

Think Tanks as Policy Entrepreneurs

*An exploratory case study of the factors that contributed to the influence of
The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy on The
Integrated International Security Strategy
(2018-2022)*



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Abstract

There are relatively few case studies on the role of think tanks in the Dutch policy advisory system. In this exploratory case study, I will address the role of The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) in the Dutch policy advisory system. Specifically, I will lay out which factors have contributed to the impact of the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World. A Strategic Vision for Defence Policy’ (2017) on The Integrated International Security Strategy 2018-2022 (IISS). Theoretically motivated by Kingdon’s Multiple Streams Framework, I will elaborate on the problem stream, the policy stream and the political stream as factors that are expected to be partly responsible for the influence of the advisory report on the policy change under investigation. In the problem stream, I will investigate a combination of three focusing events, namely the MH17 airplane crash, the return of foreign fighters to the Netherlands and the failed coup d’etat in Turkey. In the policy stream, I will investigate whether an available policy alternative was formulated that received sufficient recognition among government officials and other advisory actors. In the political stream, I will investigate the swings of national mood and government turnover. Based on these findings, I will conclude to which extent these factors have contributed to the influence of the WRR on the formulation of the IISS (2018-2022).

Keywords: Multiple Streams Framework, think tanks, foreign security and defence policy, The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy, Integrated International Security Strategy

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1. Introduction

The Minister of Foreign Affairs S.A. Blok presented the Integrated International Security Strategy 2018-2022 (IISS) on the 20th of March in 2018. The IISS (2018-2022) is an international security strategy that is formulated as part of Dutch foreign security and defence policy. It replaces the International Security Strategy (ISS) that was formulated in 2013 during Rutte II Cabinet (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 33694, nr. 12, p. 1). In contrast to the IISS (2018-2022), the International Security Strategy (2013) underlines in line with the Coalition Agreement (2012) the need for cutbacks in the defence budget (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013, p. 11). The ISS (2013) does, however, emphasize the role of NATO for the collective defence of NATO member states and the national security of the Netherlands (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013, p. 11). Although, the ISS (2013) recognizes the importance of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), it does not announce additional defence spending in accordance with NATO guidelines.

The policy decision to replace this security strategy with the IISS (2018-2022) as announced in the Coalition Agreement (2017) arose from the changed security environment in which external security threats around Europe such as the crash of the airplane MH17 above Ukraine, the return of foreign fighters and the failed coup in Turkey directly affected the national security of the Netherlands (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 33694, nr. 12, p. 1). As national security became intrinsically related to international security, there arose a need for an integrated security and defence policy, specifically designed to safeguard the security of the Netherlands. For this reason, the IISS (2018-2022) was formulated (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 33694, nr. 12, p. 1). Furthermore, contrary to the announced cutbacks in the defence budget during Rutte II Cabinet, the Minister of Foreign Affairs S.A. Blok announced that additional investments are required in the policy domains of cybersecurity, defence and development cooperation (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 33694, nr. 12, p. 1).

The advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World. A Strategic Vision for Defence Policy’ that was published by the WRR on the 10th of May in 2017 already argued that there is a need for an integrated security approach.¹ In this report, the WRR argues that the security situation has deteriorated because of security concerns in and around Europe (WRR, 2020, p. 2). On the basis of the interconnectedness of national and foreign security, it advises the government to adjust the foreign and defence policy to this new security situation (WRR, 2020, p. 59). In particular, the report emphasizes the importance of the armed forces for national security. Considering the decline of the

¹ The advisory report is published in Dutch as ‘Veiligheid in een wereld van verbindingen. Een strategische visie op het defensiebeleid’. I will use the English translation of this advisory report that was published on 22nd of April in 2020. Only minor changes were added to this translation.

Dutch defence spending in the past few years, the report highlights that investments are to be made to properly adjust the armed forces to the new security threats (WRR, 2020, p. 2). Furthermore, the advisory report finds that NATO plays an essential role in the collective defence of the Netherlands and its allies (WRR, 2020, p. 2). Therefore, in one of its twelve recommendations, the advisory report recommends that the defence expenditures should increase to 2% of GDP in accordance with the NATO guidelines (WRR, 2020, p. 159).

According to the Act Establishing a Scientific Council on Government Policy, the WRR is formally institutionalized as an advisory council to provide policy advice to the government on issues that concern the Dutch society and its citizens on the long term (Instellingswet W.R.R., 2019). According to this Act, the Dutch Council of Ministers is legally required to respond to advisory reports that are produced by the WRR (Instellingswet W.R.R., 2019). As a result, the Dutch Cabinet published its main findings on the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ on the 28th of March in 2018 (*Kamerstukken II* 2017/2018, 33763, nr. 141). In this response, the Minister of Defence A.Th.B. Bijleveld-Schouten agrees in line with the advisory report that developments in and around Europe call for an adjustment of the foreign security and defence policy (*Kamerstukken II* 2017/2018, 33763, nr. 141, p. 1).

The IISS (2018-2022) seems to respond to the request of the advisory report for a reconsideration of the Dutch foreign security and defence policy. At first, the IISS (2018-2022) explicitly integrates the definition of the policy problem at hand from the advisory report as it also defines the security situation as being deteriorated because of international developments that threatened the security status of the Netherlands both internationally as well as nationally (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, p. 13). Secondly, the IISS (2018-2022) adopts some of the policy recommendations as provided by the advisory report. Specifically, the IISS (2018-2022) underlines the importance of the adherence to the NATO guidelines for the purpose of a collective defence of NATO territory (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, pp. 30-31). This calls for an exploratory case study in which I will explore what factors have led to the influence of the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ on the IISS (2018-2022).

1.1 Problem Definition

Think tanks play a considerable role in the Dutch policy advisory system (Mentzel, 1999; Timmermans & Scholten, 2006; Scholten, 2009; Scholten & Timmermans, 2010; Van den Berg, 2017). Despite several case studies on the nature and influence of these advisory systems, Craft and Howlett (2013) observe that there is not much known about policy advisory system behaviour. Furthermore, while think tanks seem to have an influence on policymaking, they are not considered

to be ‘key contributors’ to policy (Weidenbaum, 2010, p. 134). Policy makers are generally reluctant in referring explicitly to expert advice from think tanks (Stone, 1996, p. 1). As a result, the influence of think tanks on policy is often ‘incomplete’ as decision-makers determine whether expert advice is adopted, to what extent it is used in the formulation of policy and how it is communicated to the public (Stone, 1996, p. 2). The scholarly literature concerning policy advisory systems recognizes that think tanks exert a substantial amount of influence on policymaking (Rich, 2004; Craft & Howlett, 2012; Fraussen & Halpin, 2017). Moreover, in the case under study, there is evidence that a substantial part of expert advice from the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ was explicitly used in the IISS (2018-2022). This means that there is evidence that the WRR actually influenced Dutch foreign security and defence policy. However, its influence on the IISS (2018-2022) was not a matter of course. Therefore, it is relevant to inquire which factors led to the influence of the advisory report on the IISS (2018-2022).

1.2 Research Relevance

This exploratory case study of the factors that contributed to the influence of the WRR on Dutch foreign security and defence policy has societal as well as academic relevance. It is academically relevant since the influence of Dutch think tanks on Dutch foreign security and defence policy seems to be relatively underexplored. A substantial amount of the literature on the influence of think tanks on foreign policy discuss the influence of think tanks in the Anglo-Saxon world. Moreover, case studies concerning the role of think tanks in the Dutch policy advisory system are relatively outdated.² Therefore, it is academically relevant to investigate the factors responsible for the influence of the WRR on the IISS (2018-2022) as it could be an essential contribution to the academic literature on the relationship between expertise and policy in the Dutch Policy advisory system.

The case study is also societally relevant. While there is a substantial amount of media coverage on the implementation of policies in the Netherlands, there is a lack of transparency with regard to the influence of non-state actors on governmental policy. Since governance networks in European member states become increasingly complex due to their diversity and the fact that these networks operate at different levels of governance, it is often unclear for the general public how policies are formulated and which actors in and outside government influence policy formulation (Papadopoulos, 2010). A recent example is the criticism during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Netherlands about the influence of the Outbreak Management Team (OMT) on governmental policy. Critics have argued that their influence is insufficiently transparent as their recommendations are not made public

² The studies of Timmermans and Scholten (2006), Scholten (2009) and Scholten and Timmermans (2010) seem to be the most recent case studies that discuss the role of the WRR in the Dutch policy advisory system.

(Holdert et al., 2020). Therefore, from a societal point of view, the exploratory case study will also shine more light on the questions of accountability and transparency in the Dutch policy advisory system.

1.3 Research Question

The purpose of this exploratory case study is to investigate the main factors that led to the influence of the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ on the Integrated International Security Strategy (2018-2022). The case under study could provide insight into which factors contribute to the influence of think tanks on Dutch policymaking. As a result, it could improve the academic understanding of the influence of think tanks in the Dutch policy advisory system. The research question is formulated as follows:

What is the impact of the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ of the WRR on the Integrated International Security Strategy (2018-2022)?

To answer this research question, three sub-questions are formulated:

1. How did the policy change under investigation come about?
2. What was the influence of the advisory report on the formulation of the IISS (2018-2022)?
3. Which factors have contributed to the influence of the advisory report on the IISS (2018-2022)?

By answering these sub-questions, it should become clearer how the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ influenced the IISS (2018-2022). Specifically, it should become clearer which factors are responsible for the influence of the WRR on the policy change under investigation: the change from the ISS (2013) to the IISS (2018-2022). To identify the factors that are responsible for the influence of the advisory report on the IISS (2018-2022), I will use the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF). This framework was initially developed by J.W. Kingdon in *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (2003 [1984]). On the basis of this framework, three streams seem to be causally relevant, namely the problem stream, the policy stream and the political stream. The problem stream designates the way events are defined as policy problems and the means through which these events receive attention from government officials (Kingdon, 2003, p. 197). In the policy stream, actors in and outside government formulate policy proposals that are judged as available policy alternatives on the basis of the degree of receptivity and the criteria of the policy community (Kingdon, 2003, p. 200). In the political stream, a change in national mood and turnover of government are factors that could influence agenda setting (Kingdon, 2003, p. 198).

Kingdon argues that policy change may occur in case a policy window opens (Kingdon, 2003, p. 203). In the case under investigation, the change from the ISS (2013) to the IISS (2018-2022) is expected to have occurred because of the opening of a policy window. In line with the MSF, this policy window is expected to have opened because the policy alternative under investigation (i.e. NATO-norm) was linked to a general policy problem from the problem stream (*problem window*) and/or advocated during institutional events such as government turnover or a swing in national mood (*political window*) (Kingdon, 2003, p. 203). Policy entrepreneurs or ‘people willing to invest their resources in return for future policies they favor’ have a special role in the coupling of these streams as they wait for the moment during which policy solutions can be linked to a policy problem in the problem stream or make advantage of an institutional event in the political stream (Kingdon, 2003, pp. 181-182). If the three streams are successfully coupled, then policy change may follow. In the case of policy change, available policy alternatives from the policy stream or policy problems from the problem stream are put on the decision agenda after which policies are formulated (Kingdon, 2003, pp. 203-204).

The MSF helps to understand which factors (*independent variables*) have contributed to the influence of the WRR on the policy change under investigation (*dependent variable*), namely the change from the ISS (2013) to the IISS (2018-2022). Specifically, throughout the study it will become clear which factors contributed to the adoption of the NATO-norm as a policy alternative into the IISS (2018-2022). In the case under study, the harmonization of the three streams is expected to have led to a policy window that created an opportunity for the WRR as a policy entrepreneur to influence the change from the ISS (2013) to the IISS (2018-2022). Each of these streams is expected to have influenced the opening of a policy window through which the adoption of one specific policy recommendation concerning the NATO-norm from the advisory report in the IISS (2018-2022) took place. The reason for this is that the IISS (2018-2022) shows a ‘complete linkage’ of a problem, a policy solution (i.e. NATO-norm) and political acceptability (Kingdon, 2003, p. 204).

On the basis of the Multiple Streams Framework, three expectations are formulated:

Expectation 1: A combination of focusing events in the problem stream has contributed to the adoption of policy recommendations from the advisory report into the Integrated International Security Strategy (2018-2022).

Expectation 2: The presence of an available policy alternative in the policy stream has contributed to the adoption of policy recommendations from the advisory report into the Integrated International Security Strategy (2018-2022).

Expectation 3: Changes in national mood and government turnover have contributed to the adoption of policy recommendations from the advisory report into the Integrated International Security Strategy (2018-2022).

1.4 Data & Methodology

In this exploratory case study, I will explore which factors (*independent variables*) have contributed to the influence of the advisory report on the formulation of the IISS (2018-2022) (*dependent variable*). After formulating the theoretical expectations in the theoretical framework, I will operationalize the independent variables in the research design by outlining which types of evidence support the hypothesized factors. To collect the types of evidence to investigate whether the independent variables are causally related to the dependent variable, I will use document analysis. Document analysis is a data collection method that can be used to uncover the relevant primary and secondary sources (Thies, 2002, p. 351). Document analysis is used as follows. For the problem stream, I will use primarily media sources and supplementary governmental/parliamentary documents. For the policy stream, I will use the NATO Summit Declaration (2014), governmental documents from delegated government officials and advisory reports that are produced by Dutch think tanks.³ The Dutch think tanks under investigation are the AIV (Advisory Council on International Affairs), Clingendael Institute and the HCSS (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies). For the political stream, I will use parliamentary proceedings, party programs that were formulated in the run-up of the general election on the 15th of March 2017 and the Coalition Agreement (2017). In the research design, I will also highlight the main threats to the use of document analysis as a research method for this exploratory case study.

1.5 Structure

The thesis is structured as follows.

In the second chapter, I will provide a literature review on the role of think tanks in the Dutch advisory system (2.1). Consequently, I will provide an overview of the literature on the different factors that shape Dutch foreign policy (2.2). After justifying my choice for the Multiple Streams Framework as the theoretical framework, I will outline the Multiple Streams Framework (2.3).

³ I will use the Wales Summit Declaration (2014) as this declaration contains the international agreement to increase the defence budget of member states towards 2% of GDP (NATO-norm) (p. NATO, 2014, 14). I will investigate in the analysis of the policy stream whether this policy solution was considered to be a policy alternative in the policy community under investigation. I will elaborate on how I will use this document in sections 3.2 and 3.3.

Subsequently, I will justify the selection of the influence of the WRR on the IISS (2018-2022) as the case for this exploratory case study (2.4). At last, I will formulate the theoretical expectations (2.5).

In the third chapter, I will discuss the research design of this exploratory case study. At first, I will explain what an exploratory case study is and why it is used (3.1). Secondly, I will operationalize the independent variables from the theoretical framework. In this section, it will be explained for each stream what types of evidence might support the expectations (3.2). After the operationalization, I will describe for each stream which types of data are collected (3.3). At last, I will describe the main limitations of and threats to this exploratory case study (3.4).

In the fourth chapter, I will provide an overview of the case (4.1). After the case overview, I will analyze the three streams that are expected to be responsible for the influence of the advisory report on the IISS (2018-2022) (4.2 – 4.4). As a result, I will be able to explain how these streams are causally related to the dependent variable (4.5). I will end this chapter by investigating to what extent the main expectations have been satisfied in the analysis (4.6).

In the fifth chapter, I will provide the main conclusions of the analysis, the academic implications of the research, the main limitations of this exploratory case study and some recommendations for future explanatory case studies.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I will construct a theoretical framework that focuses on the factors that contribute to the influence of think tanks on the formulation of foreign policies in the Netherlands. In the first section, I will provide an overview of previous studies that discuss what role think tanks have in the Dutch policy advisory system and the factors that contribute to this influence (2.1). Subsequently, as this case study is about the factors that influence Dutch foreign policy, I will also provide an overview of the literature concerning the different factors that shape Dutch foreign policy (2.2). In the third section, I will lay out Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) of agenda setting. Furthermore, I will justify the choice of the MSF (2.3). In the fourth section, I will justify the selection of the influence of the advisory report 'Security in an Interconnected World' on the IISS (2018-2022) as the case for this study (2.4). In the fifth section, I will formulate the main expectations of this research (2.5).

2.1 The Role of Think Tanks in the Dutch Policy Advisory System

Think tanks can be minimally defined as 'relatively autonomous organizations engaged in the research and analysis of contemporary issues independently of government, political parties, and pressure groups' (Stone, 2001, p. 15668). As think tanks vary substantially in terms of their organizational features, they defy an exact definition (Stone, 2001, p. 15669). Furthermore, in policy advisory systems, the formulation of policy is dependent on a variety of interlocked actors of which each has its own uniquely configured field of expertise (Craft & Howlett, 2012, p. 80). In a policy advisory system, these advisory actors provide 'information, knowledge and recommendations for actions to policy-makers' (Craft & Howlett, 2012, p. 80). In the literature on the role of think tanks in the Dutch policy advisory system, there are three points of departure.

According to Weingart (1999), two processes explain the role of think tanks in policy advisory systems, namely the scientification of politics and the politicization of science. The scientification of politics signifies the process in which traditionally accepted norms and values in politics are gradually replaced by norms and values accepted by science (Weingart, 1983, p. 228). As a result of the scientification of politics, policy advice is increasingly attracted from independent experts. Due to the increase in the use of external expert advice, experts are increasingly involved in the formulation of policy problems. For instance, scientists are often involved in defining the relevant policy problem in a specific policy area (Weingart, 1999, p. 155). The scientist as policy advisor often assumes two functions: an instrumental and a legitimating function (Weingart, 1999, p. 155). For example,

scientists are often recruited in advisory panels to provide certain authoritative support for policies which increases their legitimacy (Weingart, 1999, p. 156). In some cases, scientists also assume a political role in decision-making processes as their expert advice is used to resolve political controversies. This process is an instance of the politicization of science (Weingart, 1999, p. 156).

Mentzel (1999) observes that since the 1960s, a substantial number of Dutch politicians have assumed a scientific role before their political career, and vice versa. Under the influence of the process of depolarization in the Dutch society, the focus shifted during the 1980s to the role of think tanks as resolvers of political conflict (Mentzel, 1999, p. 175). During the 1990s, a more fragmented policy development and the focus on political consensus resulted in a less linear advisory system in which policy problems 'are actually constructed through push and shove in the political arena and structured by way of ideas and discussion' (Mentzel, 1999, p. 175). The political role of scientists and the dynamics of the Dutch policy advisory system indicate that policy advice from think tanks became more politicized as advice was increasingly prone to political negotiation (Mentzel, 1999, p. 176). Therefore, Mentzel conceives the WRR as a think tank that is engaged in 'regulatory science' (Mentzel, 1999, p. 177). This means that the WRR is expected to produce expert advice that is relevant for regulatory decisions. To achieve influence on Dutch policymaking, the WRR strategically uses issue expansion to draw attention from the media and governmental bodies in order to achieve gradual acceptance of its policy advice (Mentzel, 1999, p. 177). It shows that the acceptance of policy advice depends both on its content as well as the attention it receives from the media and governmental actors (Mentzel, 1999, p. 177).

Craft and Howlett (2012) explain think tanks as knowledge brokers: think tanks execute the role as intermediaries between knowledge producers such as academics and researchers from research institutes and knowledge consumers such as policy makers. The main objective of knowledge brokers is to translate research results into forms of knowledge that are useable to decision-makers (Craft & Howlett, 2012, p. 82). Knowledge brokers are expected to achieve stability rather than instability within policy subsystems (Christopoulos & Ingold, 2015, p. 478). Policy subsystems are systems of actors that work in the private and public sector and share with each other that they are actively engaged with one particular policy problem (Sabatier, 1988, p. 131). The extent to which think tanks as knowledge brokers achieve political stability in policy subsystems depends on the degree of externalization and politicization. While externalization refers to the process through which policy makers increasingly use external sources of advice, politicization refers to the increased use of policy advice for political purposes (Craft & Howlett, 2013, p. 187). Therefore, while think tanks were minimally defined as 'relatively autonomous', expert advice from knowledge brokers seems to be

dependent on the content of the policy advice as well as the preferences of policy makers to which these think tanks provide expert advice (Lindvall, 2009, p. 708).

Drawing on the concept of externalization, Van den Berg (2017) shows that survey findings suggest an increase of the use of external policy from advisory councils by the Dutch government between 2007 and 2013 (p. 73). An important economic-political factor is the influence of New Public Management (NPM) reforms within the Dutch policy advisory system. Due to these NPM-reforms, independent expertise became increasingly considered to be a useful source for the formulation of policy, but also for the legitimation and rationalization of governmental policy (Van den Berg, 2017, p. 72). Furthermore, the increase of ministerial advisors from 2002 onwards potentially indicates an increase of the degree politicization of expertise within the Dutch policy advisory system as there was an increase in the use of expertise for political-strategic purposes between 2007 and 2013 (Van den Berg, 2017, p. 78). These ministerial advisors increasingly assumed a political role as the increase of political negotiations with factions within parliament illustrates. As advisory actors were increasingly used for political purposes, there was an increase of the degree of the politicization of expertise in the Dutch policy advisory system between 2007 and 2013 (Van den Berg, 2017, p. 78).

Drawing on the concept of policy venues as defined by Baumgartner and Jones (1993), Timmermans and Scholten (2006) introduce think tanks as policy venues in agenda setting (p. 1105). Think tanks as policy venues are considered to be primarily engaged in the construction of images of policy problems and solutions. As a consequence, think tanks function in the policy advisory system as 'sites of strategic issue control' for policy makers or other strategic actors (Timmermans & Scholten, 2006, p. 1105). These strategic actors or policy entrepreneurs use these venues for different purposes depending on their policy preferences (Timmermans & Scholten, 2006, p. 1106). One can distinguish two processes for what venues are used, namely processes of negative and positive feedback (Timmermans & Scholten, 2006, p. 1107). In the process of negative feedback, think tanks may be used as venues to stabilize an existing policy monopoly or the dominant policy image (Timmermans & Scholten, 2006, p. 1107). In the process of positive feedback, the findings of think tanks support a strategically constructed policy image which possibly replaces the dominant policy image (Timmermans & Scholten, 2006, p. 1107). The processes of positive and negative feedback are expected to determine the primacy of science over politics, and vice versa (Timmermans & Scholten, 2006, pp. 1105-1107).

In a case study on immigrant integration, Timmermans and Scholten (2006) show that the WRR had a considerable influence on constructing and challenging the dominant policy image from 1980 and onwards (p. 1108). For instance, as a response to the construction of a policy image which portrayed immigrants as ethnic minorities, the WRR initiated a process of negative feedback by

producing policy advice that contributed to the legitimation of the policy image and to counteract rival perspectives (Timmermans & Scholten, 2006, pp. 1109-1110). At that time, policies of immigrant integration were in need of legitimate and de-politicized policy advice (Timmermans & Scholten 2006, p. 1109; Scholten, 2009, pp. 566-567). As a result, the WRR succeeded in reducing the scope and depoliticize the debate concerning the issue of immigrant integration (Timmermans & Scholten, 2006, pp. 1109-1110). After this process of negative feedback, the minorities policy paradigm came under severe criticism. As the WRR produced a new advisory report on immigrant integration, the debate shifted towards the socioeconomic dimension of immigrant integration. It led to a process of positive feedback that replaced the previous minorities policy paradigm with a policy image that focused on the socioeconomic dimension of immigrant integration (Timmermans & Scholten, 2006, p. 1110). The case study on immigrant integration shows that think tanks as scientific venues produce processes of negative as well as positive feedback which have an effect on the sustainability of the dominant policy image (Timmermans & Scholten, 2006, p. 1114). It shows that the primacy of think tanks in agenda setting depends on punctuated changes in policy that can result from different factors such as focusing events, elections or changes of the government coalition (Timmermans & Scholten, 2006, p. 1116).

2.2 The Factors Shaping Dutch Foreign Policy

For this exploratory case study, I will use the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) as a theoretical framework. In the next section, I will justify and explain the choice for this framework. Despite its usefulness for this case study, there remains a potential flaw. As the MSF is initially designed by Kingdon (1984) for the application to public policy, it has to be established that it can be applied to Dutch *foreign policy* (p. 4). Furthermore, the three theoretical viewpoints that I explored in the previous section do not take into account the influence of think tanks on Dutch foreign policy as these studies investigate the influence of external sources of policy advice on Dutch public policy. However, in this exploratory case study, the policy change under investigation is a change in Dutch foreign policy, namely the change from the ISS (2013) to the IISS (2018-2022). I will anticipate on this potential flaw by showing that the factors influencing Dutch foreign policy are closely related to the factors of the MSF. As a consequence, it provides a justification for the application of the MSF to Dutch foreign policy. In this section, I will discuss the literature on the different factors that shape Dutch foreign policy. Subsequently, I will show how the MSF relates to these factors

Several authors regard international and domestic affairs as intrinsically related (Heldring, 1978; Voorhoeve, 1979; Baehr, 1980; Verbeek & Van der Vleuten, 2008; Kaarbo, 2015). Baehr (1980) writes that there is a ‘conviction that international and domestic politics are “linked” in many ways’

(p. 226). Verbeek and Van der Vleuten (2008) confirm the relative importance of domestic affairs to foreign policy (p. 357). These authors indicate that between 1989 and 2007, a process of ‘domesticization’ of Dutch foreign policy was initiated through which Dutch policy makers in the domain of foreign policy became increasingly sensitive to domestic affairs (Verbeek & Van der Vleuten, 2008, p. 358). For instance, policies about security were heavily influenced by domestic affairs. Security issues became more politically salient due to the increase of European integration since 1990 (Verbeek & Van der Vleuten, 2008, p. 372). As a result of the politicization of these emerging security issues by far-right parties, their increasing electoral success and domestic events, unilateral immigration policies were developed (Verbeek & Van der Vleuten, 2008, pp. 372-373). Hellema (2009) also stresses this development in the field of European integration as the increasing electoral success of right-wing populist leader Pim Fortuyn led to a public discussion about security and immigration (p. 359). At the same time, the interdependence of domestic and international affairs implied that Dutch ministries became more internationalized as directorate-generals became increasingly involved in European and international affairs (Hellema, 2009, p. 402).

As a result of the interconnectedness of foreign and domestic affairs ‘many more domestic actors with more diverging opinions have to be satisfied’ (Verbeek & Van der Vleuten, 2008, p. 375).⁴ For this reason, foreign policy decision-making has a domestic dimension as domestic pressures affect the direction of foreign policies in the Netherlands. For instance, as Members of Parliament became more concerned with foreign policy issues from 1980 onwards, they also gained more influence (Kaarbo, 2015, p. 73). There are two reasons for this development. Firstly, the means by which the Parliament is able to influence Dutch foreign policy have increased since 1945 (Voorhoeve, 1979, pp. 80-81; Kaarbo, 2015, pp. 75-76). Examples of those means are the ability to withhold the approval of international agreements, the motion of no-confidence and parliamentary investigations (Voorhoeve, 1979, p. 80). Secondly, an increase of electoral volatility and polarized views on foreign policy issues such as issues on security since 1990 have led to an ‘increase in the weight of domestic concerns held by foreign policymakers’ (Verbeek & Van der Vleuten, 2008, p. 362). However, despite the increase of parliamentary control on foreign policy, Kaarbo (2015) contends that the ‘parliament is generally not considered a very important player’ (p. 76). In addition, there are also cases in which Dutch foreign policy was led by international developments such as the ‘US-led War of Terror’ during which the Netherlands politically and militarily supported the United States after 9/11 (Hellema, 2009, p. 373).

⁴ Baehr (1980) distinguishes two groups of domestic actors, namely the ‘formal foreign policy elite’ (government officials, Members of Parliament) and the ‘informal foreign policy elite’ (academics, advisory bodies, public interest groups, news media).

While the means of the Dutch Parliament to influence foreign policy decision-making processes increased, ‘the determination of daily foreign policy has remained largely in the hand of the Foreign Minister’ (Voorhoeve, 1979, p. 82). Kaarbo (2015) confirms that the Minister of Foreign Affairs is often reported as the key player in Dutch foreign policy (p. 77). Due to the linkage of domestic and foreign affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs began to assume a coordinative function from 2000 onwards (Hellema, 2009, p. 403). Furthermore, other members of the cabinet became increasingly involved in international affairs (Hellema, 2009, p. 402). As a consequence, the Dutch Council of Ministers is responsible for a substantial part of the decisions made with regard to foreign policy issues (Kaarbo, 2015, p. 77). Therefore, Kaarbo (2015) argues that coalition politics is a crucial factor that has an increasing influence on foreign policymaking since the 1960s (p. 79). According to Kaarbo (2015), this development has led to foreign policymaking being more politicized and partisan (p. 79). Policy differences between members of a coalition and between coalition parties haven proven to be a factor affecting the sustainability of a coalition (Kaarbo, 2015, p. 80). For this reason, coalition members constantly focus on coalition bargaining to reach compromises between members of a coalition which delays the process of foreign policymaking (Kaarbo, 2015, pp. 80-81). However, political fragmentation among coalition members also has positive effects such as high political legitimacy (Kaarbo, 2015, p. 82).

The portrayal of domestic and international events by news media is another factor that influences Dutch foreign policy. Voorhoeve (1979) writes that ‘their impact can be significant in an indirect fashion’ as the media raise new policy issues and portray these issues in a certain fashion which in turn influences public opinion (p. 89). The opinion of the public is of importance in this context as the public forms an increasing domestic pressure on foreign affairs (Kaarbo, 2015, p. 74). Due to the democratization of Dutch foreign policy, the public became more involved and interested in foreign policy issues (Heldring, 1978, p. 412; Verbeek & Van der Vleuten, 2008, p. 362; Kaarbo, 2015, pp. 73-74). Public opinion began to affect all actors involved in foreign affairs (Voorhoeve, 1979, p. 89). Therefore, the main reason for media dominance in foreign affairs is the fact that politicians have access through the media to the public opinion of ‘mass audiences’ (Van Noije et al., 2008, p. 458). As the public opinion is greatly affected by domestic events portrayed in the media and the media are the means by which politicians get to know these events, there is a ‘causal relationship between the agendas of the media and parliament’ (Van Noije et al., 2008, p. 471). This interconnectedness shows that the media is a crucial factor that influences foreign affairs through their influence on public opinion which in turn is resonated in parliamentary debates (Van Noije et al., 2008, p. 455).

At last, it should be noted that there is a variety of factors that shape Dutch foreign policy such as self-interests in terms of economic, military and political influence as well as principles such as humanitarian and ethical concerns (Hellema, 2009, p. 403; Kaarbo, 2015, p. 67). As a consequence, the course of foreign policy decision-making processes is in no way determined by the single set of factors outlined in this section. In fact, Dutch foreign policy is determined by different policy circumstances and often depends on the 'conservatist' or 'idealistic' principles held by Dutch decision-makers which account for deviations between theoretical models of Dutch foreign policy (Hellema, 2009, p. 404). For this reason, Hellema writes: "Foreign policy is plainly not always a rational 'translation' of external and domestic circumstances" (Hellema, 2009, p. 404). Therefore, this study uses the Multiple Streams Framework as its theoretical framework as it is able to account for the contingent reality of Dutch foreign policy-making processes as well as is able to systematically structure the factors responsible for changes in Dutch foreign policy.

Comparing the Multiple Streams Framework to the different factors that shape Dutch foreign policy, there are two theoretical findings. At first, the literature review of the different factors that shape Dutch foreign policy shows that there is an influence of domestic politics on Dutch foreign policy. The political differences among politicians in Dutch Parliament seem to be an important factor in Dutch foreign policy. For instance, in the policy domain of foreign security, Verbeek and Van der Vleuten (2008) show that politicization and electoral volatility have an influence on issue salience (pp. 372-373). Furthermore, coalition politics influences the way cabinets are formed through coalition bargaining and it stimulates the need for compromises between cabinet members in order to prevent 'coalition crises' which in turn affects the velocity in which coalition decisions are made (Kaarbo, 2015, pp. 80-81). In the MSF, developments in domestic politics such as a change in national mood among politicians in parliament and government turnover are expected to influence agenda setting. This first comparison warrants the use of national mood and government turnover as factors that affect the agenda status of foreign policy issues (Kingdon, 2003, p. 149).

Secondly, the literature suggests that the portrayal of domestic events in the media can have an influence on the formulation of Dutch foreign policy. This is the case as media coverage of domestic issues influences public opinion which in turn influences policy makers (Van Noije et al., 2008, p. 458). In the next section it will be shown that in the MSF, the media are considered to play an essential role in the portrayal of focusing events (Birkland, 1997, p. 31). Furthermore, Kingdon (2003) recognizes that mass media 'clearly do affect the public opinion agenda' (p. 57). Since mass media affect the political opinions of their constituents, politicians closely follow the media coverage of public issues (Kingdon, 2003, p. 58). Similar to Van Noije et al. (2008), the media primarily affect policy makers because of their influence on public opinion. Therefore, in the MSF the media also

influences the governmental agenda in an indirect fashion, namely through their impact on public opinion (Kingdon, 2003, p. 60). The fact that media coverage strongly affects public opinion or the national mood of a country and, in turn, strongly affects policy makers further enhances the expectation that focusing events receive a substantial amount of governmental attention. It warrants the analysis of focusing events as portrayed in the media as factors that shape decision-making processes of Dutch foreign policy (Kingdon, 2003, pp. 57 - 58; p. 149).

2.3 Multiple Streams Framework

In this section, I will provide an all-encompassing account of the different factors that contribute the influence of think tanks on foreign policy. At first, I will show how the Multiple Streams Framework fits the exploratory goal of this case study and how it fills the gaps of previous studies (2.3.1). Subsequently, I will describe the factors of the MSF that are expected to contribute to the influence of think tanks on foreign policy, namely the problem stream (2.3.2), the policy stream (2.3.3) and the political stream (2.3.4). At last, I will explain how the opening of a policy window and the coupling of the three streams by a policy entrepreneur lead to policy change (2.3.5).

2.3.1 Justification

In this section, I will provide a justification for the selection of the Multiple Streams Framework as the theoretical framework of this exploratory case study. Previous studies on the influence of think tanks on policymaking in the Dutch policy advisory system highlight several factors that affect policy advisory systems such as strategic-issue control (Timmermans & Scholten, 2006; Scholten, 2009; Scholten & Timmermans, 2010), externalization (Van den Berg, 2017) and politicization (Mentzel, 1999). However, these studies do not systematically clarify under which conditions think tanks act as strategic advisors of governmental policy. A current trend in the literature about policy advisory systems is to conceive think tanks as strategic actors (Fraussen & Halpin, 2017; Cadier & Sus, 2017; Åberg et al., 2019). Unlike the theories that underpin previous studies, the MSF accounts for the insight that the degree of influence think tanks have on policy does not principally rely on the interests that policy makers have in attracting external policy advice. The MSF accounts for the role of think tanks as policy entrepreneurs that strategically formulate policy solutions in order to influence governmental policies (Zahariadis, 2019). Therefore, the MSF is fit to be used to explore the conditions under which think tanks can act as strategic advisors or policy entrepreneurs as it highlights these conditions in a systematic way.

Furthermore, the MSF is able to systematically apply the hypothesized factors to the case under investigation. There are two reasons. At first, the framework contains a set of clearly described

concepts and relationships between these concepts which aids in conceptualization. This means that the framework leaves little to the imagination which facilitates the application of these concepts to a real policy process. As a result, the framework enables this exploratory case study to operationalize the factors as independent variables in order to investigate whether they are causally related to dependent variable (Cairney & Jones, 2015, p. 41). Secondly, the MSF is a flexible theory that can be applied to a variety of policy processes in different political settings. While the MSF is initially developed by Kingdon for the application to the public policy process in the United States, its universal concepts allow for an application to different political settings such as the Netherlands (Cairney & Zahariadis, 2016, p. 88).

2.3.3 Problem stream

The problem stream is the stream where conditions are defined as problems that require governmental attention. The policy problems that are on the governmental agenda receive a reasonable amount of governmental attention in a particular period (Kingdon, 2003, p. 3). As problems reach the decision agenda, these problems become the main 'focus of attention' for government officials (Kingdon, 2003, p. 3). If a policy problem or policy solution reaches the decision agenda, then a policy decision will be made (Kingdon, 2003, p. 3). Kingdon attempts to understand the conditions under which problems in the problem stream reach the governmental agenda. This agenda setting process depends on two factors, namely the way conditions are defined as policy problems and the means by which government officials are attended to policy issues (Kingdon, 2003, p. 197).

For this case study, I will investigate focusing events as the primary means through which government officials become aware of policy issues. Focusing events play a considerable role in Kingdon's framework. Despite their importance, Kingdon has not developed an extensive account of the role of focusing events in the policy process. Birkland's framework of focusing events (1997) is helpful in this respect as it elaborates in a more extensive way on Kingdon's account of focusing events. Using Birkland's definition, a focusing event is understood as an event 'that is sudden, relatively rare, can be reasonably defined as harmful or revealing the possibility of potentially greater future harms, inflicts harms or suggests potential harms that are or could be concentrated on a definable geographical area or community of interest, and that is known to policy makers and the public virtually simultaneously' (Birkland, 1997, p. 22). Examples are crises or (natural) disasters. According to Kingdon, individual focusing events are not powerful enough to influence the governmental agenda as individually focusing events often do not sufficiently show that the current situation requires governmental action as a result of policy failure (Kingdon, 2003, pp. 94-95; Birkland, 1997, p. 22).

However, a combination of several focusing events occurring in a short period is able to draw enough governmental attention for the formulation of a policy problem. The reason is that jointly these focusing events can ‘create a sense of a general problem’, while individually a particular focusing event may be regarded by policy makers as mere coincidence or simply an anomaly (Kingdon, 2003, p. 98). Whether these focusing events have enough vocal power for the formulation of a policy problem also depends on the characteristics of the focusing event such as its suddenness, rareness and inflicting harm (Birkland, 1997, p. 22). A combination of focusing events of which each individually meets Birkland’s definition is expected to lead to the formulation of a general policy problem in the policy domain of our interest. The presence of a clearly defined and recognized policy problem is of importance as Kingdon (2003) writes that ‘linking a proposal to a problem that is perceived as real and important does enhance that proposal’s prospects for moving up on the agenda’ (p. 115).

2.3.4 Policy stream

The policy stream is a stream in which different kinds of policy ideas, proposals and alternatives are generated and selected by specialists of policy communities (Kingdon, 2003, p. 116). Specialists such as researchers and government officials in a given policy community are concerned with the policy ideas, proposals and alternatives of a specific policy domain (Kingdon, 2003, p. 117). In each policy community, there is a ‘primeval soup’ of policy ideas, proposals and alternatives. At each stage of policymaking, there are numerous policy ideas, proposals and alternatives available (Kingdon, 2003, p. 142) Only some of these policy ideas, proposals and alternatives are selected as viable for actual policies in the final decision-making stage (Kingdon, 2003, pp. 116-117). Whether policy proposals or policy ideas reach the decision agenda as available alternatives depends on two factors, namely whether they have softened up important actors and meet the ‘criterial for survival’ of the policy community (Kingdon, 2003, p. 117).

The softening up of the policy community is the process in which policy entrepreneurs actively soften up actors from the policy community by introducing new policy ideas to these actors (Kingdon, 2003, p. 128). As these actors get to know the ins and outs of these policy ideas, there is chance that a greater acceptance or receptivity of these ideas or proposals arises among key decision-makers (Kingdon, 2003, p. 128). If the policy entrepreneur is also successful in linking their policy proposal to a policy problem or proposes it during favourable political changes, then the relevant actors such as government officials are already more receptive to these policy proposals (Kingdon, 2003, p. 128). Another factor for the success of policy proposals is the ‘criteria for survival’ (Kingdon, 2003, p. 131). There are several criteria for survival including technical feasibility, value acceptability, budget

restrictions, the acceptability by the public and the receptivity among politicians (Kingdon, 2003, p. 131). Based on these criteria, policy makers decide whether a policy proposal is perceived as an available policy alternative that is ready to be translated to actual policy (Kingdon, 2003, p. 142). The presence of an available policy alternative that is softened up and meets the criteria for survival increases its chance of moving up on the decision agenda (Kingdon, 2003, p. 142).

2.3.5 Political stream

The political stream is the third stream that also operates independently from the other two streams. In this stream, three political changes are of importance, namely changes in national mood, campaigns of pressure groups and government turnover. These developments could have a possible effect on whether policy issues receive a high agenda status (Kingdon, 2003, p. 145). In this study, I will focus on the national mood and governmental turnover.

The national mood can be described as the political climate of a country or the common opinions of the public about politics (Kingdon, 2003, p. 146). This means that ‘a rather large number of people out in the country are thinking along certain common lines’ (Kingdon, 2003, p. 146). However, the national mood ‘does not necessarily reside in the mass public’ (Kingdon, 2003, p. 148). Instead, politicians that are elected sense the national mood through the media or by communicating with ordinary people. Government officials primarily sense the national mood through what political matters politicians among each other discuss (Kingdon, 2003, p. 149). Therefore, the national mood can be identified by looking at the common opinions or common lines of thinking among elected politicians. The national mood can have an effect on policy as shifts in the national mood affect the viability of policy proposals making government officials more (or less) receptive for these policy alternatives (Kingdon, 2003, p. 149).

The second factor is government turnover (Kingdon, 2003, pp. 153-154). Elections may cause new government officials to take a seat within an administration. During government turnover, agenda change either occurs as a result of government officials bringing forward new agenda items or due to changing jurisdictional boundaries. In the first case, governmental actors are expected to raise new policy issues on the governmental agenda (Kingdon, 2003, pp. 153-154). In the second case, a change in jurisdictional boundaries within government administrations could make other actors within government responsible for agenda items of a particular policy domain. This may contribute to more governmental attention of particular agenda items (Kingdon, 2003, p. 158). Furthermore, politicians are rather engaged in bargaining than persuasion. In the construction of coalitions, political concessions are made to gain support from the members of the coalition

(Kingdon, 2003, p. 159). Therefore, whether policy proposals gain prominence among governmental actors also depends on the political support political actors receive (Kingdon, 2003, p. 160).

2.3.6 Policy window

At critical times, a policy window opens (Kingdon, 2003, p. 165). A policy window is an opportunity for policy change in a short period of time (Kingdon, 2003, p. 166). A policy window opens as a result of a pressing policy problem in the problem stream or a drastic change in the political stream (Kingdon, 2003, p. 168). In the first case (*problem window*), a combination of focusing events lead to a policy problem moving high on the governmental agenda (Kingdon, 2003, p. 98). In the second case (*political window*), changes in the national mood or government turnover lead to a high agenda status of policy proposals or policy issues (Kingdon, 2003, p. 174). The problem window and political window may also reinforce each other as a policy solution that is linked to a policy problem in the problem stream is more likely to receive a high agenda status when this solution is also politically acceptable in the political stream. Furthermore, a politically acceptable policy solution in the political stream is more likely to move high on the governmental agenda when it is linked to a policy problem that is considered to be real and important (Kingdon, 2003, p. 175). What is common to the two cases is that there is an opportunity for policy change.

The coupling of the three streams is a crucial step towards policy change as ‘the probability of an item rising on the *decision* agenda is dramatically increased’ (Kingdon, 2003, pp. 178-179). Think tanks have a fundamental role in the coupling of the three streams. Think tanks can be conceived as policy entrepreneurs that are willing ‘to invest their resources – time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money – in the hope of a future return’ (Kingdon, 2003, p. 122). During a policy window, think tanks as policy entrepreneurs are expected to seize an opportunity for policy change by coupling a policy alternative from the policy stream with a pressing policy problem in the problem stream or during a favourable change in the political stream (Kingdon, 2003, pp. 180-181). The ability of think tanks to successfully couple the three stream depends on their persistency, political skills and a ‘claim to a hearing’ (Kingdon, 2003, p. 180). Persistency is of importance as think tanks are required to patiently wait to seize an emerging opportunity of policy change (Kingdon, 2003, p. 181). Furthermore, political qualities such as negotiation skills and political expertise may be helpful in communicating policy alternatives to decision-makers (Kingdon, 2003, p. 181). At last, a ‘claim to a hearing’ is essential as a think tank that has an institutionalized position in formal decision-making processes or possesses a particular kind of expertise about a policy domain is more likely to be heard which facilitates its influence on actual policies (Kingdon, 2003, p. 180).

2.4 Case Selection

In this exploratory case study, the MSF is used to explore the factors that contribute to the influence of the WRR on Dutch foreign security and defence policy. Specifically, the case study investigates the factors that have contributed to opening of a policy window through which the influence of the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ on the IISS (2018-2022) took place. The change from the ISS (2013) to the IISS (2018-2022) is expected to have resulted from a policy window because of three reasons. Firstly, a general policy problem in the policy field of foreign security and defence is expected to have created an opportunity for the WRR to link a policy solution from the policy stream. Secondly, a change in the political stream such as a change in the national mood is expected to have contributed to the opportunity for the WRR to communicate a policy solution from the policy stream. At last, the availability of a policy solution (i.e. NATO-norm) during the time of analysis is expected to have contributed to the convergence of the three streams. As the IISS (2018-2022) contains a complete linkage of a general policy problem, a policy solution and political acceptability, it is expected that this policy change resulted from a policy window (Kingdon, 2003, p. 204). The WRR is investigated as the key policy entrepreneur in the policy community under investigation as it was actively engaged in the coupling of the three streams. I will provide an extensive overview of the case in the analysis (4.1). In the following paragraphs, I will provide a justification why this case is selected for this exploratory case study.

A reason for selecting this case is that the problem definition and policy recommendations from the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ were explicitly adopted into the IISS (2018-2022). As a result, it justifies the exploratory goal of this research, namely, to explore the factors that led to this influence. Another reason for selecting this case is that it can be described as a unique case. A unique case is case that ‘that occurs rarely and may therefore provide new insights’ (Dick, 2014, p. 4). Therefore, this case fits the exploratory goal of this research as there is relatively little research on the influence of the WRR on Dutch foreign and security policy. As the case under study is relatively rare, the case study is an original contribution to the literature on policy advisory systems as it could offer a new perspective on the strategic role of think tanks in agenda setting processes.

In the next section, I will formulate three expectations on the basis of the Multiple Streams Framework. By using the selected case, I am able to investigate the plausibility of the expectations on the basis of the available evidence. In this way, I will provide a contribution to the literature on policy advisory systems. As only a marginal part of the literature about the Dutch policy advisory system uses the Multiple Streams Framework, the selected case will also be used to explore whether this framework is a viable theory for future explanatory studies on the role of think tanks in policy advisory systems and their influence on foreign policymaking.

2.5 Theoretical Expectations

Using the Multiple Streams Framework, there are at least three factors that are expected to have contributed to the influence of the WRR on Dutch foreign security and defence policy, namely the problem stream, the policy stream and the political stream. These streams are expected to be responsible for a policy window through which the WRR influenced the IISS (2018-2022). On the basis of these streams, three expectations are formulated:

Expectation 1: A combination of focusing events in the problem stream has contributed to the adoption of policy recommendations from the advisory report into the Integrated International Security Strategy (2018-2022).

Expectation 2: The presence of an available policy alternative in the policy stream has contributed to the adoption of policy recommendations from the advisory report into the Integrated International Security Strategy (2018-2022).

Expectation 3: Changes in national mood and government turnover have contributed to the adoption of policy recommendations from the advisory report into the Integrated International Security Strategy (2018-2022).

Figure 1 schematically illustrates the theoretical framework and the theoretical expectations:

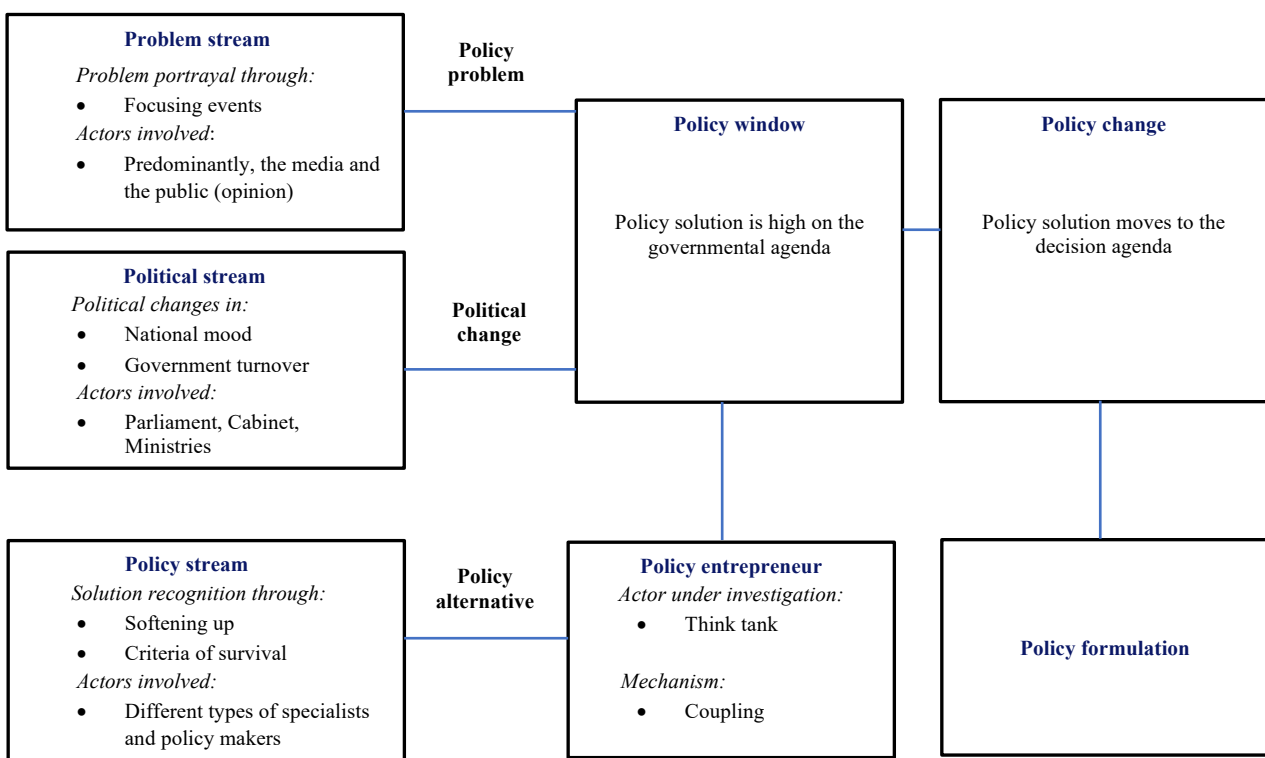


Figure 1. Overview of the theoretical framework

3. Research Design

In this chapter, I will provide the research design of this exploratory case study. In the first section, I will explain what an exploratory case study is and why it is used to investigate how the independent variables are causally related to the dependent variable under investigation (3.1). In the second section, I will discuss the operationalization of the variables (3.2). In the third section, I will show how document analysis is used as the data collection method and which types of the data are used in the analysis (3.3). In the fourth section, I will indicate the limitations of and threats to this exploratory case study and how they might be overcome (3.4).

3.1 Exploratory Case Study

The study can be described as an exploratory case study. It is a case study as it investigates the various types of evidence about a single case (Toshkov, 2016, p. 285). In this study, the case that is investigated is the influence of the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ on the IISS (2018-2022). The case study is exploratory as I will investigate which factors (*independent variables*) are causally related to the influence of the advisory report on the policy change under investigation (*dependent variable*): the formulation of the IISS (2018-2022). Based on the theoretical framework, I expect that there are three independent variables that are causally related to the dependent variable, namely the problem stream, the policy stream and the political stream. In the theoretical expectations, I have specified which relation between the independent variables and dependent variables are measured. The goal of this case study is theory building as it will illuminate the plausibility of the theoretical expectations and the applicability of the MSF on the basis of the available data. By analyzing these data, I am able to show how the hypothesized factors have contributed to the influence of the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ on the IISS (2018-2022).

There are three reasons for the use of an exploratory case study. The first reason is that there is ‘a lack of detailed preliminary research’ on the selected case (Streb, 2012, p. 372). As there is a lack of research on the selected case, the exploratory case study is ‘a preliminary step of an overall causal or explanatory research design exploring a relatively new field of scientific investigation’ (Streb, 2012, p. 372). Another reason is that it is methodologically difficult to provide a definitive explanation of the case as there is no conclusive evidence for how think tanks influence policymaking (Toshkov, 2016, p. 292). For instance, Weidenbaum (2010) argues that the ‘basic obstacle’ in measuring the influence of think tanks is ‘the extended nature of the public policy process’ (p. 135). Therefore, the process through which ideas from think tanks are transformed into policy decisions is a complex and time-consuming process (Weidenbaum, 2010, p. 135). This makes it difficult to

explain how think tanks influence policy. At last, an exploratory case study is used as there is some preliminary evidence that the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ influenced the IISS (2018-2022). It warrants the use of an exploratory case study to investigate the factors that are responsible for this influence. As the goal of this study is theory building, the exploratory case study will be able to contribute to a ‘broader theoretical field of knowledge’ (Toshkov, 2016, pp. 291-292).

3.2 Operationalization

In this section, I will describe how the three independent variables are measured and how these variables are causally related to the influence of the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ on the formulation of the IISS (2018-2022). For each stream, I will describe what observable manifestations (types of evidence) support the hypothesized factors or independent variables as set out in section 2.5 of the theoretical framework. These independent variables (IVs) are considered to be causally related to the dependent variable (DV) if and only if these variables have contributed to the opening of a policy window through which the influence of the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ on the IISS (2018-2022) took place.

In table 1, I have schematically illustrated for each section (stream) of the analysis, what types of evidence are investigated to measure the independent variables and their influence on the dependent variable:

Sections	Conceptualization	Type(s) of evidence
Problem stream (4.2)	IV 1: A combination of focusing events (a) create a sense of a general policy problem (b).	- a: the presence of a combination of focusing events in the chosen period of analysis. - b: the combination of focusing events constitute a sense of a general policy problem.
Policy stream (4.3)	IV 2: A policy solution that is formulated by specialists as an available policy alternative (a) that is softened up (a1) and meet the criteria of the policy community (a2).	- a: the presence of a policy solution that is recognized as an available policy alternative among different types of specialists that: (a1) has a degree of receptivity (softened up); (a2) meet the criteria of policy community.
Political stream (4.4)	IV 3: A change of the national mood (a) and government turnover (b) increase political acceptability of policy issues and/or solutions.	- a: a change of the national mood is evident from the degree of political support among opposition and coalition parties. - b: a change of government is evident from the coalition agreement that leads to new policy issues/policy solutions on the governmental or decision agenda.
Policy window (4.5)	A policy window opens through which policy influence could take place (i.e. policy solutions/issues are put on the decision agenda).	- a: a policy window opens because of a political change and/or a policy problem. - b: the WRR couples the three streams by linking policy solutions to a general policy problem in the problem stream and/or during a change in the political stream. - c: policy solution(s) from the advisory report are adopted in the IISS (2018 - 2022).

Table 1. Operationalization

In the analysis of the problem stream (4.2), I will investigate (a) the occurrence of a combination of focusing events before the publication of the advisory report. Minimally, each focusing event should meet the following definition of Birkland (1997): ‘A focusing event is an event that is sudden; relatively uncommon; can be reasonably defined as harmful or revealing the possibility of potentially greater future harms; has harms that are concentrated in a particular geographical area or community of interest; and that is known to policy makers and the public simultaneously’ (p. 22). I will reconstruct a chronology of at least three focusing events that meet these criteria. After providing a chronology of a combination of focusing events, I will analyze (b) whether and how the combination of focusing events has constituted a sense of a general policy problem (4.2.4).

There are at least three focusing events that fit Birkland’s definition of focusing events. The first focusing event is the crash of the civilian airplane with flight number MH17 on the 17th of July in 2014 (4.2.1). This event occurred suddenly, and it was relatively uncommon for a civilian airplane to be shut down on Ukrainian soil. Furthermore, the event directly affected the Netherlands as it led to

a substantial number of casualties. In addition, it was directly recognized as a national disaster. The use of an airplane crash as a focusing event is also warranted by the fact that Kingdon highlights that airplane crashes receive significantly more governmental attention than other issues in transportation safety as airplane crashes often lead to an aggregation of deaths in a very short period of time (Kingdon, 2003, p. 100). The second category of focusing events is the return of foreign fighters returning to the Netherlands (4.2.2). This category refers to a series of particular focusing events that were extensively portrayed in the media from 2014 onwards. There were domestic fears that these events could cause greater harms in the future to the security of the Netherlands as the risk of a terrorist attack seemingly increased. The third focusing event is the failed coup d'état in Turkey on the 15th of July in Turkey (4.2.3). This focusing event occurred in a different geographical area. However, it indirectly affected the security of the Netherlands in the aftermath of this event as it resulted in clashes among citizens in the Netherlands with a Turkish background. This focusing event is especially important as Dutch citizens with a Turkish background constitute the largest group in the Netherlands with a non-western background (CBS, 2020).

In the analysis of the policy stream (4.3), I will analyze (a) the presence of a policy solution that is recognized as an available policy alternative by specialists and government officials in the policy community under investigation. The policy community under investigation consists of specialists such as researchers from think tanks and government officials in the policy area of foreign security and defence. Firstly, I will focus on the NATO-norm as an international agreement that was agreed upon among NATO member states during the NATO Wales Summit in 2014 (4.3.1). The NATO-norm states that member states should increase their defence spending to 2% of GDP within ten years. However, the interpretation of this norm remained essentially contested among different actors in the policy community. I will investigate whether this policy solution was considered to be an available policy alternative in the policy area of foreign defence and security among researchers from think tanks (specialists) and government officials. For a policy solution to be considered as an available policy alternative, it should have (a1) a degree of receptivity among specialists and government officials (softened up) and (a2) meet the policy criteria of the policy community. Throughout the analysis, I will focus on two criteria: budget constraints and value acceptability. A budget constraint is the criterion whether the proposed policy solution is acceptable relative to the federal budget (Kingdon, 2003, p. 138). Value acceptability concerns the question whether the policy proposal is acceptable in the eyes of specialists (Kingdon, 2003, p. 132). As a result, I am able to show whether the NATO-norm was considered to be an available policy alternative in the policy community under investigation.

Firstly, I will analyze how government officials that were delegated to the NATO Summit in Wales initially reacted to the NATO-norm (4.3.2). At least three government officials in the relevant policy community were present at the Wales Summit in 2014, namely the former Minister of Defence J.A. Hennis-Plasschaert, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs F.C.G.M. Timmermans and Prime Minister M. Rutte (Europa Nu, n.d.). The policy reactions of these delegated government officials are important as these reactions indicate whether the NATO-norm is considered to be an available policy alternative among these government officials and whether it meets the criterion of budget constraints. The extent to which the criterion of budget constraints is satisfied is of fundamental importance as the announced cutbacks in the defence budget as set out in the Coalition Agreement (2012) could form a possible hinderance in accepting the NATO-norm as an available policy alternative.

Secondly, I will analyze the reactions of the Dutch think tanks Clingendael Institute (CI), the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) and The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS) to the NATO-norm. These think tanks are specialists that publish research on a regular basis concerning the policy area of foreign security and defence. They have also played a role in softening up government officials in the policy community as there are reasons to believe that these think tanks were in close contact with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs throughout the publications of their advisory reports that will be used in the analysis. At first, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs commissioned the HCSS to write the strategic monitors (HCSS, 2017c). Secondly, the strategic monitors published by Clingendael Institute were first presented to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. For instance, the Strategic Monitor of 2014 was first presented to the Minister of Foreign Affairs F.C.G.M. Timmermans (Clingendael, 2014). Furthermore, the Minister of Defence J.A. Hennis-Plasschaert underlines in a letter to the Second Chamber during the period of analysis that the Cabinet values the expertise from institutes such as Clingendael Institute and the HCSS (*Kamerstukken II* 2014/2015, 33763, nr. 82). Thirdly, the Dutch Cabinet provided a reaction to every advisory report of the AIV in the period of analysis (Government of the Netherlands, 2015; 2016). These pieces of evidence indicate that governmental actors were aware of these reports during the period of analysis. By analyzing reactions of these think tanks, I am able to investigate whether the NATO-norm as a policy solution satisfied the criterion of value acceptability. This is helpful to understand to what extent the NATO-norm was considered as an available policy alternative among these specialists.

In the analysis of the political stream (4.4), I will analyze how changes in the national mood and government turnover affected the agenda status of the NATO-norm as a policy solution. Firstly, I will analyze a change in the national mood or the common political opinions of the public towards the NATO-norm before the general election on the 15th of March 2017. The national mood will become evident from (a) the degree of political support among opposition and coalition parties in the Second

Chamber as the national mood is partly shaped by what politicians among each other discuss (Kingdon, 2003, p. 149). Therefore, I will analyze the degree of political support among opposition and coalition parties in the Second Chamber towards the NATO-norm (4.4.1). By analyzing the degree of political support for this policy solution, the ‘common lines’ of thinking among politicians about this norm become evident (Kingdon, 2003, p. 146). To analyze the degree of political support, I will also analyze party programs of political parties that received a seat within the Second Chamber as a result of the aforementioned general election (4.4.2). Party programs also indicate how bargaining processes during the government turnover have led to changes in the agenda status of the NATO-norm. Consequently, I am also able to analyze whether any political concessions were made between coalition parties (Kingdon, 2003, p. 159). Subsequently, I will analyze (b) government turnover in 2017 by investigating the coalition agreement of the newly formed coalition to indicate what policy decisions concerning the NATO-norm were made as a result of the coalition formation (4.4.3). I will end this section with an analysis of the political acceptability of the NATO-norm in the political stream (4.4.4).

After the analysis of the three streams, I will analyze whether the streams are factors (independent variables) that are causally related to the dependent variable (4.5). The factors are causally relevant if and only if a policy window arises as a result of these streams through which the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ influenced the IISS (2018-2022). Firstly, I will show (a) whether a policy window opened as a result of a change in the problem stream and/or the political stream. Secondly, I will introduce (b) the WRR as a think tank that couples the three streams during the opening of the policy window. In the case of successful coupling by the WRR, at least one policy solution from the policy stream is proposed during a fundamental political change(s) in the political stream (national mood, general election, government turnover) and/or linked to a policy problem in the problem stream. Thirdly, it will be investigated (c) whether a policy window has led to the policy decision to formulate the IISS (2018-2022). The IISS (2018-2022) is considered to have resulted from a policy window as it shows a clear linkage of a general policy problem from the policy area of foreign security and defence, a policy solution (i.e. NATO-norm) and political acceptability. Specifically, I will investigate whether this policy window has contributed to the adoption of policy recommendations from the advisory report in the IISS (2018-2022).

3.3 Data Collection

In terms of data collection, document analysis will be used. Document analysis is a data collection method that can be used to trace primary and secondary sources that are used as evidence for qualitative research (Thies, 2002, p. 351). For this case study, several types of documents are used.

In this section, I will first explain why document analysis is chosen to collect the data. Secondly, I will explain for each stream what types of documents are used.

The reason for the choice of document analysis as the data collection method of this exploratory case study is twofold. Firstly, the WRR is a relatively small organization and budget constraints could impede members of the WRR taking time for semi-structured interviews. Secondly, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there could arise some practical difficulties in conducting the interviews with members of the WRR. In addition, by using document-analysis, I should be able to collect the data that are necessary to (dis)confirm the causal relevance of the factors that are expected to have led to the influence of the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ on the IISS (2018-2022). However, there are some threats to the use of document analysis as a data collection method. These methodological threats will be elaborated on in section 3.4 of this chapter along with the main limitations of this exploratory case study.

In the tables 2.1-2.3, I have schematically indicated for each section of the analysis what types of data are collected, what timeslots are chosen and what search terms (categories) are used to collect the relevant documents for the analysis. In the problem stream, I distinguish two periods: the initial portrayal of the focusing event (A) and the policy implications in the aftermath of the particular focusing event (B).

Sections	Types of data	Timeslots	Search terms (categories)
4.2.1	Media sources from LexisNexis Database (Nexis Uni).	A: 17/07/2014 - 19/07/2014 B: 20/07/2014 - 05/2017	A: ‘MH17’, B: AND ‘Maatregelen’
4.2.2	Media sources from LexisNexis Database (Nexis Uni).	A: 2014 B: 01/01/2015 – 05/2017	A: ‘Syriëganger’ B: AND ‘Maatregel(en)’ OR ‘Buitenlandse Zaken’
4.2.3	Media sources from LexisNexis Database (Nexis Uni).	A: 15/07/2016 – 21/07/2016 B: 22/07/2016 – 05/2017	A: ‘Coup’ B: AND ‘Maatregelen’

Table 2.1 *Problem Stream (4.2)*

In the analysis of the problem stream (4.2), I will reconstruct a chronology of a combination of focusing events. For this section, media sources are the main sources of evidence. The justification for the choice of media sources as the main sources of analysis for the problem stream is as follows. According to Birkland (1997), the media play a role in the portrayal of the ‘initial reaction to a focusing event’ (p. 30). The portrayal of focusing events by the media has foremost an indirect influence on ‘institutional agenda activity’ (Birkland, 1997, p. 33). As the public primarily rely for their information on media sources, public recognition is greatly dependent on how issues are

portrayed in the media (Birkland, 1997, p. 33). For this reason, the media greatly influence the public opinion and, consequently, it may have an effect on the degree of governmental attention it receives (Kingdon, 2003, pp. 60-61)

Media sources will be used from the following newspapers: *NRC Handelsblad*, *Trouw*, *Het Financieele Dagblad (FD.nl)*, *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau (ANP)*, *Het Parool* and *De Volkskrant*. The academic database of LexisNexis (Nexis Uni) will be used to trace newspaper articles in order to reconstruct the course of focusing events leading to the publication of the advisory report on the 10th of May in 2017. In addition, I will also use parliamentary proceedings from the database of the Dutch Second Chamber or governmental documents from the database of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in case a newspaper article refers to this document. To trace the relevant newspaper articles to analyze the initial portrayal of the focusing event, I will first use the search term that directly refers to the particular focusing event: ‘MH17’ or ‘Syriëganger’ (i.e. foreign fighter returning to the Netherlands) or ‘Coup’. For each individual focusing event, I will also search whether any policy measures were taken in the policy domain of foreign security and defence in the aftermath of the focusing event. The policy implications are considered to be an indicator of the agenda status of the focusing events. After I have constructed the chronology of focusing events, I should be able to show that there was a sense of a general problem in the policy domain under investigation.

After an initial search in the LexisNexis Database (Nexis Uni) for each section, I have constructed the following figure which shows the number of articles (N) based on a search in the LexisNexis Database (Nexis Uni) using the aforementioned inclusionary criteria: the type of sources used (media sources), the kinds of media sources, the time period and the search terms (categories).

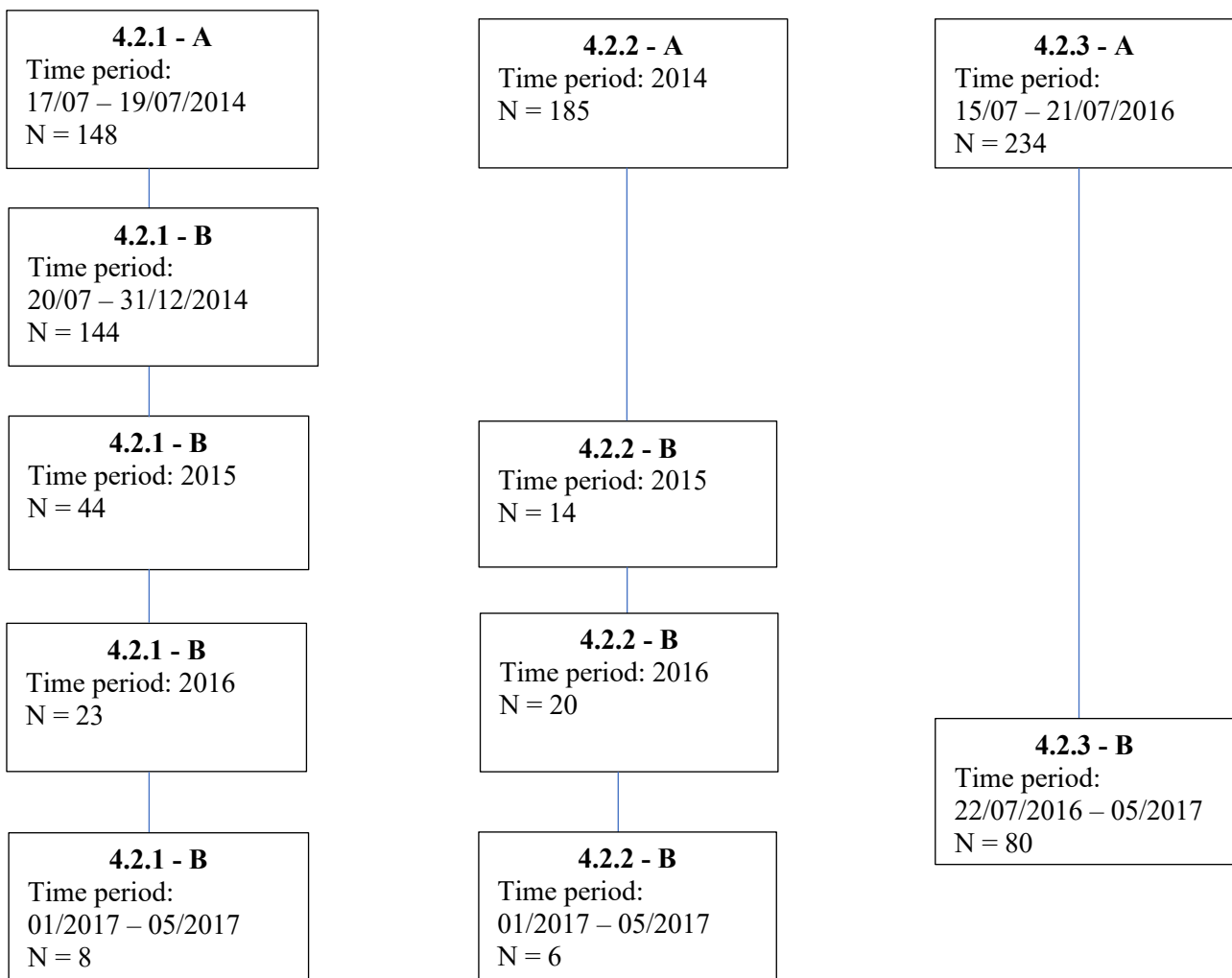


Figure 2. *The number of media articles (N) based on the inclusionary criteria*

By means of purposive sampling, I will select for each section a final sample of documents based on the exclusionary criteria that narrow down the search results (Dudovskiy, n.d.; Gross, 2018, p. 4). At first, I will investigate whether the initial sample is actually conforming the inclusionary criteria as set out in table 2.1 (Gross, 2018, p. 4). Secondly, I will use the following exclusionary criteria that are based on an ‘in-depth review of the documents’ (Gross, 2018, p. 4). The criteria that are used are the relevance, appropriateness and diversity of the content (Gross, 2018, p. 4). Content relevance is based on the question whether the content of the sample of documents is relevant to the case under investigation. Content appropriateness is based on the question whether the content can be used to accurately analyze (A) the initial portrayal of the focusing event and (B) the policy implications in

the aftermath of the focusing event. Content diversity is based on the question whether the content of the documents is sufficiently diverse to provide a complete account containing multiple perspectives of the focusing events and the policy implications in its aftermath (Gross, 2018, p. 4).

Based on the exclusionary criteria, I have constructed the following table containing the number of media articles (N) (excluding supplementary political, governmental and some other media documents) that are actually used in the analysis:

Section 4.2.	Final Sample
4.2.1	N = 12
4.2.2	N = 8
4.2.3	N = 13

Table 2.1.1 *Final Sample (4.2)*

The next table illustrates the inclusionary criteria that are used for the analysis of the policy stream:

Sections	Types of data	Timeslots	Search terms (categories)
4.3.1	- Wales Summit Declaration (2014) - Documents that provide context to this declaration from the official website of NATO: https://www.nato.int/	04/09/2014 – 05/09/2014	‘Wales Summit Declaration’
4.3.2	Policy documents containing a policy reaction of delegated government officials to the Wales Summit Declaration (2014) from the databases of: - the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - the Government of the Netherlands - the Second Chamber	04/09/2014 – 10/05/2017	- ‘Wales Summit Declaration’ - ‘NAVO-top’ or ‘NATO Summit’ - ‘reactie’ or ‘reaction’ - ‘verslag’ or ‘report’ - ‘Minister-President’ - ‘Minister van BuZa’ or ‘Minister of Foreign Affairs’ - ‘Minister van Defensie’ or ‘Minister of Defence’
4.3.3	Advisory reports and other documents from the databases of three Dutch think tanks: - the AIV - Clingendael Institute - the HCSS	06/09/2014 – 10/05/2017	- ‘NATO-norm’ - ‘recommendations’ or ‘aanbevelingen’

Table 2.2 *Policy Stream (4.3)*

In the analysis of the policy stream (4.3), I will analyze the NATO-norm as an available policy alternative. I will investigate the reactions of two types of actors in the policy community under investigation: government officials and think tanks. For each type of actors, several types of documents are used. In the first section, I will primarily use the Wales Summit Declaration (2014) and related documents that could provide context to this declaration (4.3.1). After the preliminary analysis of the Wales Summit Declaration (2014), I will analyze the initial policy response of Dutch government officials to the NATO-norm that were present at the NATO Summit in Wales (4.3.2). To analyze this policy response, I will search for references made to the Wales Summit Declaration (2014) in the databases of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of the Netherlands and the Second Chamber.

In order to find the relevant documents, I will use the search terms 'reactie' (i.e. 'reaction') and 'verslag' (i.e. 'report'). In addition, to narrow my search I will use the 'Wales Summit Declaration' or 'NAVO-top' (i.e. NATO Summit) to find documents that contain a reference to these search terms. As I have identified which government officials were present at the NATO, I will use a unique search term for each different type of actor. Subsequently, I will analyze advisory reports and other relevant documents from the databases of the AIV, Clingendael Institute and the HCSS (4.3.3). To be relevant for the analysis of the policy stream, these documents should minimally contain recommendations (or 'aanbevelingen' for articles in Dutch) that refer to the 'NATO-norm' that is defined in the Wales Summit Declaration in the following way: an international agreement to increase the defence budget to 2% of GDP (NATO, 2014, 14).

On the basis of the inclusionary (and exclusionary) criteria of table 2.2, I have identified the final sample of documents that is used for the analysis of the policy stream and that is specified in the following table:

Sections	Documents
4.3.1	Wales Summit Declaration (2014)
4.3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prime Minister M. Rutte: ‘Speech by Prime Minister Mark Rutte at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Annual Session’ (2014) - The Minister of Foreign Affairs F.C.G.M. Timmermans and the Minister of Defence J.A. Hennis-Plasschaert: <i>Kamerstukken II</i> 2014/2015, 28676, nr. 210.
4.3.3	<p>The Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Instabiliteit rond Europa. Confrontatie met een nieuwe werkelijkheid</i> (2015) - <i>Inzet van snelle reactiemachten</i> (2015) <p>Clingendael Institute:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Clingendael Monitor 2014: Een wankel wereldorde</i> - <i>Clingendael Monitor 2016: Great Powers and Global Stability</i> - Drent, M. & Homan, K. (2014). Eenheid cruciaal voor NAVO-top - Zandee, D. (2016). De Nederlandse krijgsmacht: keuzes of geen keuzes? <p>The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The Wheel of Fortune: Up and Down, Round and Round, Faster and Faster</i> (2016) - <i>Een kompas voor een wereld in beweging: de rol van Buitenlandse Zaken in het borgen van Nederlandse belangen</i> (2017) - <i>Volatility and Friction in the Age of Disintermediation</i> (2017) - <i>HCSS Strategic Monitor</i> (2017)

Table 2.2.1 *Final Sample (4.3)*

The following table illustrates the inclusionary criteria that are used for the analysis of the political stream:

Sections	Types of data	Timeslots	Search terms (categories)
4.4.1	Parliamentary proceedings from the database of the Second Chamber: https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken .	01/01/2014 – 15/03/2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reference(s) to ‘NATO-norm’ - expressing political support - ‘kamerstukken’ or - ‘handelingen’ or - ‘aanhangel handelingen’
4.4.2	Party programs from the political parties that received a seat: VVD, CDA, PVV, SP, D66, GL, 50PLUS, FvD, PvdD, SGP, CU, PvdA, DENK.	06/09/2014 – 15/03/2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reference(s) to ‘NATO-norm’ - expressing political support
4.4.3	Coalition Agreement (2017).	10/10/2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reference(s) to ‘NATO-norm’ - policy decisions

Table 2.3 *Political Stream (4.4)*

In the analysis of the political stream (4.4), I will first analyze the common political opinions or national mood with respect to the NATO-norm among politicians of opposition and coalition parties in the Second Chamber. To analyze the national mood, I will use parliamentary proceedings (i.e. ‘kamerstukken’, ‘handelingen’ or ‘aanhangel handelingen’) in which coalition or opposition parties express political support for the NATO-norm. I will search for these documents in the database of the Second Chamber by using the search term ‘NATO-norm’ (4.4.1). Subsequently, I will analyze party programs of political parties that participated in the general election on the 15th of March in 2017 and received at least one seat in the Second Chamber (4.4.2). To find these party programs, I will use the official websites of each political party. Party programs that made any reference to the NATO-norm are used to analyze the degree of political support for the NATO-norm around the general election on the 15th of March in 2017. In the last section, I will analyze the political changes the general election brought about with regard to the NATO-norm during the government turnover in 2017. To analyze these changes, I will analyze the Coalition Agreement ‘Confidence in the Future’ of the political parties VVD, CDA, D66 and Christian Union (CU) that was communicated to the public on the 10th of October in 2017 (4.4.3). I will search for references made to the NATO-norm. In particular, I will focus on policy decisions that are made to meet this norm.

On the basis of the inclusionary (and exclusionary) criteria of table 2.3, I have identified a number of parliamentary documents (N) for the analysis in section 4.4.1. and the other relevant political documents for sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 in the following table:

Sections	Documents
4.4.1	N = 39
4.4.2	Party programs: - VVD: ‘Verkiezingsprogramma 2017-2021’. - CDA: ‘Keuzes voor een beter Nederland: Verkiezingsprogramma 2017-2021’. - SP: ‘Programma voor een sociaal Nederland’. - GL: ‘Tijd voor verandering: Verkiezingsprogramma’. - FvD: ‘Standpunten: Defensie’. - CU: ‘Hoopvol Realistisch (...) Verkiezingsprogramma 2017-2021’. - SGP: ‘Stem vóór het leven’. - PvdD: ‘Plan B: Verkiezingsprogramma Tweede Kamer 2017’. - PVV: ‘Concept verkiezingsprogramma 2017-2021’.
4.4.3	Coalition Agreement ‘Confidence in the Future’ (2017)

Table 2.3.1 *Final Sample (4.4)*

3.4 Limitations and Threats

The main limitation of this exploratory case study is its relatively low external validity. As this case study analyzes pieces of evidence within one case, it is unlikely that this case can be generalized to a wider population of cases (Toshkov, 2016, p. 304). However, the case fits in a ‘broader class of phenomena’, namely a set of cases in which think tanks in policy advisory systems influence foreign policymaking (Toshkov, 2016, p. 288). Therefore, minimally the case study should be able to contribute to an academic understanding of the influence of think tanks in the Dutch policy advisory system. Another limitation is the lack of explanatory power of the case study. Assuming that a definitive explanation of the case is methodologically difficult, the case study will lack a full explanatory account of the case that is studied (Weidenbaum, 2010, p. 135). However, as this single-case study is exploratory, it could provide a preliminary contribution to explanatory studies on the Dutch policy advisory system.

There are also threats to this exploratory case study. Especially, the use of document analysis poses some threats to the research. Thies (2002) describes investigator bias and selection bias as the main methodological problems of document analysis. Selection bias occurs when primary and secondary sources are selected to support a theory, while neglecting sources or evidence that are inconsistent with this theory (Thies, 2002, p. 355). Another problem is investigator bias which occurs when one relies on sources that favour a specific account of historical events (Thies, 2002, p. 360).

To reduce the danger of selection bias and investigator bias in this case study, triangulation will be used (Thies, 2002, p. 359). By means of triangulation, I will use several types of sources to interpret events within the three streams as I have explained in the previous section. Moreover, I will clarify for each section of the analysis what the institutional context is in which these documents were created. To avoid selection bias, the analysis should contain all available evidence collected on the basis of the operationalization in this chapter, even those data that would disconfirm the expectations as formulated in the theoretical framework. By providing a reliable account of how each stream is causally related to the dependent variable, the reliability of the analysis is increased, and selection bias is avoided.

4. Analysis

In this chapter, I will analyze the main results of the exploratory case study. The goal of this chapter is to uncover the extent to which the hypothesized factors in the theoretical framework are causally related to the influence of the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ on the policy change under investigation: the change of the ISS (2013) to the IISS (2018-2022). Specifically, I will investigate its influence on the policy decision to increase the defence budget to 2% of GDP.

The expectations of the theoretical framework are formulated as follows:

Expectation 1: A combination of focusing events in the problem stream has contributed to the adoption of policy recommendations from the advisory report into the Integrated International Security Strategy (2018-2022).

Expectation 2: The presence of an available policy alternative in the policy stream has contributed to the adoption of policy recommendations from the advisory report into the Integrated International Security Strategy (2018-2022).

Expectation 3: Changes in national mood and government turnover have contributed to the adoption of policy recommendations from the advisory report into the Integrated International Security Strategy (2018-2022)

The structure of this section is as follows. At first, I will provide a chronological overview of the case (4.1). In this section, I will explain how the International Security Strategy (2013) was replaced by the Integrated International Security Strategy (2018-2022). Furthermore, I will describe what influence the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ had on the IISS (2018-2022). In the subsequent sections, I will analyze the three factors (independent variables) that are expected to be responsible for the influence of the advisory report on the policy change under investigation, namely the problem stream (4.2), the policy stream (4.3) and the political stream (4.4). After these three sections, I will show whether and how these factors are causally related to the dependent variable (4.5). At last, I will show to what extent the theoretical expectations as set out in the theoretical framework are satisfied (4.6).

4.1 Case Overview

On the 29th of October in 2012, the VVD and the PvdA agreed upon the Coalition agreement 'Building bridges'. In the context of foreign security and defence policy, three important policy decisions were taken. At first, a more integrated approach to security and crisis management was presented. This 3D approach stands for defence, diplomacy and development and is specifically used in the case of peace missions or international crisis management (Government of the Netherlands, 2012, p. 19). Secondly, the decision was made to create a permanent international security budget of 250 million euros (Government of the Netherlands, 2012, p. 20). To finance this budget, the budget of Development Cooperation is decreased by 250 million euros annually (Rijksoverheid, 2012, p. 72). The third policy decision is a structural cutback in the defence budget of 250 million euros each year (Rijksoverheid, 2012, p. 72).⁵ This decision is made to solve general financial problems (Government of the Netherlands, 2012, p. 20). At the same time, the Coalition Agreement (2012) stresses the importance of the overall capability of the Dutch armed forces to guarantee international security (Government of the Netherlands, 2012, p. 19). Furthermore, it emphasizes meeting the responsibilities towards NATO by maintaining armed forces that are sufficiently capable for military operations (Government of the Netherlands, 2012, p. 21).

On the 21st of June in 2013, the Dutch government presented its International Security Strategy (ISS) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013). As in the Coalition agreement (2012), the ISS (2013) stresses the importance of armed forces for national and international defence and the need for an integrated approach (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013, p. 1). The need for an integrated approach arises from the fact that contemporary security issues show that external security and internal security are intrinsically related (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013, p. 2). To safeguard external as well as internal security, the security strategy emphasizes the importance of international collaboration (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013, p. 2). The ISS (2013) recognizes that the security situation of the Netherlands is dependent on the collective defence by its allies and in turn it recognizes that the Netherlands should be able to safeguard the security of its allies (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013, p. 8). As a result, the ISS (2013) states that Dutch armed forces should be military capable to participate in military interventions that are initiated by NATO (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013, p. 11). Therefore, to promote national and international defence, the 'Netherlands will meet its responsibilities in this area first and foremost by contributing to NATO (...) at a level commensurate with its economic weight' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013, p. 11). In addition, the ISS (2013)

⁵ In the policy agenda of the state budget, this amount was increased to 400 million euros in 2012 (Rijksbegroting, 2012).

stresses that the UN, the EU and NATO are responsible for the formulation of an integrated approach to security because of their coordinative capabilities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013, p. 17).

Four years after the publication of the ISS (2013), the WRR published an advisory report on how Dutch foreign security policy should adapt to the changing security situation (WRR, 2017, pp. 17-18; WRR, 2020, pp. 1-2). The report ‘Security in an Interconnected World. A Strategic Vision for Defence Policy’ was published on the 10th of May in 2017. It was created as a response to various developments in the geopolitical security situation of the Netherlands (WRR, 2020, p. v). These developments are used to illustrate how the security situation of the Netherlands has deteriorated over the past few years. On the basis of the changing security situation, it proposes twelve policy recommendations with regard to Dutch foreign security and defence policy. Therefore, the function of this advisory report is twofold. At first, the report describes the current security situation of the Netherlands in order to define the main policy problem that is related to the security situation of the Netherlands (WRR, 2020, pp. 1-2). Secondly, based on this problem definition, it provides twelve concrete policy recommendations that suggest a more comprehensive and integrated Dutch defence and security policy (WRR, 2020, pp. 153-161). The main conclusions of the advisory report are formulated as follows:

- (1.) *The deteriorated internal and external security situation of the Netherlands asks for an integrated security strategy.*
- (2.) *Constitutional obligations and obligations towards alliances (NATO, EU) should be directive for the Dutch defence policy.*
- (3.) *As there is a decrease of capabilities of the Dutch military and an increased necessity to anticipate in order to reduce security threats, the Dutch government should invest more in defence.⁶*

Each conclusion corresponds to a set of policy recommendations. The second conclusion corresponds most accurately to the policy focus of the ISS (2013). Similar to the advisory report, the ISS (2013) emphasizes the need to meet the military obligations towards NATO to safeguard internal as well as international security (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013, p. 11). However, contrary to the ISS (2013), the advisory report states that to promote the military capability of the Dutch armed forces, the defence budget should increase towards 2% of GDP by 2024 (WRR, 2020, pp. 159-160). Recommendation 9 resonates the agreement that was made during the NATO Wales Summit (2014) to raise defence budgets of NATO member states towards 2% of GDP by 2024. This international agreement (‘NATO-norm’) will be discussed in the policy stream (4.3) and the political stream (4.4).

⁶ WRR, 2020, p. 151.

On the 28th of March in 2018, Rutte III Cabinet published a response to the advisory report (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 33763, nr. 141). In this response, the Minister of Defence A.Th.B. Bijleveld-Schouten explicitly recognizes that the security situation of the Netherlands has deteriorated in the past few years (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 33763, nr. 141, p. 1). Moreover, Bijleveld-Schouten emphasizes that the interwovenness of the security situation of the Netherlands and developments in international and European security justify the formulation of the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ and its policy recommendations (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 33763, nr. 141, p. 1). In addition, she underlines that partly because of events in Ukraine, the Middle East and North-Africa that have affected the internal welfare of the Netherlands, the Cabinet decided to formulate an integrated international security strategy (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 33763, nr. 141, p. 1). Therefore, in line with current developments in the security situation of the Netherlands and the advisory report, the Cabinet agreed to formulate an integrated approach to security.

The Cabinet also agreed with a considerable number of recommendations of the advisory report (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 33763, nr. 141).⁷ In particular, in response to policy recommendation 9 of the advisory report, the Dutch Cabinet agreed that the defence budget should be increased to 2% of GDP in 2024. Furthermore, in order to realize this policy goal, the Dutch Cabinet expects that the defence budget of 1,17% in 2017 increases to 1,26% in 2021 (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 33763, nr. 141, p. 5). While this policy recommendation seems to be adopted, there is also disagreement with regard to policy recommendation 11, namely that the Dutch government should invest more in the air force and the navy (WRR, 2020, pp. 160-161). The Cabinet finds that this neglects the importance of armed forces on the ground (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 33763, nr. 141, p. 6). Instead, the Cabinet decides that it will invest in the versatility of the armed forces. These armed forces would develop a variety of capabilities to anticipate to new security threats. This decision is in line with the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) of NATO (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 33763, nr. 141, p. 6).

After the general election on the 15th of March in 2017, a new Coalition agreement was agreed upon by the VVD, the D66, the CDA and the CU on the 10th of October in 2017. Contrary to announced cutbacks in the previous Coalition agreement (2012), the Coalition Agreement (2017) announces to increase the defence spending substantially (Government of the Netherlands, 2017, p. 53). This policy decision is made to increase the basic readiness and operational readiness of the Dutch military (Government of the Netherlands, 2017, p. 53). While this policy decision contradicts

⁷ The influence of the advisory report on Dutch foreign policy did not stay unnoticed as the editors of the English translation of the advisory report write: ‘Many of the recommendations were fully agreed upon, whilst other recommendations were welcomed (...) The Cabinet did follow up on this line of recommendations by publishing the 2018 Defence Note (Defensienota) and Integrated Foreign and Security Strategy (...) and composing them in a coherent way’ (WRR, 2020, pp. v-vi).

the decision from the Coalition agreement (2012) that announces budget cuts in the defence budget, it is in line with the strategic interest of the ISS (2013) to maintain the military capability to defend national territory and the territory of NATO member states (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013, p. 8). Another announced decision in the Coalition Agreement (2017) is the formulation of a new security strategy that replaces the ISS (2013). This new security strategy is explicitly formulated as an integrated approach to tackle both foreign as well as national threats (Government of the Netherlands, 2017, p. 53). In addition, the Coalition Agreement (2017) announces the formulation of the Defence White Paper that should draw the lines by which the Netherlands should meet the capability planning objectives of NATO more accurately (Government of the Netherlands, 2017, p. 53). Therefore, the Coalition Agreement (2017) shows that the Dutch foreign security and defence policy will continue to focus on international cooperation in terms of security and defence.

As announced in the Coalition agreement (2017), the Minister of Foreign Affairs S.A. Blok presented the Integrated International Security Strategy 2018-2022 on the 20th of March in 2018. In his letter to the chairman of the Second Chamber, Blok regards the interwovenness of national and international security threats and the deterioration of the security situation of the Netherlands as the main reasons for the formulation of an integrated and international security approach (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018, 33694, nr. 12, p. 1*). Furthermore, Blok underlines that the integrated security approach is in line with policy developments of NATO (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018, 33694, nr. 12, p. 2*). Therefore, in the policy document 'Working Worldwide for the Security of the Netherlands' that outlines the IISS (2018-2022), investing in the cooperation with NATO is one of the main policy goals (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, pp. 30-32). Overall, the policy goals of the IISS (2018-2022) will rest on three pillars, namely prevention, defence and strengthening (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018, 33694, nr. 12; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, p. 6*).

As already stated by Blok, the IISS (2018-2022) is formulated in line with the policy problem as recognized in the advisory report 'Security in an Interconnected World', namely that 'The security environment in which the Netherlands finds itself has deteriorated' (WRR, 2020, p. 151). According to the IISS (2018-2022), this policy problem arose due to various security developments including the return of foreign fighters and the crash of the airplane with flight number MH17 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, p. 9). These events are also recognized to be constitutive for the policy problem as defined in the advisory report of the WRR (WRR, 2020, p. 2). Another similarity between the advisory report and the IISS (2018-2022) is policy goal 5 which states that the Dutch government should invest in the NATO alliance in line with the agreements made during the NATO Wales Summit (2014) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, p. 30). One of these agreements is the agreement to increase the defence budget towards 2% of GDP by 2024 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, p.

31). In the advisory report, recommendation 9 also advises the government to meet the agreements made as determined by the guidelines as set by NATO (WRR, 2020, pp. 159-160). This suggests that the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ had an influence on the formulation of the policy goals of the IISS (2018-2022).

Similar to the ISS (2013), the IISS (2018-2022) explicitly outlines the steps that are necessary to foster the foreign relations with NATO and to meet the NATO capability objectives (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, pp. 30-31). While the ISS (2013) also recognizes the importance of international cooperation with and collective defence by NATO member states, it fails to address which financial steps are necessary to maintain a sufficient basic and operational readiness of the military as well as how to meet the NATO capability objectives (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013, p. 11). One of the reasons is that the Coalition agreement (2017) announces to increase defence expenditure, while the Coalition agreement (2012) announces government cutbacks in the defence budget (Government of the Netherlands, 2017, p. 53). These additional financial resources allow the Dutch governments to meet the NATO capability objectives in a shorter period (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, p. 31). One of these capability objectives is to increase the defence budget towards 2% of GDP. However, the IISS (2018-2022) agrees that it is still unclear whether this agreement will be reached on time as NATO finds these investments to be insufficient. Additional investments will depend on the agreed budgets, the security situation and government priorities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, p. 31).

4.2 Problem Stream

In the analysis of the problem stream, I will lay out a chronology of a combination of focusing events, namely the crash of airplane MH17 (4.2.1), the return of foreign fighters to the Netherlands (4.2.2) and the failed coup d’état in Turkey (4.2.3). The combination of these focusing events is expected to create a sense of a general policy problem in the policy area of foreign security and defence. I will analyze the initial portrayal of these focusing events and the policy implications in the aftermath of these focusing events. At last, I will show whether the combination of focusing events led to the formulation of a general policy problem in the policy area of foreign security and defence (4.2.4).

4.2.1 17 July 2014: the crash of airplane MH17

In March 2014, a conflict on Ukrainian soil in the Crimea area arose after pro-Russian separatists gained support from the Russian president Vladimir Putin and occupied several areas while attempting to organize a referendum to decide whether the Crimea area should be separated from Ukraine and join Russian territory (‘‘Russische militairen versterken’’, 2014). The conflict

accelerated at the end of April after Ukrainian armed forces attacked pro-Russian separatist groups in the city Sloviansk (Verfuss, 2014a).

On the 17th of July in 2014, a Boeing 777 of Malaysia Airlines with flight number MH17 crashed. On this day, it is alleged to be shot down by pro-Russian separatists (Verfuss, 2014b). On the 21st of July in 2014 the UN Security Council recognized the downing of the airplane with flight number MH17 (Security Council, 2014). Furthermore, the Dutch Safety Board (OVV) began its investigation of the crash on the 18th of July in 2014 and published its report on the 13th of October in 2015. In this report, the OVV concluded that the airplane was shot down by a missile from a Buk missile system (OVV, 2015, p. 269). It has been reported that all 298 passengers died of whom 196 had the Dutch nationality (Straathof et al., 2014). The foreign threat of the Ukrainian crisis became evident because of this event as it showed that the crisis directly affected the security of citizens of the Dutch community. As Dutch citizens were directly affected, the Ukrainian crisis became a foreign threat to the national security of the Netherlands.

On the day of the crash, there was considerable speculation among different Dutch media about the cause of the crash. It was presumed to be shot down by a Buk missile that was fired by pro-Russian separatists. However, at this stage, it was not yet clear how many Dutch citizens were exactly on board (Verfuss, 2014b). On Schiphol, where the airplane left at 12.14 according to an official statement, relatives gathered at a specially allocated location. The crash had a devastating impact on relatives (Einder et al., 2014). However, directly after the crash, the information exchange between authorities and relatives was portrayed by various media as seriously flawed. For instance, there was a lack of information about the Dutch passengers that were on board (Van Zwol, 2014). Still waiting on the official passenger list, various media speculated about the number of Dutch casualties by gathering passenger information from tour operators (Einder, 2014). This accelerated the idea that Dutch authorities were unprepared for an airplane crash on this scale.

As the number of known Dutch casualties increased, the severity of the situation became increasingly clear. While the extent and severity of the situation was portrayed in the media by the number of Dutch casualties and the perceived tragedy among relatives gathering at Schiphol, the discussion slowly shifted to the question who should be held accountable. For instance, fingers were pointed in the direction of Russia and it was questioned whether it was safe for Malaysian Airlines to fly above Ukrainian territory. In April that year the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) did advise pilots to take on another route to their destination (Schreuder, 2014; Hack & Katstra, 2014). The fact that the crash could have been prevented also shifted the question who should be held accountable to the authorities. However, the public debate was mainly focused on the role of pro-Russian separatists in the Crimea area. As more and more fingers pointed to the direction of the Buk

missile system of pro-Russian separatists that accidentally fired at a civilian airplane, the event was increasingly portrayed as a terrorist attack (Hack, 2014). For instance, the political scientist Jonathan Holslag compared the crash with 9/11 (Holslag, 2014).

Most of Dutch politicians and government officials reacted to the MH17 airplane crash. Prime Minister M. Rutte spoke of a national disaster some days after the crash in a press conference. However, he explicitly underlined that an independent investigation by the Dutch Safety Board is crucial. Therefore, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs F.C.G.M. Timmermans and a team of forensic experts and members of the Dutch Safety Board travelled to the crash site to assure that the investigation is performed independently (Kranenburg, 2014). The need for an independent investigation is also demanded in resolution 2166 of the UN Security Council that is formulated after consultations with the Minister of Foreign Affairs in New York on the 21st of July in 2014 (Security Council, 2014; Van Gelder, 2014). In the meantime, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of European member states suggested introducing economic sanctions against Russia (“Harde sancties tegen Rusland”, 2014).

In May in 2015, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs A.G. Koenders wrote in a letter to the Second Chamber that the Cabinet has decided to actively maintain a policy of political pressure towards as well as dialogue with Russia (*Kamerstukken II 2014/2015*, 34000-V, nr. 69, pp. 9-11). Political pressure is performed through economic sanctions suggested by the European Ministers of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, the importance of NATO is also underlined. For instance, Koenders recognizes in his letter that NATO-forces should be more adaptable to changing circumstances. Especially, the High Readiness Joint Taskforce (VJTF) is praised to increase the flexibility and capacities of NATO-forces in order to increase the military defence of Europe (*Kamerstukken II 2014/2015*, 34000-V, nr. 69, pp. 10-11). In addition, to stimulate dialogue with Russia, Koenders writes that the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) will play a coordinative role (*Kamerstukken II 2014/2015*, 34000-V, nr. 69, pp. 9-11).

In 2016, after the evaluation of governmental action directly after the crash of airplane MH17, the Dutch cabinet decided that the Nationaal Kernteam Crisiscommunicatie (NKC) shall play a considerable role in the provision of information to the relatives of victims during future crises (*Kamerstukken II 2015/2016*, 33997, nr. 65, p. 10). This policy measure was formulated as a response to the fact that relatives expressed their dissatisfaction with the information exchange directly after the crash. Especially, the relatives were dissatisfied as it took a long time before the official passenger list was published. Partly due to this complaint, it was announced that a national crisis plan concerning airplanes crashes will be formulated that will improve the exchange of information about the

casualties between authorities and relatives directly after an airplane crash (*Kamerstukken II* 2015/2016, 33997, nr. 65, p. 8).

In 2017, the subject of the debate concerning MH17 shifted towards cyberattacks and the spread of fake news by Russian trolls. The debate shifted as it was discovered that Russian hackers made various attempts to hack the computer systems of the OVV during its investigation into the crash of airplane MH17 (“*Waarom Russische inmenging*”, 2017). Therefore, the Minister of Interior and Kingdom Relations K.H. Ollongren and the Minister of Justice and Security F.B.J. Grapperhaus announced to discuss with media- and technology companies how political interference from foreign powers may be prevented in the future (*Kamerstukken II* 2017/2018, 26643, nr. 497, p. 2). In this year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also formulated its International Cyber Strategy (2017) that lays out an integrated approach to cybersecurity (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017).

4.2.2 18 May 2014: foreign fighters returning to the Netherlands

ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) is a terrorist movement. In January 2014, it was reported that this movement had captured the cities Ramadi and Falluja in the western part of Iraq (“*Al Qaida en stammen*”, 2014). The main objective of ISIS from this date onwards was to capture large parts of Syria and Western-Iraq in order to establish an Islamic caliphate. Over time, ISIS captured increasingly more territory. These captured areas were later partly recovered by national governments and allied military groups with the help of Western powers (Vreeken, 2014).

In response to the emerging threat from ISIS, the return of Dutch foreign fighters to the Netherlands became the topic of a number of discussions in the Dutch media. For instance, on the 14th of February, *Het Parool* reported that the Ministry of Justice and Security confirmed the identity of a foreign fighter named Khalid K. who poses on a photo on Twitter in the presence of a decapitated head (Smit, 2014). This image in combination with the fact that around 150 Dutch citizens participated in the Syrian civilian war also led to parliamentary questions in the Second Chamber (Smit, 2014). On the 17th of March, *De Volkskrant* reported that a new image arose on the internet portraying Khalid K. accompanied by five decapitated heads (Groen, 2014a). After a terrorist attack on a Jewish museum in Brussels, *NRC Handelsblad* reported that the return of foreign fighters from Syria becomes an increasing threat to the Dutch society (Blokker & Kouwenhoven, 2014). The National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) also reported that the increasing number of sympathizers of ISIS is alarming (Blokker & Kouwenhoven, 2014). Furthermore, the former Minister of Interior and Kingdom Relations R.H.A. Plasterk acknowledges in an annual report of the General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) that the war against ISIS increasingly becomes a threat to the national security of the Netherlands (AIVD, 2015, p. 3). Eventually, on the

22nd of July 2014, the first foreign fighter returning from ISIS was on trial in the Netherlands (Kuypers, 2014).

While one cannot attach these events to a specific geographical area, these events were considered to be potentially harmful in a relatively small period for the community of interest, namely the Netherlands and its citizens. This is evident from the fact that the NCTV already changed the threat level to substantial in 2013. Furthermore, the NCTV decided to invest more time in monitoring Dutch citizens returning from the caliphate (Groen, 2014b). Furthermore, as a terrorist attack became more likely, the Integral Approach Jihadism action programme was formulated that lay outs policy actions in order to effectively tackle Jihadistic threats (Ministry of Justice and Security, 2014). Furthermore, under the influence of these new security threats, the Cabinet decided to provide the AIVD with an additional budget of 25 million euros each year (AIVD, 2015, p. 3).

In 2015, the threat level in Belgium was raised after an alleged terrorist threat of a group jihadists (Van der Burg, 2015). After this event, the Minister of Foreign Affairs A.G. Koenders acknowledged that the Netherlands as a neighbouring country is also faced with the threat of terrorism (Van der Burg, 2015). As a response to this emerging threat, Koenders announced in March in 2015 to freeze the bank accounts of four foreign fighters after they returned to the Netherlands. This policy measure was used to actively minimize the chance of a terrorist attack by foreign fighters that return to the Netherlands as it was expected that preventing them from using their financial resources disables jihadist fighters to finance their plans (“Koenders bevriest rekeningen”, 2015).

On the 22nd of March in 2016, there was a terrorist attack on Brussels airport with many casualties. Despite this event, Prime Minister Mark Rutte assured that the threat level of terrorism in the Netherlands will be maintained as substantial (“Premier Rutte: ‘Opnieuw een laffe aanslag’”, 2016). After the attack, the media reported that, presumably, one of the terrorists involved in the Brussels attack, Ibrahim el Bakraoui, was a foreign fighter who returned from Turkey to the Netherlands. He could travel from Turkey to the Netherlands without being arrested or being monitored by government agencies (“Rumoer na uitzetting”, 2016). As a policy response, a list of 76 persons, including foreign fighters that returned to the Netherlands, that formed a threat to national security was published to actively counter the terrorist threat. This list contains personal information about the persons listed in order to simplify financial sanctions. The decision who is included on this list was made by means of the information collected by the AIVD, the NCTV and the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIA) (Kouwenhoven & Versteegh, 2016).⁸ After 2016, events of jihadist foreign fighters returning to the Netherlands remained to be extensively covered in the media.

⁸ General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD). National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV).

4.2.3 15 July 2016: the failed coup d'état in Turkey

In 2003, the political leader of the Turkish party AKP Recep Tayyip Erdoğan took office in Turkey as the Prime Minister. In 2007, the military already attempted to overthrow Erdoğan because of his promotion of the Islamic agenda (Shaw & Şık, 2016). Since this 'pre-coup', his regime was actively engaged in initiating political measures against military generals by dismissing and arresting a substantial number of generals. These measures were taken to prevent political interference of the military. Furthermore, Erdoğan actively tried to infiltrate Islamic values into politics. In 2014, Erdoğan took office as the president of Turkey ("Buren rammelen uit protest", 2016). Despite his efforts to restore stability in Turkey, there was increasingly political instability in the country. After the eruption of the civil war in Syria, the situation in Turkey was characterized by conflicts with the Kurdish movement PKK and a series of terrorist attacks by jihadists ("Turkse leger poogt staatsgreep", 2016).

On the 15th of July in 2016, a group of the Turkish military that was allegedly supported by the Gülen movement (FETO) attempted a coup on the Turkish government in order to restore democracy and human rights in Turkey ("Turkse leger poogt staatsgreep", 2016). Several military vehicles and soldiers occupied parts of the city of Ankara in the night of 15 July. As Erdoğan called the Turkish people to revolt against these soldiers and generals, Erdoğan played the winning hand. After several conflicts between the police and the military in Ankara, an F-16 Fighting Falcon shot down a helicopter with the main initiators of the coup. Around 3.00 A.M., the coup officially failed ("Buren rammelen uit protest", 2016).

In the Dutch media, the coup was portrayed as an opportunity for Erdoğan to gain more political support and to amend the Turkish constitutional law in order to strengthen his political power (Gersdorf, 2016b). This thought led conspiracy theorists to think that the coup was initiated as a confirmation and strengthening of his political power (De Koning, 2016). Spiritual leader Fethullah Gülen and political opponent of Erdoğan's regime confirmed this suspicion. In addition, after the coup, Erdoğan discussed whether it is possible to implement laws that would reintroduce the death penalty (Hendriksen, 2016c). In an article that was published on *FD.NL*, researcher Peter Wijninga who works at the HCSS speculated that Erdoğan will use this coup to clear the military from political opponents and dissenters (Gersdorf, 2016a). Erdoğan indeed arrested many of the military commandants and other military personnel closely after the coup (Hendriksen, 2016b). Furthermore, opposition parties agreed to work more closely with the political party of Erdoğan which could suggest that the coup was used to increase the political support for his regime (Hendriksen, 2016a).

While the coup was not a direct threat to the national security of the Netherlands, it indirectly influenced the security situation in the Netherlands. This is worth considering as around 420.000

Dutch citizens with a Turkish background are living in the Netherlands. It forms the largest group in the Netherlands with a non-western background (CBS, 2020). The coup became a direct threat when Erdoğan held the spiritual leader Fethullah Gülen accountable for the coup. As a result, cultural institutions in the Netherlands that were supposedly affiliated with Gülen were partly destroyed and a list of entrepreneurs who had been openly critical of Erdoğan's regime was made public ("Buren rammelen uit protest", 2016; "Arrestatiegolf Turkije breidt zich uit", 2016). As a result, the mayor of Rotterdam Ahmed Aboutaleb organized a meeting with several Turkish associations. Aboutaleb accused some of these organizations sympathizing with Erdoğan's regime that they did not sufficiently underlined democratic values ("Irritaties lopen op", 2016).

After the coup, a sequence of arrests followed. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW) expressed their concern over the situation in Turkey ("Kort nieuws over de coup", 2016). These organizations underlined that Turkey is bound to constitutional rules. Furthermore, the Dutch Association for the Judiciary (NVvR) condemned in a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs A.G. Koenders the arrest of 2.750 Turkish magistrates ("Kort nieuws over de coup", 2016). Koenders, in turn, insisted that Erdoğan followed the constitutional laws of Turkey ("Erdogan kondigt noodtoestand af", 2016). As Erdoğan's actions after the coup made the membership of Turkey in the European Union less likely, Turkey threatened to break the deal between the EU and Turkey concerning the sheltering of refugees by opening the Turkish borders (Vleugel, 2016). As a consequence, the coup and the political measures taken by Erdoğan against the presumed perpetrators worsened the diplomatic relations between the EU and Turkey (Vleugel, 2016).

4.2.4 The Formulation of a General Problem in Foreign Security and Defence Policy

It has been shown that a combination of focusing events was portrayed in the media as policy issues that required governmental attention. The first focusing event that was analyzed is the crash of the airplane with flight number MH17 (4.2.1). Prime Minister M. Rutte conceived the MH17 airplane crash as a national disaster (Kranenburg, 2014). While M. Rutte underlined in his press conference that an independent investigation into the crash is crucial, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of European member states quickly demanded economic sanctions against Russia (Kranenburg, 2014; "Harde sancties tegen Rusland", 2014). After the crash, there was a tendency to hold pro-Russian separatists responsible for the downing of the airplane with flight number MH17 (Verfuss, 2014b). The involvement of pro-Russian separatists was later confirmed by the OVV (OVV, p. 269). As a reaction to this event, the Minister of Foreign Affairs A.G. Koenders had formulated a policy of political pressure towards and dialogue with Russia (*Kamerstukken II 2014/2015, 34000-V, nr. 69, pp. 9-11*).

The extent and urgency of the focusing event were underlined in the media by means of the number of casualties: 298 passengers of whom 196 with the Dutch nationality died because of this crash (Straathof et al., 2014). In the media, the search for and use of the number of casualties as an indicator of the extent of the event indicates how the focusing event was defined in the media as a proper candidate for a policy problem that should be addressed by government officials. Furthermore, the media made use of the failure of information exchange directly after the crash in conjunction with the sentiment surrounding the crash. This is evident from the portrayed situation on Schiphol where relatives were desperately looking for an answer whether their loved ones were on board of flight MH17 (Van Zwol, 2014). The debate slowly shifted to cybersecurity issues among government officials as well as in the media when it was discovered that Russian hackers were actively trying to access the computer systems of the OVV (“*Waarom Russische inmenging*”, 2017).

In the case of the return of foreign fighters to the Netherlands, this topic remained to be extensively covered in the media throughout the year 2014 (4.2.2). Several focusing events such as the terrorist attack on a Jewish museum in Brussels increased the perceived chance of a terrorist attack in the Netherlands (Blokker & Kouwenhoven, 2014). For this reason, the NCTV had already raised the threat level of a terrorist attack in the Netherlands to substantial, while, at the same time, used extensive monitoring to follow the steps of returning foreign fighters more closely (NCTV, 2013, p. 2; Groen, 2014b). The sequence of focusing events that was extensively covered in the media also came increasingly under the attention of policy makers. This is evident from the formulation of the Integral Approach Jihadism action programme which lays out policy actions in order to effectively tackle terrorist threats (Ministry of Justice and Security, 2014). Another policy measure is the increase in the budget of the AIVD with 25 million euros each year (AIVD, 2015, p. 3). In 2015, the chance of a terrorist attack was minimized by freezing the financial accounts of returned foreign fighters (“*Koenders bevriest rekeningen*”, 2015). In addition, after the terrorist attack on Brussels airport on the 22nd of March in 2016, a list was published with the names of foreign fighters to simplify the process of financial sanctions (“*Premier Rutte: ‘Opnieuw een laffe aanslag*’”, 2016; Kouwenhoven & Versteegh, 2016)

The third focusing event, the failed coup d'état in Turkey, did not directly affect the national security of the Netherlands. The coup was portrayed in the media as a political opportunity to strengthen the political power of Erdoğan and to diminish political opponents (Gersdorf, 2016a; 2016b). Hence, the debate surrounding the coup was mainly focused on the violation of the human rights of Turkish citizens and the undemocratic regime of Erdoğan (“*Kort nieuws over de coup*”, 2016). For this reason, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Bert Koenders condemned that Erdoğan did not act according to the constitutional laws of Turkey (“*Erdogan kondigt noodtoestand af*”, 2016).

The aftermath of this event did have concrete consequences for Dutch citizens as cultural centres of entrepreneurs that criticized Erdoğan's regime were physically affected ("Buren rammelen uit protest", 2016; "Arrestatiegolf Turkije breidt zich uit", 2016). The mayor of Rotterdam Ahmed Aboutaleb condemned these clashes between sympathizers of Erdoğan's regime and sympathizers of Gülen ("Irritaties lopen op", 2016).

Jointly, the focusing events have created a sense of a general problem in the domain of foreign security and defence policy. There is documental evidence that the combination of focusing events has created a sense of a general policy problem among government officials and policy makers. In 2015, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a policy letter 'Turbulent Times in Unstable Surroundings' on the renewed security situation of the Netherlands (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015). In this letter, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs underlines that the actions of Russia in Ukraine and the conflict in the Middle East, especially the downing of flight MH17, have created an 'arch of instability around Europe' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015, p. 1).⁹ Furthermore, it acknowledges that the internal and external security of the Netherlands are intrinsically connected (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015, p. 2). It also recognizes that the ISS (2013) already formulates an integrated approach that focuses on development, defence and diplomacy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015, p. 2). However, as the portrayal of the three focusing events in the problem stream illustrate: the Netherlands is 'faced with new security threats that demand new answers' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015, p. 2). Due to these new security threats, policy makers and government officials working in the field of Dutch foreign security and defence policy began to focus extensively on the analysis of the instability in regions in and around Europe (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013, p. 13; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015, p. 14).

4.3 Policy Stream

In the analysis of the policy stream, I will analyze the presence of a policy solution that is recognized as an available policy alternative among different types of actors in the policy community of foreign security and defence. I will focus on the NATO-norm as an international agreement that was agreed upon during the NATO Summit in Wales in 2014 (4.3.1). After providing the institutional context of this agreement, I will analyze two types of actors. First, I will focus on the policy reactions to this norm of government officials that were delegated to the NATO Summit (4.3.2). The government officials that were part of this delegation are the former Minister of Defence J.A. Hennis-Plasschaert, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs F.C.G.M. Timmermans and Prime Minister M. Rutte.

⁹ The Coalition Agreement (2017) expresses the security situation around Europe in a similar way: 'the arc of instability on Europe's periphery' (Government of the Netherlands, 2017, p. 52).

Secondly, I will investigate the reactions of the AIV, Clingendael Institute and the HCSS to the NATO-norm (4.3.3). Subsequently, I will show whether the NATO-norm was considered as an available policy alternative in the policy community under investigation (4.3.4).

4.3.1 The Wales Summit Declaration (2014)

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is an international organization of 30 member states in Europe as well as in North America. As a military and political alliance, the participating member states contribute to this cooperation for security and defence (NATO, n.d.). On the 5th of September 2014, the Wales Summit Declaration was issued at the NATO Summit in Wales. Prime Minister M. Rutte, the Minister of Foreign Affairs F.C.G.M. Timmermans and the Minister of Defence J.A. Hennis-Plasschaert were present at the NATO Summit (Europa Nu, n.d.). As a result of the annexation of the Crimea area by Russia and the instability that emerged in North Africa and the Middle East, the Wales Summit Declaration establishes firm agreements with regard to military capability and responsiveness of member states (NATO, 2014, 1). In addition, the increasing instability in and around Europe puts Article 5 of The North Atlantic Treaty (1949) under pressure. According to Article 5, an attack against one ally implicates all allies (NATO, 2014, 1; NATO, 1949, 5). Therefore, the changing security situation calls for new agreements with regard to the security and defence policies of member states in order for allies to fulfill the tasks of collective defence, cooperative security and crisis management (NATO, 2014, 3).

The security developments that arose during the time that the Wales Summit Declaration was issued required the military preparedness of all member states. For this reason, at the Wales Summit, the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) was issued as a response to these new security developments (NATO, 2014, 5). One of the policy measures to quickly adopt to the new security challenges is the presence of military forces in foreign countries and the installment of the NATO Response Force (NRF) including the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) (NATO, 2014, 7-8). These policy measures were expected to ensure higher responsiveness and a quick adaption of military forces in the member states to future security challenges in order to ensure collective defence and crisis management in the Euro-Atlantic region (NATO, 2014, 5). However, around this time there was a development of declining defence budgets in most member states. The Netherlands also introduced governmental cutbacks as set out in the Coalition agreement (2012) (NATO, 2014, 14). Therefore, the Wales Summit Declaration (2014) sets out the agreements that demand that member states will put an end to the decrease of defence expenditures, defence expenditures will increase if GDP also increases and that the defence budgets of member states increase towards 2% of GDP within ten years (NATO, 2014, 14). This international agreement has become known as the 'NATO-norm'.

4.3.2 The Dutch Response

On the 24th of September in 2014 at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Annual Session, Prime Minister M. Rutte acknowledged that the international agreements that were approved during the NATO Wales Summit require an increased financial contribution of member states. In view of the importance of NATO to tackle current and future security challenges, M. Rutte approves in his speech that member states ‘decided in Wales to boost (...) defence spending over the next ten years’ (Government of the Netherlands, 2014).

In response to the Wales Summit Declaration (2014), the Minister of Foreign Affairs F.C.G.M. Timmermans and the Minister of Defence J.A. Hennis-Plasschaert report that the Netherlands will fulfill the agreement to pause the decline of their defence budget and increase their defence expenditures with a structural raise of 100 million euros in defence (*Kamerstukken II 2014/2015*, 28676, nr. 210, p. 4). This decision is made as NATO remains to be an important cornerstone of the security of the Euro-Atlantic region and the Netherlands (*Kamerstukken II 2014/2015*, 28676, nr. 210, p. 4). However, the Dutch government will not only focus on increasing their financial contribution, but also focus on how defence expenditure are spent on defence. Therefore, it will focus on the way defence expenditure will be effectively used for defence as NATO should not only focus on collective defence, but also on other core tasks, namely crisis management and cooperative security (*Kamerstukken II 2014/2015*, 28676, nr. 210, p. 4). As a result, the Minister of Defence has signed two cooperative agreements with its allies. These agreements are the Framework Nation Concept (FNC) and the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) that would increase cooperative development in terms of military capacities and deployability (*Kamerstukken II 2014/2015*, 28676, nr. 210, p. 4).

In response to the decisions made in the Wales Summit Declaration (2014), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2015) also agrees that the burden of the NATO alliance should be better shared among member states (p. 28). As there was substantial deviation among the defence budgets of European member states and the United States, the NATO-norm was agreed upon to assure ‘a more balanced sharing of costs and responsibilities’ (NATO, 2014, 14). However, in the policy letter on international security ‘Turbulent Times in Unstable Surroundings’, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not explicitly state that defence expenditure should increase to 2% of GDP. Instead, it states that: ‘The Netherlands has emphasised the importance of looking not only at expenditure but also at making defence efforts more effective’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015, p. 28). Therefore, to make defence efforts more effective, it rather underlines the importance of The Readiness Action Plan (RAP) that was also agreed during the Wales Summit in 2014.

In their response, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also writes that the Dutch government has decided to contribute to the development of an educational programme for the Supreme Allied

Commander Europe (SACEUR) in order to contribute to the interim Very High Readiness Joint Task (VJTF) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015, p. 20). The decision to contribute to these new armed forces is a decision that was also recognized by the Minister of Foreign Affairs A.G. Koenders in his letter to the Second Chamber during the Ukrainian crisis in which he writes that NATO-forces should be more adaptable to changing circumstances. The Very High Readiness Joint Taskforce (VJTF) is an example of such more versatile armed forces (*Kamerstukken II* 2014/2015, 34000-V, nr. 69, pp. 9-11). In 2018, the Minister of Defence A.Th.B. Bijleveld-Schouten further acknowledged the importance of military forces that are adaptable to the changing security situation (*Kamerstukken II* 2017/2018, 33763, nr. 141, p. 6).

4.3.3 Think Tanks in the Netherlands

Clingendael Institute published the Strategic Monitor *Een wankelende wereldorde* (2014) on the 18th of June in 2014. In the context of the Netherlands, the first policy recommendation with regard to the foreign relations with NATO is an anticipatory security policy in which the Netherlands requires to put more effort in its contribution to and relations with NATO. Specifically, this means investing in the transatlantic relationship with the United States (Clingendael, 2014, p. 248). Clingendael Institute also underlines that the Russian infiltration into Ukrainian territory shows that collective defence of NATO member states should be a priority in the years to come (Clingendael, 2014, p. 41). As the Netherlands is a relatively small country, international cooperation with NATO is crucial to maintain European as well as national security (Clingendael, 2014, p. 16). However, in another article, it is underlined that this does not only mean that member states should increase their defence budget to 2% of their GDP. The effectiveness of military deployment is also important (Drent & Homan, 2014)

In May 2015, the AIV published the advisory report *Instabiliteit rond Europa: confrontatie met een nieuwe werkelijkheid*. This report discusses the developments in the security situation of the Netherlands. It argues that under the influence of these developments, transatlantic cooperation becomes more meaningful as the need for collective defence becomes increasingly important (AIV, 2015a, p. 5). The report concludes with a number of policy recommendations, including policy recommendation 9 that advises the Dutch government to increase the defence budget to 1,6% of GDP as this is the average of European member states. This recommendation should be met within a period of ten years (AIV, 2015a, p. 47). This recommendation closely corresponds to the agreement made in the Wales Summit Declaration (2014) which demands that allies should invest 2% of GDP in their defence budgets (NATO, 2014, 14).

On the 2nd of October in 2015, the AIV published the advisory report *Inzet van snelle reactiemachten* which is about the effective deployment of armed forces by NATO. In this report, it

is investigated whether changes in international and national procedures are necessary to simplify decision-making processes with regard to the deployment of EU Battlegroups, NATO Response Force (NRF) and the Very High Readiness Force (VJTF) of NATO (AIV, 2015b, p. 1). The AIV recommends in the 10th policy recommendation of this advisory report that the Dutch Parliament should discuss and assess the extent of the military contribution of the Netherlands to EU Battlegroups, NRF and VJTF each year. In particular, the report states that these assessments require the involvement of the Committee of the Ministry of Defence as well as the Committee of Foreign Affairs (AIV, 2015b, p. 45).

In 2016, the advisory report *The Wheel of Fortune: Up and Down, Round and Round, Faster and Faster* of the Hague Centre for Strategic Studies indicates that the share of GDP in defence is far from the agreed two percent (HCSS, 2016, p. 23). The Clingendael Monitor *Great Powers and Global Stability* (2016) also underlines that a substantial number of European member states does not meet the NATO-norm (Clingendael, 2016, p. 14). As the Netherlands does not meet this norm, Clingendael Institute remains critical towards its current defence budget and questions the current capabilities of the Dutch defence forces to contribute to NATO in times of quick deployment (Zandee, 2016). In this article by Zandee (2016), Clingendael Institute also refers to a Capability Review from NATO concerning the armed forces of the Netherlands. This review indicates that the quantity of Dutch armed forces has decreased significantly and that this makes the Netherlands 'unable to fight effectively a high-intensity battle with an opponent using mechanised forces' (NATO, 2016, p. 5).

In 2017, the HCSS published the advisory report *Volatility and Friction in the Age of Disintermediation*. This report recommends that the Dutch government should support coordination mechanisms between NATO and the EU. This policy recommendation is expected to improve defence and security policies (HCSS, 2017b, p. 204). It is also argued that by contributing to NATO national interests are better protected. To improve the Dutch military contribution to the high readiness forces that were mentioned earlier, the Dutch government is recommended to send Dutch forces to frontline states and align this approach to a sophisticated military training program (Bekkers & Sweijjs, 2017, p. 3). The HCSS shows that, in light of the Ukrainian crisis, NATO can be seen as an important component of national as well as European defence. As a result, meeting the NATO-norm is considered to be necessary (HCSS, 2017a, p. 20).

4.3.4 An Available Policy Alternative: the NATO-norm

The analysis shows that the NATO-norm was recognized as an available policy alternative in the policy community under investigation. The available policy alternative under investigation, the NATO-norm, is an international agreement that was already clearly defined in the Wales Summit

Declaration (2014). According to this international agreement that was issued during the NATO Summit in Wales, member states including the Netherlands should increase their defence budget towards 2% of GDP (NATO, 2014, 14). The agreement was made in light of the changing security situation in and around Europe. Because of this changing security situation, the constitutional task of collective defence became more urgent (NATO, 2014, 3). The importance of this constitutional task is also underlined in the policy letter on international security ‘Turbulent Times in Unstable Surroundings’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015). This letter underlines that ‘the Ukraine crisis has led to a reaffirmation of the importance of collective defence’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015, p. 12). As the task of collective defence has become increasingly important, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2015) underlines the need for a ‘balanced burden-sharing’ (p. 27). This affirms that the NATO-norm as a policy solution received a high degree of recognition among government officials.

As a clearly defined policy alternative, the NATO-norm has softened up essential government officials in the policy community under investigation. This is evident from the fact that Prime Minister M. Rutte approved the importance of the NATO-norm to tackle future security challenges (Government of the Netherlands, 2014). Furthermore, the two other government officials that were delegated to the NATO Summit in Wales, the Minister of Foreign Affairs F.C.G.M. Timmermans and the Minister of Defence J.A. Hennis-Plasschaert, agreed that defence expenditure should increase structurally with 100 million euros (*Kamerstukken II 2014/2015*, 28676, nr. 210, p. 4). In addition, the Ministers acknowledge the importance of collective defence. However, the Ministers agree that it is not only a matter of increasing the defence budget but also how the defence budget is spent (*Kamerstukken II 2014/2015*, 28676, nr. 210, p. 4). This is also underlined in the policy letter ‘Turbulent Times in Unstable Surroundings’ which states that the ‘Netherlands has emphasised the importance of looking not only at expenditure but also at making defence efforts more effective’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015, p. 28).

Despite the increased recognition of the importance of the policy solution under investigation, budget constraints are a particular reason why the defence budget could not structurally increase easily relative to the GDP from 2014 onwards. As announced in the Coalition Agreement (2012), the defence budget would structurally decrease with 250 million euros (Government of the Netherlands, 2012, p. 20). The decision to announce cuts in the defence budget was made as a solution to the general financial problems of the Netherlands at that time (Government of the Netherlands, 2012, p. 20). Therefore, the criterion of budget constraint hindered the Dutch government to structurally increase the defence budget. For instance, in a response to the motion of Van der Staaij (*Kamerstukken II 2014/2015*, 34000, nr. 23), the Minister of Defence Hennis-Plasschaert acknowledges that the extent to which this NATO-norm is realized depends on the financial means

that the Cabinet has at its disposal (*Kamerstukken II 2014/2015*, 33763/33694, nr. 81, p. 4). Under the influence of the changing security situation and the international agreements made at the NATO Summit in Wales, the trend of governmental cutbacks has come to a halt. However, due to the governmental cutbacks that were announced in 2012, the defence expenditure decreased until 2017. The Minister of Defence J.A. Hennis-Plasschaert promised that the defence budget will structurally increase after 2017 (*Kamerstukken II 2014/2015*, 34210-X, nr. 3, p. 2).

The NATO-norm also received recognition as an available policy alternative among the Dutch think tanks under investigation. The analysis of the advisory reports of these think tanks shows that researchers are fairly positive towards the NATO-norm as an available policy alternative. For instance, two advisory reports that were published by the AIV in 2015 advice the government to invest more in transatlantic cooperation and in the effective deployment of armed forces (AIV, 2015a, p. 5; 2015b, p. 1). According to the AIV, the need for an effective deployment of armed forces and transatlantic cooperation arises from the changing security situation of the Netherlands (AIV, 2015a, p. 5). Therefore, the AIV advises the government to increase the defence budget to 1,6% of GDP (AIV, 2015a, p. 47). It also asks the Dutch government to assess whether its military contribution is sufficient in light of the new security situation (AIV, 2015b, p. 45). As the defence budget did not increase substantially, an advisory report from the HCSS indicates that the share of GDP spent in defence is far from the agreed norm (HCSS, 2016, p. 23). For this reason, a researcher from Clingendael Institute criticized the governmental efforts to meet this norm as Dutch armed forces are not prepared for quick deployment (Zandee, 2016). In at least two advisory reports that were published throughout 2017, the importance of the NATO-norm is again underlined (HCSS, 2017a, p. 20; 2017b, p. 204). Therefore, the policy alternative meets the criterion of value acceptability among researchers as specialists in the policy community under investigation.

4.4 Political Stream

In this section, I will analyze the national mood and government turnover as indicators of the political acceptability of the NATO-norm as a policy solution in the policy area of foreign security and defence. To analyze the national mood, I will investigate the political support as expressed by coalition and opposition parties (4.4.1). Subsequently, I will analyze party programs that were formulated before the general election on the 15th of March in 2017 (4.4.2). After the analysis of the parliamentary proceedings and the party programs, I will analyze the Coalition Agreement ‘Confidence in the Future’ (2017) to investigate whether and to what extent the NATO-norm as a policy solution was translated into governmental policy (4.4.3). At last, I will show to what extent there was political acceptability of the NATO-norm in the political stream (4.4.4).

4.4.1 The National Mood in the Second Chamber

In December 2013, a member of the First Chamber C.S. Kuiper (CU) proposed a motion in which he requests that the Dutch government adjusts its defence expenditures to recent developments in line with the International Security Strategy (2013) (*Kamerstukken I* 2013/2014, 33750-X, C). This motion was accepted with the support from the political parties VVD, PVV, CDA, PvdA, CU and SGP (Eerste Kamer, 2013). In a reaction to this motion on the 11th of September, the former Minister of Defence J.A. Hennis-Plasschaert promised to put an end to government cutbacks in the defence budget (*Kamerstukken II* 2013/2014, 33750-X, F, p. 4). In a general meeting, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs A.G. Koenders and the Minister of Defence J.A. Hennis-Plasschaert underline that defence expenditures will increase in the case of economic growth (*Kamerstukken I* 2014/2015, 33750-X, G, pp. 6-7).

In a note consultation on the 6th of November in 2013, two Members of Parliament R.W. Knops (CDA) and E. Dijkgraaf (SGP) expressed their concern about the Dutch government meeting the NATO-norm (*Kamerstukken II* 2013/2014, 33763, nr. 33). Furthermore, R.W. Knops (CDA) asked the parliamentary question whether former Minister of Defence J.A. Hennis-Plasschaert is aware of the decrease in defence expenditures (*Aanhangsel Handelingen II* 2013/2014, nr. 1971, p. 1). In a general meeting in July, Knops further underlined the fact that the defence budget is far from the NATO-norm (*Kamerstukken II* 2013/2014, 29521, nr. 250, p. 27). Hennis-Plasschaert underlined several times the importance of this norm. However, due to financial restrictions and the chosen course in the Coalition Agreement (2012), she finds it to be inevitable that the defence budget decreases to 1,15% of GDP (*Kamerstukken II* 2013/2014, 33750-X, nr. 69, p. 12). In August 2014, the Groep Bonten/Van Klaveren also began to interfere in the political debate concerning the NATO-norm (*Kamerstukken II* 2013/2014, 27830, nr. 133, p. 3).

After the Wales Summit Declaration on the 5th of September in 2014, Member of Parliament C.G. Van der Staaij (SGP) proposed a motion in which he asks the government to consider in which manner the defence budget could be increased to sustain the ambition level of the military (*Kamerstukken II* 2014/2015, 34000, nr. 23). This motion was sufficiently supported in the Second Chamber by the VVD, right-wing parties and Christian democratic parties. The motion was not supported by the coalition party PvdA and other left-wing parties (Tweede Kamer, 2014a). J.J. van Klaveren (Groep Bontes/Van Klaveren) proposed another motion on the 10th of September in which he asks the government to formulate an action plan on how it will meet the NATO-norm (*Kamerstukken II* 2013/2014, 27925, nr. 500). This motion was not sufficiently supported. In fact, only the Groep Bontes/Van Klaveren supported this motion against 148 Members of Parliament (Tweede Kamer, 2014b). Furthermore, parliamentary questions from the Groep Bontes/Van Klaveren

about this action plan in the period of September to December were not directly answered (*Aanhangsel Handelingen II* 2014/2015, nr. 419; nr. 157; nr. 721). Instead, the Minister of Defence J.A. Hennis-Plasschaert and the Minister of Foreign Affairs A.G. Koenders referred to a letter issued on the 7th of November in which an official reaction is provided to the motion of Van der Staaij (*Kamerstukken II* 2014/2015, 33763, nr. 59).

In an initiative note issued on the 4th of November 2014, Van Klaveren further argued that the defence budget should structurally increase to 2% of GDP (*Kamerstukken II* 2014/2015, 34066, nr. 2, p. 7). In a plenary meeting on the 12th of November, the political party Groep Bontes/Van Klaveren also expressed its concern over a motion that they proposed in September which was not sufficiently supported (*Handelingen II* 2014/2015, nr. 23, item 2). Member of Parliament R. Vuijk (VVD) reacted that the VVD could not support their request for a concrete action plan on how to Cabinet will achieve the NATO-norm. Instead, the VVD supported the motion of Van der Staaij that requested the defence budget to increase in line with financial restrictions and the ambition level of the military. According to Vuijk, meeting the NATO-norm asks for a more realistic approach considering the financial restraints of the Dutch government (*Handelingen II* 2014/2015, nr. 23, item 2). However, in this plenary meeting, G.J. Segers (CU) is critical about the fact that the Dutch government has not taken concrete steps after the motion of Van der Staaij (*Handelingen II* 2014/2015, nr. 23, item 2).

In a plenary meeting on the 19th of November, there is also opposition against the NATO-norm as expressed by Member of Parliament B. van Ojik (GL). GreenLeft (GL) and other left-wing parties expressed their opposition against the NATO-norm (*Handelingen II* 2014/2015, nr. 26, item 9). In a written consultation to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, members of D66 expressed their support for moving to a more realistic norm which can be met by all 28 European member states (*Kamerstukken II* 2014/2015, 28676, nr. 217, pp. 7-8).

In 2015, the political debate concerning the NATO-norm continued. In the subsequent months, the Groep Bonten/Van Klaveren underlines in its parliamentary questions the importance of the NATO-norm (*Aanhangsel Handelingen II* 2014/2015, nr. 1116, p. 2; nr. 2582, pp. 1-2). In response to these parliamentary questions, the Minister of Defence J.A. Hennis-Plasschaert states that international agreements were made during the NATO Wales Summit to halt the trend of declining defence expenditures and to eventually increase the defence budget in line with the financial resources. In addition, Hennis-Plasschaert states that it is not just a matter of expenditures, but also about the effective deployment of military forces (*Aanhangsel Handelingen II* 2014/2015, nr. 1511, p. 2). However, in a response to a parliamentary question with regard to the NATO-norm, Hennis-Plasschaert assured that defence expenditures will no longer decrease after 2017 (*Kamerstukken II* 2014/2015, 34210-X, nr. 3, p. 2). In a letter that was formulated in response to the motion of Van der

Staaïj, Hennis-Plasschaert also states that in response to the motion of Van der Staaïj (*Kamerstukken II* 2014/2015, 34000, nr. 23) and the motion of Kuiper (*Kamerstukken I* 2013/2014, 33750-X, C) defence expenditures will gradually increase in accordance with the financial situation and security developments. The main message of this response is that a long-term perspective is required in order to meet the NATO-norm (*Kamerstukken II* 2014/2015, 33763/33694, nr. 81, p. 4).

In a plenary meeting on the 30th of June, P.H. Omtzigt (CDA) expressed his concern over the Dutch government not meeting the NATO-norm. He accused the government to be reluctant in its efforts in meeting this norm (*Handelingen II* 2014/2015, nr. 102, item 11). R.W. Knops (CDA) also states in a legislative consultation held on the 11th of June that no steps are taken to meet this international agreement as defence expenditures relative to the GDP are still decreasing (*Kamerstukken II* 2014/2015, 34200-X, nr. 15, p. 2). Furthermore, in a general meeting with the Commission of Defence, R.W. Knops (CDA) acknowledges that the efforts of the government are insufficient (*Kamerstukken II* 2014/2015, 21501-28, nr. 128, pp. 4-6). On the 14th of October, Hennis-Plasschaert explained that while defence expenditures are increasing, an increase in GDP caused the percentage points of the defence budget relative to GDP to decrease with 0,01 from 2014 to 2015. It is expected that the percentage points will increase from 2015 onwards (*Kamerstukken II* 2015/2016, 34300-X, nr. 20, p. 42). Furthermore, the Minister of Foreign Affairs A.G. Koenders states that NATO member states will make efforts to assure that defence expenditure are in line with the NATO-norm. Koenders promises that defence expenditures are increased in line with the federal budget (*Kamerstukken II* 2015/2016, 34300-V, nr. 9, p. 16).

In a general meeting on the 2nd of February in 2016, E. Dijkgraaf (SGP) once again underlined the importance of the NATO-norm and that further steps are required (*Kamerstukken II* 2015/2016, 21501-28, nr. 138, pp. 11-12). Furthermore, A.M.C. Eijssink (PvdA) also states that this norm is of importance because of recent terrorist attacks and the presence of ISIS in North Africa and the Middle East. This indicates a change of the political opinion of the PVDA towards the NATO-norm (*Kamerstukken II* 2015/2016, 21501-28, nr. 138, p. 10). Considering the fact that the defence budget in 2016 was 1,16% of GDP, E. Dijkgraaf (SGP) continues to plead for concrete proposals formulated by the Minister of Defence in order to meet the NATO-norm in 2024 (*Kamerstukken II* 2015/2016, 28676, nr. 240, pp. 7-9). R.W. Knops (CDA) underlines Dijkgraaf's opinion but argues that the Dutch government should act more quickly (*Kamerstukken II* 2015/2016, 28676, nr. 240, p. 9).

In a letter to the Second Chamber, the Minister of Defence J.A. Hennis-Plasschaert discusses the conclusions from the NATO Defence Planning Capability Review (DPCR) that was presented on the 17th of March in 2016. In the NATO Defence Planning Capability Review, it is concluded that the Netherlands shows insufficient commitment in meeting the NATO-norm (*Kamerstukken II*

2015/2016, 28676, nr. 241, p. 1). After the publication of this review, R.W. Knops (CDA) proposed a motion in which he asks the Dutch government to make a meaningful gesture in terms of its defence expenditures as the NATO Summit in Warschau is approaching (*Kamerstukken II* 2015/2016, 28676, nr. 244). Furthermore, on the 24th of May, Member of Parliament L. Bontes proposed a motion in which he asks the government to provide a concrete plan to meet the NATO-norm (*Kamerstukken II* 2015/2016, 28676, nr. 246). Despite the fact that most political parties agree that the NATO-norm should be met, these motions were not sufficiently supported (Tweede Kamer, 2016a; 2016b).

Despite governmental efforts to meet the NATO-norm, the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB) calculated that the defence expenditures as a percentage of GDP will decrease from 2019 onwards (*Kamerstukken II* 2016/2017, 34550-X, nr. 14, p. 7). R.W. Knops (CDA) argues in a plenary meeting on the 16th of November on the basis of these calculations that current governmental efforts are still not sufficient enough (*Handelingen II* 2016/2017, nr. 23, item 2). L. Bontes (Groep Bontes/Van Klaveren) proposed, again, a motion with regard to the NATO-norm. In this motion, he asks the government to provide a concrete roadmap before the general election in March 2017 on how this norm will be met (*Kamerstukken II* 2016/2017, 34550-X, nr. 42). This motion was not sufficiently supported (Tweede Kamer, 2016c).

In a letter to the Second Chamber on the 6th of February in 2017, the Minister of Defence J.A. Hennis-Plasschaert states that the political pressure to meet the NATO-norm is increasing as the president of the United States Donald Trump and the former Secretary of Defence J.N. Mattis have stated that other NATO member states should contribute more to NATO by increasing their defence budgets. Hennis-Plasschaert underlines that the defence budget is increasing every year and that next steps will be taken (*Kamerstukken II* 2016/2017, 28676, nr. 263, pp. 3-4). However, Prime Minister M. Rutte indicates in a plenary debate on the 22nd of September 2016 that the current Cabinet will not specify how the NATO-norm may be reached as the general election in March 2017 is approaching (*Handelingen II* 2016/2017, nr. 3, item 3). As a consequence, the political debate on the NATO-norm was postponed till the next cabinet term.

4.4.2 15 March 2017: General Election

The Dutch general election was held on the 15th of March in 2017. 28 political parties participated in these elections (Tweede Kamer, 2017). In this section, only party programs of political parties that received a seat in the Second Chamber will be discussed. These political parties and their seats are: VVD (33), PVV (20), CDA (19), D66 (19), GL (14), SP (14), PvdA (9), CU (5), PvdD (5), 50PLUS (4), SGP (3), DENK (3) and FvD (2) (Kiesraad, 2017)

The party program of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) discusses the NATO-norm in light of the security situation of the Netherlands that is considered to be deteriorated (VVD, 2016, p. 27). Due to this deteriorated situation, the VVD argues that defence expenditures should at least increase to the European NATO-average. The VVD does not regard the NATO-norm as a main priority. Instead, it states that, firstly, the average percentage of GDP that European member states spent on defence should be met before defence expenditure could increase to the NATO-norm (VVD, 2016 p. 27). While the importance of NATO as an integral part of Dutch foreign security and defence policy is underlined several times, the NATO-norm is not considered to be an inevitable requirement (VVD, 2016, p. 22).

The party program of the Party for Freedom (PVV) is only one page long and does not contain any reference to the NATO-norm. The reason might be that the party program pleads for a Netherlands that is independent from the European Union. As NATO is partly a collaborative effort between European member states, it does not show support for the NATO-norm (PVV, 2016).

The party program of the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) emphasizes that the security situation of the Netherlands has deteriorated and that defence expenditures have decreased in the last decades (CDA, 2016, p. 37). The CDA argues that the NATO-norm should be met in light of these developments. However, it does not underline this as a priority for the next cabinet term. It is stated that the average of GDP that is spent on defence among European member states should first be met (CDA, 2016, p. 37).

The Democrats 66 (D66) argues in its party program that a comprehensive European security and defence policy is important to improve the military collaboration between member states. Furthermore, this is considered to be a requirement in order to increase the military influence of the Netherlands within NATO. D66 does not emphasize meeting the agreements made during the NATO Summit in Wales (D66, 2016, p. 149). This also means that no explicit reference is made to the NATO-norm. Nevertheless, it does recognize the importance of NATO for European security (D66, 2016, p. 149).

GreenLeft (GL) does not make an explicit reference to the NATO-norm. It does, however, states that a comprehensive foreign security and defence policy in Europe is important for collaborative military efforts between European member states. Furthermore, it underlines the importance of European military integration (GL, 2016, p. 73).

The party program of the Socialist Party (SP) shows clear opposition against any military expansion within member states that would empower NATO as a military cooperation. It pleads for a renewed security collaboration with the United Nations to assure peace and security in the world (SP, 2017, p. 59).

The Labour Party (PvdA) argues in light of security developments within and outside the Netherlands that defence-expenditures should increase. The reason for this is that strong and efficient military forces are important for a collective defensive of NATO member states. Furthermore, by increasing the defence budget, the basic readiness of Dutch military forces could be improved and military missions to induce sustainable development in developing countries becomes possible (PvdA, 2016, p. 61).

The Christian Union (CU) pleads in its party program for an annual increase of two billion euros spent on defence. Furthermore, the NATO-norm is emphasized as a priority (CU, 2016, p. 10).

The Party for the Animals (PvdD) states in its party program that the Netherlands should refrain from military missions initiated by NATO (PvdD, 2016, p. 38).

The party program of 50PLUS does not contain any reference to the NATO-norm. It does, however, states that the Dutch government should actively support NATO. Furthermore, it is emphasized that international cooperation is of importance for national and international security (50PLUS, 2016, p. 14).

The Reformed Political Party (SGP) finds that bilateral military cooperation is of importance. In particular, in its party program, it argues that the military contribution to NATO should be a fundamental part of Dutch foreign security and defence policy (SGP, 2016, p. 48). In line with the motion of Van der Staaij that was accepted in 2014, it pleads that the Dutch government should take concrete steps to meet the NATO-norm (SGP, 2016, p. 46).

THINK (DENK) pleads for a reconsideration of the NATO-norm. Specifically, it states that defence expenditures should also focus on the prevention of international military conflicts (DENK, 2017, p. 34).

At last, Forum voor Democracy (FvD) recognizes the importance of defence for national security. Therefore, it pleads for an increase in the defence budget to 2% of GDP. However, it disapproves foreign military missions that have little or no use to national security (FvD, n.d.).

4.4.3 10 October 2017: Coalition Agreement

After the general election on the 15th of March in 2017, a coalition was formed between the VVD, CDA, D66 and the Christian Union (CU). On the 10th of October 2017 this coalition presented its Coalition Agreement ‘Confidence in the future’ (Government of the Netherlands, 2017).

The Coalition Agreement (2017) underlines that an ‘active international policy is in our national interest’ (Government of the Netherlands, 2017, p. 4). In terms of foreign security and defence policy, the Cabinet will focus on international cooperation between NATO member states and it will invest in the sustainability and effectiveness of the Dutch armed forces (Government of the Netherlands,

2017, p. 52). Furthermore, the Cabinet emphasizes the importance of a ‘relevant contribution alongside its allies in order to deal with the international security threats we face’ (Government of the Netherlands, 2017, p. 53). It is agreed that the investments made in Defence will increase each year with the objective to attain an amount of 1.5 billion euros by 2021 that will be spent on defence on an annual basis (Rijksoverheid, 2017, p. 56).

In addition, the decision is made to formulate a new security strategy (i.e. the IISS 2018-2022) that will replace the International Security Strategy (2013) (Government of the Netherlands, 2017, p. 53). At last, the decision is made to formulate the Defence White Paper in line with the planning processes of NATO. The Defence White Paper will outline how the defence budget will structurally be increased in order to meet the capability objectives as set out by NATO (Government of the Netherlands, 2017, p. 53). The policy decision to increase the annual defence expenditures towards 2% of GDP and the decision to formulate the Defence White Paper which outlines how the defence budget will develop in line with the planning processes of NATO shows that the coalition has agreed to actively meet the NATO-norm.

4.4.4 Political Acceptability

The analysis of the political stream has several findings. I have first analyzed the national mood or the ‘common lines’ of thinking among politicians about the NATO-norm. The national mood has become evident from the degree of political support for this norm among opposition and coalition parties in the Second Chamber. Parliamentary proceedings have shown that there is significant support for this norm throughout the cabinet period among the opposition parties the CDA, CU, SGP and the Groep Bontes/Van Klaveren. This is particularly evident from the fact that a motion proposed by Member of Parliament C.G. Van der Staaij (SGP) was sufficiently supported (Tweede Kamer, 2014a). In this motion, Van der Staaij asks the government how the defence spending will increase in order to sustain the ambition level of the military (*Kamerstukken II* 2014/2015, 34000, nr. 23).

This motion was also supported by the coalition party VVD. It was not supported by left-wing parties including the coalition party PvdA (Tweede Kamer, 2014a). Other parliamentary documents also confirm that the high political support for the NATO-norm among right-wing and Christian-democratic opposition parties was sustained throughout the cabinet term. Furthermore, the political support among these politicians and the international agreement made at the NATO Summit in Wales in 2014 have led to a halt on the announced governmental cutbacks in defence. This is evident from the structural increase of 100 million euros in defence as announced by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs F.C.G.M. Timmermans and the Minister of Defence J.A. Hennis-Plasschaert in 2014 (*Kamerstukken II* 2014/2015, 28676, nr. 210, p. 4). The high political support among politicians

shows that the political climate was particularly favourable for the NATO-norm which was conducive for this norm to receive a high agenda status.

However, while there was high political support among opposition parties for the NATO-norm during the cabinet term of the Rutte II Cabinet no concrete policy decisions were made to reach this norm. An explanation is that in a plenary debate on the 22nd of September 2016, Prime Minister Mark Rutte indicated that in light of coming general election the Cabinet will not further specify how the NATO-norm may be reached (*Handelingen II 2016/2017*, nr. 3, item 3). Only after the general election in March, a coalition agreement was agreed upon by the coalition parties the VVD, the CDA, D66 and the CU on the 10th of October in 2017 that outlines policy decisions concerning the NATO-norm. Under the influence of the general election that resulted in a change of administration, the policy solution to increase defence expenditures to 2% of GDP was linked to established beliefs of the VVD, the CDA, D66 and the CU about this policy solution. This resulted in the decision in the Coalition Agreement (2017) to increase the defence budget each year in line with the planning processes of NATO (Government of the Netherlands, 2017, p. 53).

In the Defence White Paper (2018), it has been decided that the defence budget will structurally increase to a percentage of GDP that is more in line with the NATO-norm (Ministry of Defence, 2018, p. 27). To achieve this policy objective, the decision is made to increase the defence budget with a structural increase of €1.5 billion per year and eventually €5 billion euros in 2021 (Government of the Netherlands, 2017, p. 53; Ministry of Defence, 2018, p. 27). Furthermore, due to ‘domestic and foreign threats, including terrorism’, it was decided in the Coalition Agreement (2017) to formulate the IISS (2018-2022) that will replace the International Security Strategy (2013) (Government of the Netherlands, 2017, p. 53). In light of the international security situation, the Cabinet also decided that the Budget International Security (BIV) as determined in the Coalition Agreement (2012) was not sufficient to guarantee a military contribution to foreign countries that is proportional to that of other allies. Therefore, the Cabinet has decided to reconsider the Budget International Security in the coming years (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 31516, nr. 23, p. 3).

4.5 Policy Window

In this chapter, I will show whether the streams are causally related to the influence of the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected world’ on the dependent variable: the formulation of the IISS (2018-2022). According to the Multiple Streams Framework, policy change results from a policy window (Kingdon, 2003, p. 166). For the three streams to be causally related to the dependent variable, the streams should have contributed to the opening of a policy window through which the

influence of the advisory report on the IISS (2018-2022) took place. Figure 3 illustrates how the streams are causally related to the dependent variable:

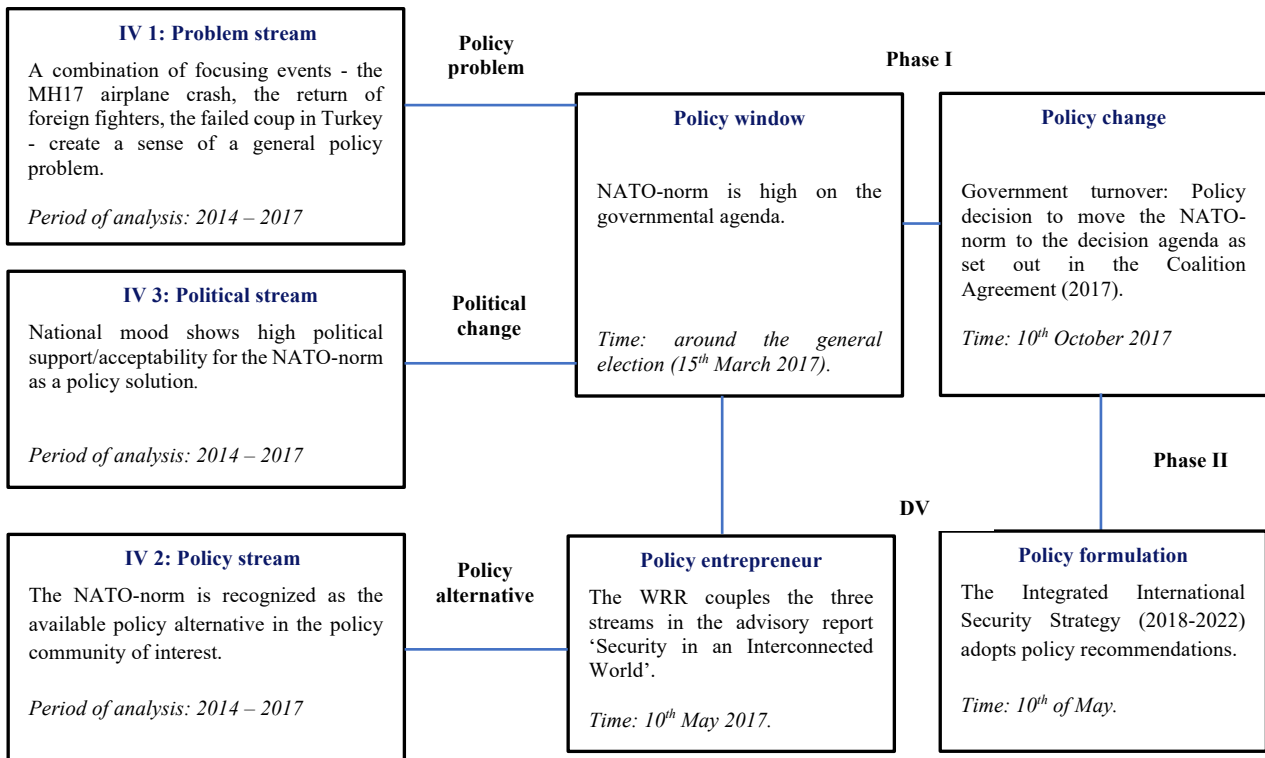


Figure 3. An overview of the policy process

Figure 3 shows that the problem stream and the political stream have contributed to the opening of a policy window during which the NATO-norm was high on the governmental agenda. Due to a combination of focusing events in the problem stream, a general policy problem was formulated in the policy domain of foreign security and defence. Especially, the policy letter 'Turbulent Times in Unstable Surroundings' captures this policy problem by acknowledging that these events have caused the international and national security situation to change as there arose an 'arch of instability around Europe' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015, p. 1). Under the influence of the changed security situation, opposition parties CDA, CU, SGP and the Groep Bontes/Van Klaveren in the Second Chamber expressed their political support for the NATO-norm as a policy solution. This expressed support is especially evident from the sufficient political support for the motion of Member of Parliament C.G. Van der Staaij (SGP) (Tweede Kamer, 2014a). Parliamentary documents have shown that the political support among opposition parties for the NATO-norm as a policy solution was sustained throughout the cabinet term of Rutte II Cabinet.

In the policy stream, the NATO-norm was increasingly considered to be an available policy alternative that required governmental attention. After the Dutch government agreed to meet this norm by 2024 during the Wales Summit in 2014, several actors in the policy community under investigation were fairly supportive towards this norm. As the NATO-norm was already introduced as an international agreement in 2014, it softened up important government officials in the policy community. One institutional constraint was the criterion of budget constraints. In the Coalition Agreement (2012), it was already decided that an annual cutback in the defence budget will follow as a response to general financial problems (Government of the Netherlands, 2012, p. 20). Despite this decision, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs F.C.G.M. Timmermans and the former Minister of Defence J.A. Hennis-Plasschaert announced that the defence budget will structurally increase after the introduction of the NATO-norm (*Kamerstukken II 2014/2015*, 28676, nr. 210, p. 4). In addition, there was a high value acceptability among researchers from Dutch think tanks working in the research field of foreign security and defence. As there was considerable receptivity or consensus among actors in the policy community and policy decisions were made to actively meet the NATO-norm, it can be considered as an available policy alternative in the policy stream

The national mood in the political stream and the presence of a general policy problem in the problem stream show that there arose an opportunity for policy change (*policy window*) around the general election on the 15th of March in 2017. The general election offered a political opportunity for policy entrepreneurs working in the policy domain of foreign security and defence to push the NATO-norm as a viable policy alternative as a majority of political parties expressed their political support for the NATO-norm. Because of the political acceptability and external security threats, the NATO-norm received a high agenda status on the governmental agenda.

As a result of this policy window, the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ which was published on the 10th of May in 2017 was able to engage in the coupling of the three streams. The WRR engaged in coupling as follows.

Firstly, the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ was able to link its policy recommendation 9 concerning the NATO-norm to the deterioration of the security situation of the Netherlands as an emerging policy problem (WRR, 2020, p. 159). The advisory report first points to the fact that the security situation of the Netherlands has changed drastically. According to the WRR, the security situation of the Netherlands has deteriorated under the influence of several (focusing) events including the crash of the airplane with flight number MH17, the threat of a terrorist attack arising from the conflict in Iraq and Syria and the failed coup in Turkey which has resulted in clashes between followers of Erdoğan and Gülen (WRR, 2020, p. 2). Due to this changing security situation, there arise ‘greater demands on the state of readiness and preparedness of the armed forces’ (WRR,

2020, p. 159). In addition, as the material readiness of Dutch armed forces was flawed over the last years because of governmental cutbacks in defence, the WRR concludes that the Dutch government 'must do more to honour the agreements made on the financing of their own armed forces' (WRR, 2020, pp. 1-2). In light of the changing security situation, the WRR advises in policy recommendation 9 that the Dutch government should increase the defence expenditure to 2% GDP in predetermined steps (WRR, 2020, p. 159). It shows that the proposed policy solution is linked to the policy problem in the policy field of foreign security and defence.

Secondly, the advisory report displays a clear awareness of the favourable political climate around the time of publication. For instance, the WRR argues that against the background of the changing security situation, especially the military actions of Russia in the Crimea area, the political debate about the ambition level of Dutch armed forces has opened again (WRR, 2020, pp. 124-125). As a result of the deterioration of the security situation in and around Europe over the past few years, the WRR recognizes that these developments have changed the 'mood among politicians and the public (...) radically' (WRR, 2020, p. 125). Two particular indications of this changed mood to which the WRR refers are the widening of the budgetary framework for defence and the sufficient support among political parties in the Second Chamber for the motion of Van der Staaij that asks for an increase of the defence spending to sustain the ambition level of the military (WRR, 2020, p. 125; *Kamerstukken II* 2014/2015, 34000, nr. 23). This indicates that the WRR meets a general quality of a policy entrepreneur, namely, to engage in sensing changes in the national mood in order to push policy solutions (Kingdon, 2003, p. 149). In combination with the changed security situation and the fact that the percentage of GDP spent on defence is still below the European average, the WRR further suggests that the budgetary framework of the government should be enlarged in order to enhance the operational readiness and deployability of the Dutch armed forces (WRR, 2020, pp. 125-126).

Despite the fact that a policy window was opened around the general election on the 15th of March and the time of publication, there arose an institutional constraint to the influence of the advisory report on foreign security and defence policy. In a plenary debate in 2016 it was made clear that the Cabinet decided to postpone its written response to this advisory report for the next Cabinet (*Kamerstukken II* 2017/2018, 33763, nr. 141, p. 1). As a policy window only opens for a short period, the advisory report could not directly influence foreign security and defence policy during the cabinet period around the time of publication (Kingdon, 2003, p. 166). This means that the policy window did not directly led to the influence of the advisory report on the IISS (2018-2022), but an intermediate step (i.e. government turnover) was necessary for policy change to happen. To explain this process, two phases are distinguished. The first phase (Phase I) is that from the general election on the 15th of March in 2017 till the formation of a new coalition on the 10th of October in 2017. In this phase, there

was no visible influence of the advisory report on governmental policy as the reaction to the advisory report was postponed to the next cabinet term. The second phase (Phase II) is from the formation of a new coalition on the 10th of October in 2017 till the formulation and presentation of the IISS (2018-2022) on the 14th of May in 2018. During this second phase, policy influence of the advisory report did take place. In what follows, I will explain how this policy influence came about.

At the start of the second phase, the Coalition Agreement (2017) of the political parties VVD, CDA, D66 and ChristenUnie announced in light of the changing international security situation the formulation of the Integrated International Security Strategy (2018-2022) on the 10th of October in 2017 (Government of the Netherlands, 2017, p. 53). On the 15th of January in 2018, the Minister of Defence A.Th.B. Bijleveld-Schouten also stressed in a letter to the Second Chamber that an integrated security approach will be formulated on the basis of an analysis of external and internal security threats (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 34775-X, nr. 72). Two months later, the Minister of Foreign Affairs S.A. Blok presented a preliminary outline of the integrated security approach on the 19th of March in 2018. In his letter to the Second Chamber, Blok underlines that the IISS (2018-2022) is formulated as a response to the policy decision made in the Coalition Agreement (2017) to replace the International Security Strategy (2013) (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 33694, nr. 12).

Before this security strategy was presented, the Minister of Defence A.Th.B. Bijleveld-Schouten formulated a written response to the recommendations made in the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ on the 28th of March in 2018 (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 33763, nr. 141). In this written response, Bijleveld-Schouten underlines that under the influence of several security threats to the security situation of the Netherlands, it has been decided to formulate the Integrated International Security Approach (2018-2022) (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 33763, nr. 141, p. 1). Furthermore, in this letter, Bijleveld-Schouten explicitly welcomes policy recommendation 9 of the advisory report that advises the government to increase defence expenditures gradually in order to meet the NATO-norm. However, Bijleveld-Schouten emphasizes that the Cabinet will formulate a plan for next Cabinets on how the NATO-norm is achieved as it will not be realized in the current cabinet term (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 33763, nr. 141, p. 5).

While the advisory report did not directly influence the policy decision to formulate the new security strategy, but required some intermediate steps, the advisory report did play a role in the formulation of the IISS (2018-2022). This is further confirmed by the fact that in a procedure agenda of the Commission of Foreign Affairs it was decided that the WRR will be invited for a conversation in the run-up of the publication of the IISS (2018-2022). Furthermore, in this agenda, it is explicitly recognized that the advisory report underlies the policy goals as formulated in the IISS (2018-2022) (Tweede Kamer, 2018a, p. 3). For this conversation, the WRR also submitted a position paper

containing its main policy recommendations (Tweede Kamer, 2018b). This confirms that the WRR was involved in the formulation of the IISS (2018-2022).

On the 14th of May in 2018, the policy document that outlines the Integrated International Security Approach (2018-2022) was presented. The IISS (2018-2022) explicitly adopts the definition of the policy problem from the advisory report as it states that:

the Scientific Council on Government Policy (WRR) concludes that the security situation in the Netherlands has deteriorated. The trends that affect the Netherlands, the Kingdom and the world entail serious risks to our security. That calls for an anticipatory and preventive international security policy for both the long and the medium term (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, p. 13).

In the IISS (2018-2022), the deteriorated security situation of the Netherlands is considered to be a result of security threats in countries around Europe (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, p. 14). The instability and threats around Europe resulted according to the analysis of the problem stream from a combination of focusing events. Therefore, as the Minister of Defence A.Th.B. Bijleveld-Schouten in her response to this advisory report and the Minister of Foreign Affairs S.A. Blok in his letter to the Second Chamber underline, these events are responsible for the changing security situation of the Netherlands. As these events also threatened the internal security situation of the Netherlands, the Dutch government formulated the IISS (2018-2022) (*Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 33763, nr. 141; *Kamerstukken II 2017/2018*, 33694, nr. 12).

In light of this problem definition, the IISS (2018-2022) seems to adopt the policy goal to increase the defence expenditure towards 2% of GDP by 2024 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, p. 31). In the description of this policy goal, it is further underlined that NATO is essential for the internal and external security of the Netherlands (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, p. 30). The importance of collective defence is also underlined as it is a core task of NATO member states in order to protect the national territory along with the tasks to promote the international legal order and to support civil authorities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, p. 30). To ensure that a collective defence by the armed forces is possible at any time and to meet the capability objectives of NATO, it is decided that concrete steps are to be taken as determined in the Defence White Paper (2018) in order to meet the NATO-norm as agreed in the Wales Summit Declaration (2014) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, p. 31). However, as NATO states in the NATO Defence Planning Capability Review (2017/2018) of the Netherlands in response to the increased defence budget of € 5 billion as announced in the Coalition Agreement (2017):

Although this planned additional spending is most welcome, and it will have a positive effect on readiness and some capabilities, far higher levels of investment will be required to meet future plans, and address the results of many years of underinvestment (NATO, 2018, p. 1).

For this reason, it is emphasized in the IISS (2018-2022) that a ‘possible extra step will be considered at an appropriate time during this government’s term of office depending on the overall situation, including the security situation, government-wide priorities and the agreed budgetary frameworks’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, p. 31). Again, additional investments in defence are dependent on developments within the problem stream, political acceptability in the political stream and federal budget constraints. As NATO indicates that the additional defence budget is not sufficient for the Dutch government to meet the capability objectives, the Dutch government need to contribute more in order to meet the NATO-norm by 2024.

4.6 Theoretical Reflections

In this section, I will show on the basis of the previous analysis to what extent the three expectations that are formulated in the theoretical framework are satisfied.

Expectation 1: *A combination of focusing events in the problem stream has contributed to the adoption of policy recommendations from the advisory report into the Integrated International Security Strategy (2018-2022).*

The first expectation is confirmed in light of the evidence collected in sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.5. After the occurrence of a combination of focusing events (the crash of airplane MH17, the return of foreign fighters and the failed coup in Turkey), a general policy problem arose in the policy field of foreign security and defence. As a result, the policy problem received a high agenda status on the governmental agenda which has partly contributed to the opening of a policy window around the time of publication of the advisory report. Around the time that the policy window opened, the WRR concludes against this background that the security situation of the Netherlands has deteriorated both internally as well as externally (WRR, 2020, p. 2). In light of this problem definition in the policy field of foreign security and defence, the IISS (2018-2022) welcomes policy recommendation 9 to increase defence expenditure towards 2% of GDP (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018, p. 31). Therefore, the combination of focusing events in the problem stream has contributed to the adoption of the NATO-norm in the IISS (2018-2022) as it led to the formulation of a general policy problem in the policy field of foreign security and defence which has contributed to the adoption of the NATO-norm as a policy solution.

Expectation 2: *The presence of an available policy alternative in the policy stream has contributed to the adoption of policy recommendations from the advisory report into the Integrated International Security Strategy (2018-2022).*

The second expectation is confirmed in light of evidence collected in sections 4.3 and 4.5. It has been established that initial policy reactions from delegated government officials to the NATO-norm as an available policy alternative show that despite budget constraints, the policy decision was made to gradually increase the defence budget relative to GDP (*Kamerstukken II* 2014/2015, 28676, nr. 210, p. 4). It shows that important government officials were already softened up after the international agreement was made as these officials became increasingly receptive to the NATO-norm. In addition, various Dutch think tanks in the policy community under investigation have introduced policy ideas and recommendations with regard to the NATO-norm. It shows that there was considerable value acceptability among these advisory actors. In light of the general consensus among the actors in the policy community about the NATO-norm, the NATO-norm was considered to be an available policy alternative in the policy stream. The presence of the NATO-norm as an available policy alternative in the policy stream enabled the WRR to couple the three streams by (a.) linking the deterioration of the security situation of the Netherlands to the NATO-norm as an available policy alternative and (b.) to push this alternative in a period during which opposition and coalition parties showed sufficient political support. As the coupling of the three streams and the opening of a policy window have eventually led to the adoption of policy recommendation 9 from the advisory report into the IISS (2018-2022), the presence of an available policy alternative in the policy stream has contributed to this policy adoption.

Expectation 3: *Changes in national mood and government turnover have contributed to the adoption of policy recommendations from the advisory report into the Integrated International Security Strategy (2018-2022).*

The third expectation is confirmed in light of the evidence collected in sections 4.4 and 4.5. The high political acceptability of the NATO-norm as a policy solution is evident from, among other parliamentary documents, the motion of Van der Staaij that received sufficient support in the Second Chamber (*Kamerstukken II* 2014/2015, 34000, nr. 23). The political beliefs about the NATO-norm that were shaped during the course of time became part of the political ideology of right-wing and Christian-democratic parties as is evident from their party programs before the general election on the 15th of March in 2017. It shows that the national mood, as is evident from the political acceptability among these political parties, aligns with the presentation of the NATO-norm as an available policy alternative. As a result, it contributed to the opening of a policy window around the

time of the general election on the 15th of March. This policy window created a political opportunity for the WRR to communicate policy recommendation 9. The advisory report did also clearly recognize this political opportunity (WRR, 2020, p. 125). Through the opening of this policy window, the political acceptability among opposition parties CDA and CU, and more or less the VVD and D66, may have led to the opposition parties linking their established beliefs about the NATO-norm to the policy decision in the Coalition Agreement (2017) to meet the NATO-norm in predetermined steps. As national mood and government turnover were evidently responsible for the opening of the policy window and the policy change under investigation, the policy stream has contributed to the adoption of policy recommendation 9 of the advisory report into the IISS (2018-2022).

5. Conclusion

In this exploratory case study, I explored the factors that have contributed to the influence of the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ on the IISS (2018-2022). In particular, I have provided an answer to the following research question: *What is the impact of the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ of the WRR on the Integrated International Security Strategy (2018-2022)?* In order to answer this research question, I have formulated three sub-questions that will be discussed below. In the theoretical framework, I have formulated three theoretical expectations on the basis of Kingdon’s Multiple Streams Framework to inquire the extent to which these expectations are satisfied. In the research design, it became clear that document analysis is used as the research method of this exploratory case study. Document analysis is used in order to identify the relevant sample of documents to analyze the influence of the independent variables (problem stream, policy stream, political stream) on the influence of the advisory report on the formulation of the IISS (2018-2022).

The first sub-question is: *How did the policy change under investigation come about?* The replacement of the International Security Strategy (2013) with the Integrated International Security Strategy (2018-2022) was decided in the Coalition Agreement (2017) that was presented on the 10th of October in 2017. This policy decision came about under the influence of a policy window that arose around the time of the general election on the 15th of March in 2017. In turn, the policy window was opened because of the interaction of three streams, namely the problem stream, the policy stream and the political stream. Therefore, the recognition of a general policy problem in the problem stream, an available policy alternative in the policy stream and political acceptability of this policy alternative in the political stream are factors that are causally related to the change from the ISS (2013) to the IISS (2018-2022).

The second sub-question is: *What was the influence of the advisory report on the formulation of the IISS (2018-2022)?* After it was decided to replace the ISS (2013) with the IISS (2018-2022), the advisory report ‘Security in an Interconnected World’ influenced the actual formulation of the IISS (2018-2022). The IISS (2018-2022) explicitly adopts the problem definition of the advisory report as it also states that the security situation of the Netherlands has deteriorated. In light of this problem definition, it also welcomes, although not explicitly, policy recommendation 9 from the advisory report which contains the recommendation to increase the defence budget towards 2% of GDP (NATO-norm) (WRR, 2020, pp. 159-160). The adoption of policy recommendation 9 is most clearly expressed in policy goal 5 of the IISS (2018-2022) which contains the decision to increase the defence expenditure towards 2% of GDP by 2024.

The third sub-question is: *Which factors have contributed to the influence of the advisory report on the IISS (2018-2022)?* On the basis of the analysis, I have identified three factors that have contributed to the influence of the advisory report on the IISS (2018-2022). The first factor is the problem stream. In the problem stream, a combination of focusing events have led to the recognition of a general policy problem in the policy area of foreign security and defence. It follows that the focusing events have led to a general image of the security situation of the Netherlands that has deteriorated. Due to this general sense of a policy problem, there arose the need for governmental attention and action. Therefore, the combination of focusing events were responsible for the high agenda status of the policy problem. As the need for governmental attention grew, there also arose a need for a concrete policy alternative. One of these policy alternatives, the NATO-norm, was decided upon among member states during the NATO Wales Summit in 2014. Due to the general trend of governmental cutbacks in defence conjoined with political discussions about the completion of this agreement, the agreement was not easily met in the years that followed.

However, the policy alternative did receive a considerable amount of political support in the Second Chamber. The analysis of the national mood in the political stream indicates a favourable political climate for the NATO-norm. Due to the political acceptability of this norm in the political stream, most political parties that were part of the new coalition in 2017 seemed to have linked their established beliefs about this norm to policy decisions that are made to achieve this norm as set out in the Coalition Agreement (2017). In addition, in the policy stream, actors in the policy community under investigation increasingly considered the NATO-norm as an available policy alternative. This is most clearly expressed by the policy reactions of Dutch government officials that were delegated to the Wales Summit in 2014 and the value acceptability among Dutch think tanks. Eventually, it is shown that these three streams have led to the opening of a policy window under influence of the coupling of the WRR of the three streams by linking the policy problem to the available policy alternative and its ability to sense the national mood towards this norm. In turn, this policy window was responsible for the policy decision to formulate the IISS (2018-2022) after which the advisory report influenced the formulation of the IISS (2018-2022). Therefore, on the basis of the analysis, the three streams can be considered to be factors that have contributed to the influence of the advisory report on the IISS (2018-2022).

On the basis of the answers to the sub-questions stated above, it can be concluded that the advisory report had an impact on how the IISS (2018-2022) was shaped. In particular, it influenced its problem definition which provides a context or justification for the formulation of its policy goals including policy goal 5. Policy recommendation 9 from the advisory report is clearly expressed in this policy goal. This influence came about because of several factors that culminated into a policy

window around the time of the general election on the 15th of March in 2017. These factors are the problem stream, policy stream and political stream. In the problem stream, a combination of focusing events shaped the formulation of a general policy problem in the policy field of foreign security and defence. This policy problem was used for the purpose of the advisory report and the IISS (2018-2022). In the policy stream, the NATO-norm was considered as an available policy alternative because of the Wales Summit Agreement (2014), the receptivity among delegated government officials and the value acceptability among Dutch think tanks. In the political stream, this alternative received considerable political support among opposition and coalition parties. The interaction of these three streams have partly led to a policy window through which the change of the ISS (2013) to the IISS (2018-2022) occurred during government turnover. The policy window also provided a political opportunity for the WRR as a policy entrepreneur to communicate its policy recommendations. As a result, policy recommendation 9 was welcomed during the new cabinet term. Therefore, the three streams that contributed to the opening of a policy window were causally related to the influence of the advisory report on the IISS (2018-2022).

Academic implications

The results of the exploratory case study have academic implications for the research on the interaction between expertise and policy in policy advisory systems. Firstly, as there is relatively little research on the influence of Dutch think tanks on foreign security and defence policy, the current exploratory single-case study contributes to this small body of literature. It shows that the WRR influenced the IISS (2018-2022) as a result of the interaction of at least three causal factors. Therefore, it is a preliminary step towards explanatory studies of the Dutch policy advisory system. Secondly, the research contributes to the methodological discussion on the application of Kingdon's framework to case studies in different political settings. The exploratory case study shows that this framework can be applied to the political context of the Netherlands in order to understand policy change.

Furthermore, the case study shows that the Multiple Streams Framework is helpful to understand under what conditions expertise from think tanks is used in governmental policies. Specifically, the case study shows that the framework can be used in order to grasp the conditions under which think tanks can act as strategic actors within policy advisory systems. Conceiving think tanks as policy entrepreneurs is helpful to understand the strategic dimension of expert advice within policy advisory systems. While more research should be done in this research field, the study also shines some light on the question of transparency and accountability within policy advisory systems. As the case study enhances our understanding of the role of think tanks in the Dutch policy advisory system, it could

also provide a small contribution to the academic literature on transparent and accountable decision-making processes.

Limitations

The exploratory case study encountered some limitations. The first limitation is the low external validity: there is a low chance that the results can be generalized beyond the case studied. I have already pinpointed to this limitation in section 3.4 of the research design. It should become clear in the discussion below why the low external validity of the research is not as problematic as it may seem at first sight. The second limitation is that coincidence cannot completely be ruled out. As already mentioned in the introduction, it is highly unusual that policy documents make an explicit reference to where certain policy ideas come from (Stone, 1996, p. 1). Furthermore, Weidenbaum (2010) argues that it is hard to measure the influence of think tanks on policy as this policy process can be considerably complex (p. 135). Therefore, it is also hard to rule out alternative explanations of how expert advice from the advisory report was adopted into the IISS (2018-2022). Nevertheless, the exploratory case study shows that there is a set of at least three factors or independent variables that are causally related to the influence of the advisory report on the IISS (2018-2022). This is also the research goal of this exploratory case study: to explore the causal factors that have contributed to the influence of the advisory report on the IISS (2018-2022).

Another limitation is that it remains questionable to what extent the WRR has had an influence on the three streams. If one applies Kingdon's framework, then it seems that the WRR primarily plays a role in the policy stream and seizes its opportunity to couple the three streams. However, one could also argue that think tanks play a role within the other two streams. For instance, think tanks could play a role in how focusing events were portrayed as problems in the problem stream. This research puzzle is further complicated as think tanks could also have a considerable influence on the political stream. It also begs the question to what extent the three streams are autonomous. According to Kingdon (2003), the streams flow independently along each other (Kingdon, 2003, p. 145). As the research has shown that policy problems from the problem stream were also discussed in the political stream and the policy stream as justifications for particular courses of action, it should be made clearer to what extent the streams are dependent on each other and how this influences the opening of a policy window. However, the extent to which the WRR has had an influence on the three streams and the autonomy of the three streams remains to be outside the scope of this research.

Discussion

The current single-case study is exploratory as it explores the factors that are responsible for the influence of the advisory report on the IISS (2018-2022). For this reason, the low external validity as discussed in the previous section is not necessarily problematic. The research can contribute to future explanatory studies on the influence of Dutch think tanks on the policy process in the Dutch policy advisory system. I will provide some preliminary guidelines on how explanatory studies should design their studies.

At first, the studies should dive deeper into the complexities of the Dutch advisory system. For instance, by means of semi-structured interviews, these studies are able to inquire what the motivations of policy actors are when policy ideas from think tanks are adopted into governmental policy. Furthermore, these studies should also investigate the motivations of actors working in Dutch think tanks such as the AIV, Clingendael Institute, the HCSS and the WRR. However, these studies should actively prevent biased opinions to affect the results when semi-structured interviews are conducted.

Secondly, explanatory studies should attempt to provide a more sophisticated explanation of how Dutch think tanks influence the policy process in the Dutch policy advisory system. To provide a more sophisticated explanation, these studies should analyze and compare more relevant cases in which Dutch think tanks were able to influence the policy process. For this reason, I recommend the use of a comparative case study in order to highlight the differences and similarities between the think tanks and their influence on governmental policies. As a result, these explanatory studies could improve the external validity of their studies which means that these studies could provide a provide a contribution to a wider class of phenomena.

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