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HOW TERRORISM SEEMS CLOSE FROM A DISTANCE

The relationship between geographic proximity and threat perceptions of terrorism among Dutch citizens and Dutch counterterrorism experts

Demi van Leeuwen

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Thesis supervisor: Dr. T. Abbas

Second reader: Dr. S. D'Amato

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"If there's no struggle, there's no progress." - Frederick Douglas

ABSTRACT

Since 2015, terrorism has increased in frequency and intensity, resulting in strengthened counterterrorism (CT) approaches and increased levels of concern among, however not limited to, European populations. The Netherlands has been less affected by terrorism, yet the Dutch government maintained a threat level of 4 out of 5 until December 2019. Hence, this research was interested in the relationship between geographic proximity and threat perceptions of terrorism among the Dutch population. This research also included the impact of Dutch CT policy on the posed relationship.

The securitisation theory in general and the model of collective securitisation in particular support the notion that terrorism has become a collective securitised concept. Literature regarding the importance of the geographical distance to terrorist attacks and CT policy support the formulated hypotheses. Mixed methods were used to collect data and gain insight in the Dutch population (citizens and CT experts). Geographic proximity was divided into *low* (outside of Europe), *average* (within Europe) and *high* geographic proximity (within the Netherlands). Five cases of terrorism were used to research potential correlations. Through a survey and interviews, the threat perception of both "regular" Dutch citizens (N=350) and Dutch CT experts (N=4) was researched.

The findings reveal that Dutch citizens have a moderate threat perception of terrorism, compared to CT experts who perceive the threat to the Netherlands as more imminent. The perceived likelihood and concern were highest after terrorism with average geographic proximity. Generally, Dutch citizens do not adopt protective behaviours after terrorism. Dutch citizens are not very familiar with the Dutch Threat Assessment Terrorism (40%) or the practices of the NCTV (46%). The findings indicate that the higher the familiarity with Dutch CT policy, the higher the threat perception of terrorism with average geographic proximity.

In conclusion, various factors help to explain shifts in the relationship between geographic proximity and threat perceptions of terrorism. These factors include, but are not limited to, media coverage, size and nature of terrorist attacks and the degree to which people can relate to the situation. Based on these findings, future research is needed to explore the interaction between these confounding factors. It is also recommended that the Dutch governments revises their communication towards the public about terrorism, to make Dutch citizens more aware and encourage them to be more alert.

Key words: geographic proximity | threat perception | terrorism | counterterrorism

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Explanation
9/11	The attacks on September 11, 2001 by al-Qaeda on several locations in the United States, among which the World Trade Center in New York City
AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
CT	Counterterrorism
CTER	Cluster Counter Terrorism, Extremism and Radicalisation (part of the Dutch National Police)
DTN	Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland (Threat Assessment Terrorism Netherlands)
ECTC	European Counter Terrorism Centre (part of Europol)
EU	European Union
Europol	European Police Office
ICCT	International Centre for Counter-Terrorism
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
NCTV	Nationaal Coördinator Terrorisme en Veiligheid (National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism)
U.S.	The United States

INTRODUCTION

In the nearly twenty years that have passed since the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York City in 2001 ("9/11"), the world has been experiencing numerous terrorist attacks that are arguably a result of the so-called 'war on terror' that the United States (U.S.) started after 9/11 (Schofer, 2015). The terrorist attack on four commuter trains in Madrid in March 2004 underscored the notion that countries worldwide are vulnerable to terrorism (Enders & Sandler, 2006). Consequently, the 'war on terror' brought along a considerable intensification of existing counterterrorism (hereafter CT) strategies and new initiatives have been developed on a global scale (Foot, 2007). In this regard, the U.S. adopted the Security Council Resolution 1373, thus deploying non-military law enforcement measures to combat terrorism globally. Nonetheless, 9/11 did not only cause the U.S. to re-evaluate and modify its CT approaches, but also its allies overseas decided on the necessity of intensifying its existing CT policies. In the period following the 9/11 attacks, the European Union (EU) developed a common legal definition of terrorism and a procedure for extradition was created for its member states (Hamilton, 2018). Moreover, the growing frequency of terrorist attacks in Europe has led European states to continue to strengthen their CT approach (Vorsina, Manning, Sheppard & Flemming, 2019). While some European countries or cities have to deal with unfortunate regularity of terrorist attacks by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), such as Paris (November 2015), Brussels (March 2016) and Barcelona (August 2017), other European states, such as the Netherlands, have been affected by terrorism to a lesser extent (Kaunert & Léonard, 2019; Vorsina et al., 2019). Nonetheless, less affected states still seem to follow similar practices of maximizing their CT policy.

The increased appearance of terrorism has not only affected governments' approaches towards terrorism; levels of fear among citizens have also been impacted intensively (Cohen-Louck, 2019; Haner, Sloan, Cullen, Kulig & Jonson, 2019). This derives from the notion that terrorism in itself brings along significant uncertainty regarding the likelihood of terrorist attacks and its effect on society (Lemyre, Turner, Lee & Krewski, 2006). As such, this perception of terrorism can result in, among others, a deteriorated well-being, distress or increased levels of fear (Thoresen, Flood Aakvaag, Wentzel-Larsen, Dyb & Hjemdal, 2012). Heightened threat perceptions can also result in people's support for government CT policy and be mitigated through a higher general trust in the government (Van Der Does, Kantorowitcz, Kuipers & Liem, 2019). However, when governments implement specific CT policies, such as anti-Muslim policy, the threat perception can be strengthened (Haner et al., 2019). Nonetheless,

the occurrence of terrorism alone is not sufficient in explaining aggravated perceptions of the terrorist threat. Additional factors, in particular media coverage, have been researched extensively to build a profound framework that explains why and how terrorism influences threat and risk perceptions (Lemyre et al., 2006). Another, less researched, factor that is considered a predictor of heightened threat perceptions of terrorism is geographic proximity (Thoresen et al., 2012; Woods, Ten Eyck, Kaplowitz & Shlapentokh, 2008). As scholars have proven, the close distance to a terrorist event predicts fear and distress (Kwon, Chadha & Pellizzaro, 2017). However, with respect to 9/11 – considered one of the worst terrorist attacks in U.S. history – *"roughly 0.00001%"* of the population was killed in these attacks, nonetheless resulting in a globally embraced 'war on terror' that led countries worldwide to revise and intensify their approach towards CT (Fischhoff, Gonzalez, Small & Lerner, 2003, p. 137; Schofer, 2015). In this regard, threat perceptions of terrorism were shaped intensively, despite the low geographic proximity of the 9/11 attacks.

According to the Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV), terrorist incidents in western Europe have been increasing in intensity and frequency since 2015 (NCTV, 2016). The threat of terrorism to the Netherlands has been growing simultaneously. The NCTV emphasizes that, notwithstanding the fact that the majority of the terrorist attacks in Europe are orchestrated by ISIS-networks, the threat of massive attacks by the terrorist group al-Qaeda maintains (NCTV, 2016, p. 2). Moreover, despite the fact that former territory occupied by ISIS has been recaptured, the NCTV stresses that terrorism and the upcoming right-extremists continue to demand the governments' attention (NCTV, 2019b). Compared to other European countries, such as France and Belgium, the Netherlands fortunately has not faced major terrorist attacks so far. More specifically, the attack on a tram in the city of Utrecht in March 2019 was the first successful terrorist attack in the Netherlands with a deadly outcome since the assassination of Theo van Gogh in 2004 (NCTV, 2019c). Despite the relatively low number of terrorist attacks in the Netherlands, the NCTV only recently (9 December 2019) lowered the threat level of the Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands (Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland, DTN) from level 4 ('substantial') to level 3 ('significant'). This raises the question about the degree to which the geographic proximity of terrorist attacks serves to heighten the threat perception of terrorism among the Dutch population. As this research solely focuses on the Dutch context, the following research question is formulated: *'To what extent has the geographic proximity of terrorist attacks that took place between 2015-2019 affected the threat perception of terrorism among the Dutch population?'*

Sub-questions

Although media coverage is usually considered a key factor in explaining the threat perception of terrorism (Lemyre et al., 2006), scholars argue that a considerable amount of the media coverage depends on government-controlled information (Woods et al., 2008). This argument suggests that experts and government officials that work within the counterterrorism field (hereafter CT experts) possibly contribute to heighten the threat perception of terrorism among citizens in an indirect manner (Woods et al., 2008). Therefore, the following three sub-questions are formulated that help to provide an extensive answer to the central research question: (1) '*How does the threat perception of terrorism differ between "regular" Dutch citizens and CT experts?';* (2) *'How is geographic proximity related to threat perceptions of terrorism?;* and (3) *'Does Dutch CT policy affect the relationship between geographic proximity and threat perceptions of terrorism?'*

Academic and societal relevance

The reasons underlying the academic relevance of this research are threefold. First, threat perceptions of terrorism have predominantly been researched from a perspective of media coverage. Media, both in its traditional and social form, have proved to be of significant value in explaining the ways in which a small geographical distance to terrorism can increase threat perceptions (Lemyre et al., 2006; Powell, 2018). This research, however, aims at looking at this relationship through a different lens by focusing on the relevance of CT policy in this context, which has been researched to a lesser extent. The attention given to CT in national policy can (partly) depend on geographic proximity and determine the threat perception of terrorism among citizens. Second, existing literature predominantly focuses on the ways that fear translates into support for anti-terrorist policies. This research contributes by examining whether Dutch CT policy influences the relationship between geographic proximity and threat perceptions. This reason for explaining the academic relevance is therefore closely related to the first. And third, as much of the research regarding geographic proximity of terrorism, threat perceptions of terrorism or the combination of these concepts has essentially focused on the U.S, this research focuses on the Netherlands; a country surrounded by multiple European countries that have been suffering from massive terrorist incidents since 2015, yet itself, fortunately, has not been a target of similar major attacks so far. It is of academic value to examine how Dutch citizens and Dutch CT experts perceive these incidents and whether they perceive these incidents as threatening to the Netherlands. Additionally, the most recent studies

on threat perceptions in the Netherlands were conducted before the tram-attack in Utrecht in March 2019, hence this research provides new insights in the current threat perception among the Dutch population and how the tram-attack possibly contributed to this perception (Liem, Kuipers & Sciarone, 2018; Van Der Does et al., 2019).

This research also has societal value, because it compares the relationship between geographic proximity and threat perceptions between "regular" citizens and experts who develop, implement or research Dutch CT policy (CT experts). Presumably, these experts have more knowledge of terrorism in general and the terrorist threat to the Netherlands in particular, therefore adjusting their perception of the terrorist threat in accordance with their knowledge. It is interesting to analyse whether the threat perceptions of these experts differ from those of regular citizens, because the information distributed by these experts can indirectly aggravate or mitigate fear of terrorism (Van Der Does et al., 2019). If governments proactively communicate their progress in fighting terrorism through speeches and press conferences, trust in governments can grow and fear can decrease. CT experts can thus consider adjusting their approach in accordance with the accurate threat perceptions of terrorism of Dutch citizens. Consequently, this research is able to provide practical recommendations with regards to the approach towards threat perceptions of terrorism among the Dutch public.

Reading Guide

This paper started with an introduction on the central themes of this research, by formulating both a central research question as well as three sub-questions that help to answer the research question. The academic and societal relevance were also presented in the introduction. This paper will then provide an evaluation of the body of literature regarding the central concepts of this paper, thus building the theoretical framework for this research. The theoretical framework also provides three hypotheses that relate to the sub-questions. The third section of this paper involves the methodology, in which details are provided relating to the operationalization of the central concepts, case selection and description, data collection and data analysis. The usage of and limitations regarding validity and reliability are also included in the methodology. Information about the participants is also provided in this section. Furthermore, the results from the data collection will be presented in the analysis followed by a discussion in which the findings are criticized, and the sub-questions are being answered. Finally, a conclusion presents the major findings underlying the answer to the research question. This paper ends by

acknowledging the strengths and limitations of this research and provides recommendations for future research and the practical field.

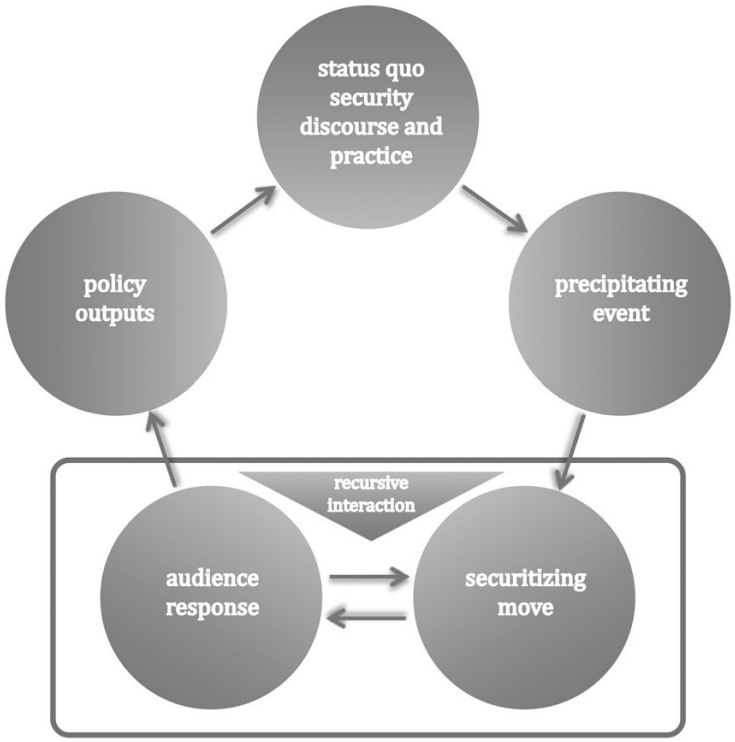
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Terrorism as a collective securitised concept

Essentially, the securitisation theory provides an appropriate framework for explaining the process of the securitisation of issues, such as terrorism (Trombetta, 2008). The Copenhagen School has established the securitisation theory to conceptualize the social construction matters of security, predominantly related to the work by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever. In scientific literature, the securitisation theory has been opposed by Realists that argue that the consideration of matters as "high politics" depends on the legitimacy of considering issues as such. Only matters that belong to the security agenda can be considered an issue of "high politics" (Trombetta, p. 587). Contrary to this view, Constructivists state that threats cannot be perceived objectively, but that threats are constructs that allow the transformation of various issues into security issues through, for example, the way that issue is framed in a political speech. In this regard, an issue becomes securitised, because a security actor identifies an issue as such in a speech act; it is not the result of the circumstance itself (Sperling & Webber, 2019).

Terrorism aims at creating a state of terror and fear and thus in itself threatens the notion of security and the conditions it pursues (Zedner, 2003). On the one hand, security pursues a state of absolute security and a neutralisation of threats (*"objective condition"*); on the other hand, security implies a feeling of safety and freedom of distress (*"subjective condition"*). As the occurrence and ramifications of terrorist attacks jeopardize these security conditions, terrorism alone logically serves as a security issue. Considering terrorism as a major security issue brings along the "common sense" that terrorism is a threat and therefore requires practices of the police, security services, media discourses and political debates to deal with the matter collectively (Hussain & Bagguley, 2012, p. 716; Trombetta, 2008). The model of collective securitisation provides an additional and profound framework to the securitisation theory of the Copenhagen School, in order to explain how terrorism has become a collective, securitised concept in a global setting. Sterling and Webber (2019) introduced this model to explain the process of collective securitisation through the use of six stages: (1) status quo security discourse and practice; (2) precipitating event; (3) securitising move; (4) audience response; (5) policy outputs and (6) routinisation of the strategic vocabulary, agenda and practice (p. 245). The model created by Sterling and Webber (2019) is presented in figure 1.

Figure 1
Model of collective securitisation



A precipitating event consists either of a single event or of a set of events that disrupt the status quo in such a way that it deteriorates the security environment (Sterling & Webber, 2019). Consequently, an authoritative figure, usually a political actor, can identify the event as an existential threat to the referent object (usually the state or nation) through speech act (Buzan, Waever & De Wilde, 1998). This can be considered the securitising move. Buzan et al. (1998) emphasize that at this point the issue has not been securitised yet; the audience needs to accept it as such. The speech act encourages states to revise their sense of security and their perception of that particular threat (audience response). These stages co-depend on a process of recursive interaction, which blurs the distinction between for example a member state of the EU and the EU as an international organisation. In other words, the recursive interaction encourages the securitising actor and the audience to negotiate about the security act. The securitised threat is then formulated in policies. The last stage, routinisation, initiates a new status quo and the recurrence of a process of collective securitisation in the future. This process can also be applied to the global securitisation of the concept of terrorism (Sterling & Webber, 2019).

Before 9/11, acts of terrorism were mainly considered major acts of international crime (Almqvist, 2008). However, the 9/11 attacks can be considered a major disruption of the status quo which led to the perception of terrorism as an "act of war" and demanded cooperation with both domestic and international counterparts. The consideration of terrorism as an act of war, helped justify the declaration of a global 'war on terror' by President George W. Bush (Kaunert & Léonard, 2019). The speech act by President Bush can be considered as the securitising move that led to the consideration of 9/11 as an assault against the civilised world, that threatened democratic and multicultural societies worldwide. Hence, by declaring a 'war on terror', President Bush, as an authoritative actor, justified a military response, even by its counterparts overseas (audience response). Consequently, countries that were not directly affected by the terrorist acts perceived it as a threat to their own national security. In response to 9/11, policies were also developed and intensified at the European level, posing a collective impact on its member states to adopt and re-evaluate CT policies. Finally, the routinisation phase has a recurring nature, as the occurrence of terrorist attacks pushes CT policy higher on the political agendas for a certain period of time. After this period, prioritizations tend to shift to other issues only until another act of terrorism is committed and the process repeats itself.

Threat perception of terrorism

Acts of terrorism, in all its possible forms, are mostly random and do not discriminate between genders, age or any societal characteristics of the victims (Cohen-Louck, 2019). Generally, terrorists aim at causing fear and spreading terror among the population, resulting in experienced feelings of potential victimization regardless of the probability of becoming a victim. Terrorism creates extreme settings in which feelings of impotence, uncertainty, anxiety and lack of security form the rule rather than the exception. The fact that terrorist attacks are taking place more regularly in an intensified manner has shifted the notion that only people directly exposed to terrorism experience feelings of unsafety and insecurity. The importance citizens assign to a terrorist attack plays a contributing role in the perceived threat, derived from the amount of media coverage, the transnational character of terrorism and feelings of a shared identity (De Roy van Zuijdewijn & Sciarone, 2019).

When studying the concept of threat perceptions of terrorism, scholars generally describe several components which, when combined, determine the perception of the threat. These contributing factors include (1) the perception of control, (2) the perception of vulnerability to the threat and (3) the perception of fear of terrorism (Cohen-Louck, 2019; Lemyre et al., 2006;

Stevens, Agho, Taylor, Jones, Jacobs, Barr & Raphael, 2011). With regards to the first component, the feeling of *loss of control* is caused by the unpredictability, uncertainty and uncontrollability of the terrorist threat. Individuals feel helpless because they are unable to cope with the threat (Cohen-Louck, 2019). Some scholars describe the first component as the *perceived likelihood* of the threat (Lemyre et al., 2006; Stevens et al., 2011). The second component relates to the *vulnerability* of individuals and their concern of potential victimization in future terrorist attacks. The last component concerns feelings of *fear*, which also includes anxiety, psychological distress and feelings of danger. Especially the aspect of fear has gained considerable attention in terrorism literature, because fear illustrates danger and encourages individuals to develop protective behaviours to avoid further danger (Haner et al., 2019; Lin & Margolin, 2014). This notion derives from the idea that behaviour is guided by emotions, which is substantiated by multiple studies. An experimental study showed that people were willing to change their travel plans after a successful terrorist attack (Göritz & Weiss, 2014). Göritz and Weiss (2014) stress that the degree to which the situation is similar to one's own and the time for reflection can influence the change of behaviour. Especially the latter explains that at some point people habituate to a situation and develop coping behaviour, such as avoiding public spaces (Bleich, Gelkopf & Solomon, 2003). Another study proved that worry significantly affects the choice to travel, thus affirming that emotions are of relevance for behaviour after terrorism (Fischhoff, de Bruin, Perrin & Downs, 2004). However, discrepancies in the duration of protective behaviour seem to exist between cultures and countries with fluctuating regularity of exposure to terrorism (Gigerenzer, 2006). Fear of terrorism also causes a higher demand for response by government officials (Lin & Margolin, 2014). Nonetheless, one cannot automatically assume that the presence of a terrorist threat results in fear among individuals (Aly & Green, 2010). From a psychological perspective, anxiety is the first response to a danger, which is perceived yet unspecified. However, when this danger becomes objectified and inevitable, fear is the natural response. Some scholars incorporate the matter of *fear* under the denominator of vulnerability. In turn, these scholars consider *protective behaviours* as the third indicator for the threat perception of terrorism (Lemyre et al., 2006; Stevens et al., 2011).

When considering the sum of components, research has shown that the three components overlap continuously, as feelings of helplessness and concern for future victimization can contribute to heightened levels of fear causing individuals to adopt protective behaviours (Kim, 2016; Lemyre et al., 2006; Stevens et al., 2011). An important indicator to explain increased threat perceptions of terrorism among citizens is their familiarity with the governments' efforts

in combating terrorism, as governments have an important role in building trust and mitigating fear (Van Der Does et al., 2019). In their efforts, governments need to create awareness while at the same time they must circumvent inducing fear among the public (Crijns, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). Researchers stress that governmental communication is crucial in this regard, because governmental experts are able to provide objective information about the risk of terrorism and thus reduce fear. However, as governments generally focus on monitoring suspicious terrorist activity, potential targets and other aspects to enhance national security, neutralization of psychological effects of terrorism (e.g. fear and concern) are often an "afterthought" (Hoffman & Shelby, 2017, p. 628). As such, it is expected that the threat perception of Dutch citizens differs from the threat perception of CT experts, because their knowledge of CT and the current threat level does not match the level of expertise of CT experts. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H_1 "Regular" Dutch citizens have a higher threat perception of terrorism compared to CT experts.

Geographic proximity and threat perception

Over the years, terrorism has shown its transnational character in which the impact of terrorist attacks crosses borders and reaches the wider, global population (De Roy van Zuijdewijn & Sciarone, 2019). This way, the infliction of psychological damage and behavioural reactions goes far beyond the immediate target population (Veldhuis & Bakker, 2012). Research has shown that the risk perception of a population increases when a terrorist attack takes place in another, western country, even when it concerns a western country on another continent (Liem et al., 2018). In this regard, geographic proximity of terrorist attacks is of particular importance. Geographic proximity is generally considered a sub-category of the umbrella term 'psychological proximity', which consists of three categories in total: temporal proximity (*"the time when an event occurred – past or future"*), social proximity (*"how close one perceives another person as an individual or member of a group"*) and geographic proximity (Kwon et al., 2017, p. 876). The latter is of utter relevance in this research. Geographic proximity can be defined as the *"psychological distance of an individual from the place where the event occurs"* (p. 876). As research has shown, fear of terrorism and distress can be instigated by the geographic proximity of terrorist attacks and close proximity to potential terrorist targets (Thoresen et al., 2012; Woods et al., 2008). Generally, CT policies

emphasize three types of high-profile targets: (1) large urban centres, (2) critical parts of the national infrastructure such as nuclear power plants and (3) symbolic targets such as monuments and government buildings (Woods et al., 2008, p. 64). Close proximity to one of these high-profile targets can strengthen the risk perception among citizens. In their study on the risk perception among residents in the U.S. state Michigan, Woods et al. (2008) found that residents of Michigan living within a five-mile radius from a high-profile target considered the risk of terrorism greater than residents who lived beyond this radius. The study supports the notion that people perceive high-profile targets as unsafe and risky, because experts have designated these areas as such and communicated this view to the public.

Thoresen et al. (2012) conducted a study on proximity and distress in Norwegian citizens following the attacks in Oslo and on Utøya Island in 2011 and found that geographic proximity was a strong predictor of distress in the Norwegian society. Residents of Oslo showed higher levels of distress than the residents living in other regions of Norway. Thoresen at al. (2012) concluded that geographic proximity of terrorism has a great likelihood of predicting feelings of personal threat. Even several months after the attacks, certain reactions such as the perceived threat and the adjustment of behaviour, remained at high levels among all the respondents. However, this rather explains the influence of temporal proximity on the threat perception of terrorism rather than the geographic proximity (Kwon et al., 2017). With respectful consideration of the literature, the following hypothesis can be formulated[1]:

H_2 A high geographic proximity of terrorist attacks results in heightened threat perceptions of terrorism among the Dutch population.

It is expected, and very likely, that the higher the geographic proximity of terrorism, the higher the threat perception of terrorism among the (Dutch) population (Thoresen et al., 2012; Woods et al., 2008). It can be expected that the collected data will support this hypothesis. However, several other components can create a puzzling effect to this hypothesis, such as news interest and familiarity with the efforts of the Dutch government organisations in the combat against terrorism. The latter is of particular relevance as this research is interested in the impact of Dutch CT policy. Therefore, an adjusted version of H_2 can then be formulated, keeping in

[1] For research purposes, geographic proximity is divided into three categories: (1) high geographic proximity of terrorist attacks (within the Netherlands), (2) average geographic proximity of terrorist attacks (within Europe) and (3) low geographic proximity of terrorist attacks (outside of Europe).

mind the specific condition of CT policy that potentially creates a spurious relationship. This hypothesis reads:

H_3 A low or average geographic proximity of terrorist attacks results in heightened threat perceptions of terrorism among Dutch citizens, when citizens are very familiar with Dutch CT policy.

METHODOLOGY

This research entails both quantitative and qualitative research, focused on finding correlations between the independent variable (geographic proximity of terrorist attacks) and the dependent variable (threat perception of terrorism). This positive research aims to examine the extent to which geographic proximity of terrorism is related to the threat perception of terrorism among Dutch citizens and Dutch CT experts. With respect to control variables that potentially affect this relationship, this research particularly focuses on the impact of Dutch CT policy on this perceived relationship.

Operationalization of variables

Independent variable

The components of the research question need to be operationalized for interpretation and measurement of the constructs (Bijleveld, 2013). In order to measure the independent variable 'geographic proximity of terrorist attacks', the geographic distance between the Netherlands and other countries is used as a ground rule (Lin & Margolin, 2014). As such, geographic proximity is divided into three categories: high proximity (within The Netherlands), average proximity (within Europe) and low proximity (outside of Europe).

Dependent variable

In order to measure the dependent variable 'threat perception of terrorism' the essential components need to be distinguished. In multiple studies on the threat perception of terrorism, three indicators were used to measure the variable and are adopted in this research for measurement. The indicators contain the *perceived likelihood of the threat*, *vulnerability/concern* (hereafter fear of terrorism) and *protective behaviours* (Lemyre et al., 2006; Stevens et al., 2011). First, the general threat perception of terrorism is measured through a number of statements per indicator. Then the threat perception is linked to geographic

proximity, by linking five cases of terrorism to statements concerning threat perceptions. The general threat perception of terrorism is measured by five statements: (1) every public space/event in the Netherlands has a risk of terrorism; (2) the risk of terrorism is greater in metropoles; (3) I am concerned that a terrorist attack will take place in the Netherlands in the near future; (4) I am travelling less because of terrorism; and (5) I am more alert in public spaces and in public transport because of terrorism. A 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) is used for measurement.

To gain insight in the relationship between geographic proximity and the threat perception of terrorism, five cases of terrorism have been selected. The selection and description of these cases are presented in the next section of the methodology. Five statements regarding these cases were presented. These statements are measured on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For every statement, respondents were asked to give an indication for each case. The statements are as follows: (1) the risk of terrorism to the Netherlands has increased after "…"; (2) every public space and public transport in the Netherlands have an increased risk of terrorism since "…"; (3) I am more concerned about terrorism in the Netherlands since "…"; (4) I am travelling less since "…"; (5). I am avoiding large public events and public spaces since "…". In addition, one question was included to ask respondents how long their concern after every case of terrorism lasted. This question was also measured on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (I never felt concern) to 5 (I am still concerned).

Control variables

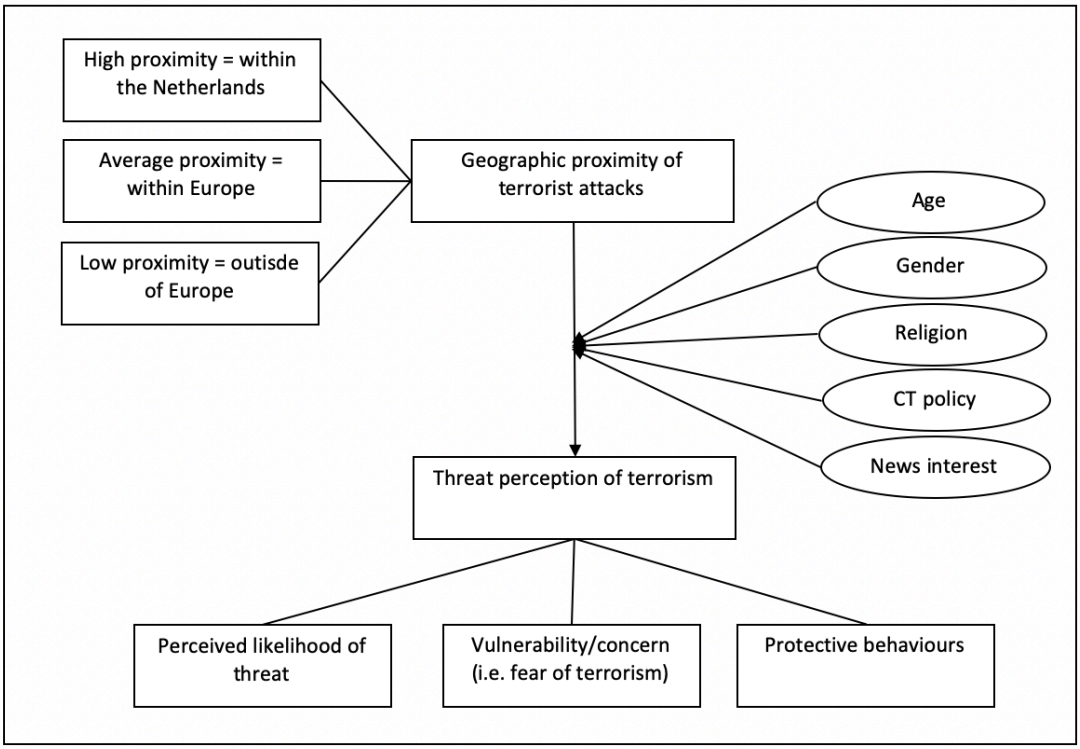
There are several control variables that potentially influence the relationship between geographic proximity and threat perceptions of terrorism, potentially resulting in a spurious relationship. Dutch CT policy is the first, and most prominent control variable in this research and was measured by asking three questions in the survey: (1) Do you know what the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) is? (1=yes, 2=no); (2) How familiar are you with the current Threat Assessment Terrorism Netherlands (DTN)?; and (3) How familiar are you with the practices of the NCTV? The latter two questions are measured on a 3-point Likert scale from 1 (very familiar) to 3 (not familiar at all).

As the relation between geographic proximity and threat perceptions of terrorism can also be strengthened or shift by other factors, this research has included demographic variables that are constant and have demonstrated to be of value in measuring concern or fear about terrorism (Haner et al., 2019; Woods et al., 2008). The independent control variables are gender (coded

male=1, female=2, prefer not want to answer=3), age (measured in years), news interest (following news rated from never=1 to multiple times a day=5), religion, current employment status, highest level of completed education and industry of employment. The respondents were also asked whether their work or study is related to terrorism policy (e.g. development, implementation, research). The combination of the components of the research question is illustrated in the conceptual model in figure 2.

Figure 2

Conceptual Model version 1: Linking geographic proximity to threat perceptions of terrorism



Cases

Case selection

For this research, five cases have been selected through theoretical sampling and in accordance with a small set of inclusion criteria (Decorte & Zaitch, 2009). The first criterium refers to the classification of an attack as terrorism. Secondly, terrorist attacks in the period 2015-2019 are exclusively included in order to provide valuable results. This period is chosen because of the increased frequency and intensity of terrorist attacks in this period and the increased threat of violent acts by right- and left extremism since 2015 (NCTV, 2016). The third criterium prescribes that solely terrorist attacks with a deadly outcome are included. The

last criterium involves the geographic region of terrorist attacks, related to the three categories of geographic proximity: the Netherlands, Europe and outside of Europe. Two cases per region are selected for the research. The Netherlands forms the exception to this rule, because the tram-attack in March 2019 in Utrecht is the only recent terrorist attack in the Netherlands with a deadly outcome. Therefore, only one case is selected for the Netherlands. The cases regarding Europe include the Paris Attacks in 2015 (attacks in January and November) and the Christmas Market attack in Germany in December 2016. Regarding cases of terrorism outside of Europe, the cases that are included in this research are the shooting at the Pulse Nightclub in Florida (The United States) in June 2016 and the mosque shooting in Christchurch (New Zealand) in March 2019.

Case description

The selected cases will briefly be described to provide a degree of understanding of the nature and intensity of every case. The descriptions are presented in descending order.

Tram-attack Utrecht, the Netherlands – 2019

In March 2019, the Netherlands experienced the first terrorism motivated attack with deadly victims since the terrorist attack on Theo van Gogh in 2004 (NCTV, 2019a). In the attack on a tram in the city of Utrecht, Gökmen T. killed four people and injured multiple others after which the attacker fled (NOS, 2019a). For a short period of time, the Dutch authorities raised the Threat Assessment Terrorism Netherlands (DTN) to the highest level ('critical') for the province Utrecht, because the situation was highly uncertain, the attacker was on the run and the authorities feared subsequent attacks (NCTV, 2019a).

Mosque shooting Christchurch, New Zealand – 2019

In March 2019, Brenton T. attacked two mosques in the city of Christchurch, New Zealand. The shooting resulted in the death of 51 people (BBC, 2020). The gunman wore a headcam during the shooting; the footage was broadcasted via Facebook Live. Brenton T. also published a right-extremist manifesto (NOS, 2020). The attack is considered as the deadliest terrorist attack in the history of New Zealand. In the aftermath of the attack, the New Zealand government sharpened its gun legislation and restricted military-style semi-automatic weapons (BBC, 2020). A year after the attacks, Brenton T. plead guilty to 51 charges of murder, one terrorism charge and the attempted murder of another 40 people.

Christmas market attack Berlin, Germany – 2016

In December 2016, Anis A. hijacked a truck and drove into a crowded Christmas market in Berlin, killing 12 people (The Independent, 2018). Although the attacker was able to flee to Italy, he was killed in a shootout with police four days later in Milan. The attack was claimed by ISIS. Anis A. was part of an active terrorist network in Europe and repeatedly made terrorist plans with other jihadists (NOS, 2019b). Five other people who were connected to Anis A. were arrested in 2018 (The Independent, 2018).

Pulse Nightclub shooting Orlando, the United States – 2016

In June 2016, a gay nightclub in Florida, the Pulse Nightclub, was hit by a terrorist attack that resulted in the death of 49 people (NBC News, 2018). During the attack, the terrorist Omar M. called 911 to pledge allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), a terrorist group which publicly illustrate their hatred towards gay people by publishing videos in which gay people are thrown off buildings. The attack was considered as one of the deadliest attacks against the LGBTQ-community in the U.S. history.

Paris attacks, France – 2015

Throughout the year of 2015, Paris was terrorised by various terrorist attacks resulting in the death of a large number of people. Among these attacks was the attack in January 2015 on the satirical French newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*, resulting in twelve deaths. The attackers' motives, a retaliation against the newspapers' repeated portrayal of the Prophet Muhammad, was considered the reason to interpret the incident as a symbolic attack against the French Republic (Fadel, 2015). Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) claimed responsibility for the Charlie Hebdo attack. In November of the same year, a series of terrorist attacks took place in Paris at several public spaces, such as the Bataclan theatre, a major stadium, restaurants and bars (Gandolphe & El Haj, 2017). The attacks killed 130 people and injured hundreds. The responsibility for the attacks in November 2015 was claimed by ISIS (CNN, 2019). The international manhunt for the attacker Salah Abdeslam took approximately four months. After the attacks in November 2015, other European states, such as the Netherlands, also declared war against ISIS and intensified its preparedness and border controls (NOS, 2015).

Data collection – mixed methods

Data triangulation

To answer the research question, data needs to be collected relating to the key elements of this research. Data triangulation is beneficial because it enables the researcher to generate a deeper understanding of various concepts (Thurmond, 2001). First, a variety of primary sources

is used to build the theoretical framework and provide the body of literature as backbone for this research. Predominantly scientific literature contributed to building this framework, which simultaneously substantiated the formulated hypotheses. Among the primary sources are also a number of government documents published by the NCTV concerning the (changing) threat level and the national strategy concerning CT. Second, a number of news-articles are used as secondary sources to provide background information on the selected cases.

Methodological triangulation

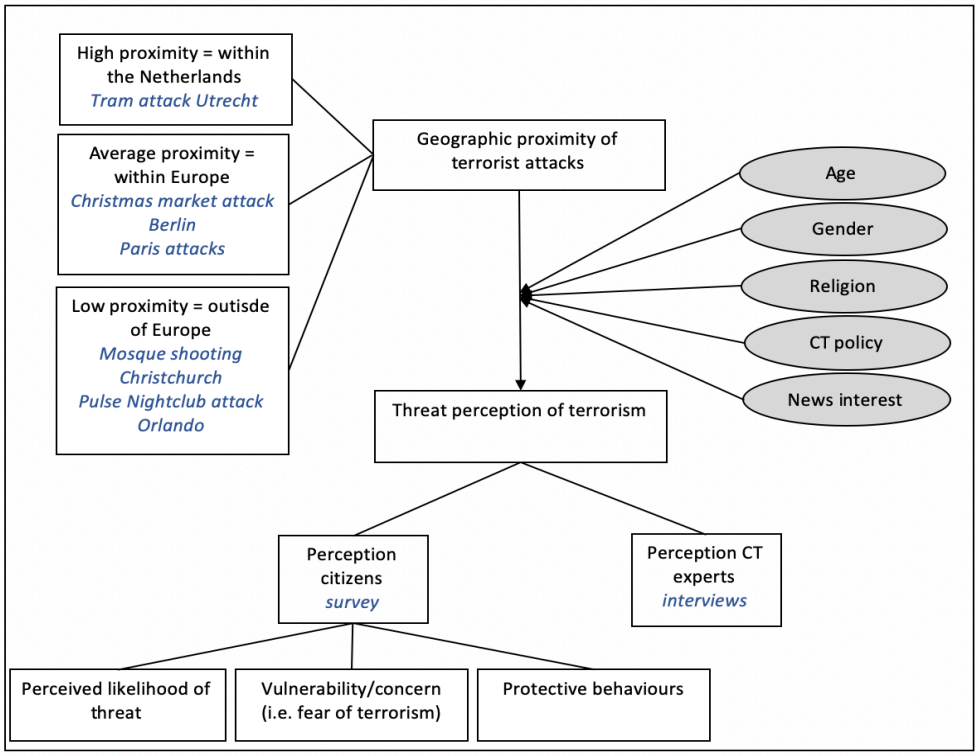
As this research is focused on the threat perception of terrorism among Dutch citizens and Dutch CT experts, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodological instruments has been used to gather data. The use of mixed methods in research allows the researcher on the one hand to test particular hypotheses about certain mechanisms of cause-effect relationships (quantitative), and on the other hand to uncover these mechanisms and provide a clearer understanding and in-depth analysis of certain phenomena (qualitative). This way, the qualitative data enriches the findings of the quantitative method (Thurmond, 2001; Yoshikawa, Weisner, Kalil & Way, 2008). To research the threat perception of terrorism among Dutch citizens, a quantitative survey was developed. Surveys can be used to reach a greater public and generate a large amount of data (Bijleveld, 2013). A survey format has been created with the program Qualtrics, including both multiple choice- and matrix questions that help answer the research question. In the survey, the indicators of threat perception are linked to the independent variable (geographic proximity of terrorism). After a brief pre-test in which a small number of people pre-tested the survey, five matrix questions were readjusted to multiple choice questions. The survey was originally created in English, but later translated to Dutch because of the research population (Dutch citizens). The survey questions are presented in Appendix B.

The second method for data collection is the use of qualitative semi-structured interviews to gain a more comprehensive view on threat perceptions of terrorism among a particular group of citizens: Dutch "experts" who work within the domain of counterterrorism. The interviews are considered to complement the survey data and are of particular interest in identifying essential patterns and potential discrepancies between the two groups of participants (Dutch citizens and CT experts). A general topic guide was created to add a certain degree of structure to the interviews (Decorte & Zaitch, 2009). This topic guide is presented in Appendix C. For every particular interview, specific questions were included as well. The link between the central theme of this research, the mixed methods of data collection and the selected cases is

captured in a second version of the conceptual model in figure 2. This adjusted version is presented in figure 3.

Figure 3

Conceptual Model version 2: Linking the research question to the mixed methods and cases



Reliability and validity of instruments

Survey

The validity and reliability are crucial criteria to measure the level of quality of the methodological instruments in this research (Bijleveld, 2013). The validity for quantitative research falls apart in (1) construct validity, (2) statistical conclusion validity, (3) internal validity and (4) external validity (Bijleveld, 2013, p. 45). Reliability forms a part of the first category of validity and implies that the data needs to be consistent when repeated at different times (Mohamad, Sulaiman, Sern & Salleh, 2015). Before the data can be analysed, the reliability of the questions concerning the threat perception needs to be determined. The Cronbach's Alpha (α) is used to test the degree of reliability. Cronbach's α is able to show whether the coherence amongst the included items for a variable is reliable (the higher the Cronbach's α, the stronger the reliability). Table 1 presents the overall reliability of the scale variables of threat perception combined with the three categories of geographic proximity

(Field, 2013). The tables with separate Cronbach's α per included item for the scale variable threat perception are included in Appendix D. Field (2013) explains that a Cronbach's α between .7 and .8 are generally accepted as appropriate values to indicate good reliability. The table below illustrates that the Cronbach's α is between .7 and .8 for every scale variable, hence indicating acceptable reliability for the threat perception of terrorism with high geographic proximity (α = .740) and good reliability for the other two scale variables. The overall reliability is strongest for the threat perception of terrorism with low geographic proximity (α=.889).

Table 1

Reliability Statistics – Cronbach's Alpha

Reliability Statistics		
	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Threat perception of terrorism with high geographic proximity	.740	5
Threat perception of terrorism with average geographic proximity	.851	10
Threat perception of terrorism with low geographic proximity	.889	10

Statistical conclusion validity measures whether a relationship is statistically significant, which the Cronbach's α in table 1 supports. The third category of validity, internal validity, measures whether a relationship is spurious, which means that other factors might explain the relationship. This research included a number of confounding variables to control whether a spurious relationship exists. Last, external validity is of great importance for survey research, because the individual results need to be meaningful and generalizable, so conclusions can be drawn from the research population (Bijleveld, 2013; Decorte & Zaitch, 2009; Mohamad et al., 2015). Therefore, the sample size needs to representative for the research population. The rule of thumb for scientific research is that the sample should contain at least 100 respondents in order for the results to be generalizable (Bijleveld, 2013). However, the aim for a sample size depends on the research population as a whole. This research is focused on the Dutch population, which consists of approximately 17 million residents, of which about 14 million are above the age of 18 (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2019); therefore, the sample size needs to be representative for this population (Bijleveld, 2013). With a 5% margin of error and

90-95% confidence interval, the sample size should contain between 300 and 400 respondents (www.surveymonkey.com).

Limitations

As explained in the theoretical framework, a spurious relationship is expected between the geographic proximity and threat perception of terrorism. This assumption limits the internal validity of this research.

Interviews

With respect to the interviews as instrument to collect data, the determination of the validity and reliability is a more complex process compared to quantitative research. It is important to note, that the interviews are meant to complement and substantiate the survey findings or to explain certain observations. Generally, results of interviews are not generalizable to a broader population (Decorte & Zaitch, 2009). Although this research does not pursue generalizability of the interview data, a minimum number of interviewees needs to be determined. Considering the time span of this research and the use of mixed methods, the minimum of respondents was set on four interviews. Through the use of semi-structured interviews, the participants have been asked questions relating to the research question. The interviews were held through the digital platform Skype and have been audio-recorded. The duration of the interviews was approximately 50-60 minutes and the spoken language was Dutch.

Limitations

When a study concerns qualitative research, as is the case with interviews, reliability is divided into *internal* and *external* reliability. Internal reliability refers to the extent to which other researchers would draw the same conclusions based on the same data, which can be achieved by providing other researchers access to the research material and compare their conclusions (Decorte & Zaitch, 2009). Moreover, the external reliability can be strengthened when new data results in the same conclusions, which reflects reproducibility. Due to the relatively short period of time for this research (approximately 4-5 months), the interviews are not optimal in their reliability. Data triangulation and methodological triangulation have been used to partially compensate this limitation, because mixed methods generate complementary findings which help to enhance research (Thurmond, 2001).

Participants

Survey

With respect to determining the target group, non-probability sampling in combination with snowball sampling and quota sampling are used for this process. This research is only interested in the Dutch population, so therefore the sample is aimed at respondents with the Dutch nationality above the age of 18 years. Through snowball sampling, the personal and professional network of the researcher has been approached for participation and were asked to share the survey with their contacts. The survey was also shared on two social media platforms: Facebook and LinkedIn. With this method, a sample size of 350 respondents (N) has been reached. The table with descriptive statistics of the sample is presented in Appendix A. The table shows that the average age (mean) of the respondents is 39 years. The most frequently used value for gender is female (mode, 2=female), implying that the sample consist predominantly of females.

Quota sampling is used to categorize the participants in mutually exclusive sub-groups, with specific characteristics and proportions (Bijleveld, 2013). The sub-groups are related to the demographic variables, including gender, age, education, religion and status of employment. The ordinal variable 'Age' is continuous and recoded into a different variable: a categorical variable with three categories: young adults (1=18-35 years), middle-aged adults (2=35-55 years) and older adults (3= ≥ 55 years). By recoding a variable, the old values of the continuous variable 'Age' can be changed by indicating a specific range for every category. The frequencies for the recoded variable are included in table 2. Table 2 also presents the frequencies of the other demographic variables. Table 2 illustrates that 167 respondents are young adults, 111 are middle-aged and 72 are older adults. In the sample, 29.1% of the respondents is male and 70% is female. The answer category 'prefer not to answer' was coded as missing. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents finished Higher Vocational Education as highest completest education level (31.1%), followed by 94 respondents (26.9%) who obtained a master's degree. The table also shows that 68% of the respondents in not religious, followed by 25.4% Catholics. Lastly, most of the respondents work full time (41.7%), followed by 24.7% part time employers and 19.1% students.

Table 2

Statistics demographic variables – respondents survey (N=350)

Demographic variables				
		N	%	Percent of Cases
Gender of the respondent	Male	102	29.1	
	Female	245	70.0	
	Total	347	99.1	
Missing	Prefer not to answer	3	.9	
	Total	350	100.0	
Age of the respondent	18-35 years old	167	47.7	
	35-55 years old	111	31.7	
	≥55 years old	72	20.6	
	Total	350	100.0	
Education	High school, no diploma	2	.6	
	High school, diploma or equivalent	32	9.1	
	Intermediate Vocational Education (MBO)	44	12.6	
	Higher Vocational Education (HBO)	109	31.1	
	Bachelor's Degree (University)	42	12.0	
	Master's Degree (University)	94	26.9	
	Professional/Doctorate Degree	27	7.7	
	Total	350	100.0	
Religion of the respondent	Catholicism/Christianity	89	25.4	
	Islam	7	2.0	
	Buddhism	1	.3	
	Other, namely	7	2.0	
	Not religious	238	68.0	
	Total	342	97.7	
Missing	Prefer not to answer	8	2.3	
	Total	350	100.0	
Employment	Employed full time	155	41.7	44.4
	Employed part time	92	24.7	26.4
	Unemployed, looking for work	6	1.6	1.7
	Unemployed, not looking for work	4	1.1	1.1
	Self-employed	26	7.0	7.4
	Retired	16	4.3	4.6
	Student	71	19.1	20.3
	Unable to work	2	0.5	0.6
	Total	372	100.0	106.6

Interviews

As explained, the interviews are intended to complement the survey data and to provide insight in a specific group of the Dutch population: CT experts who are involved in the development, implementation or researching of (Dutch) CT policy. In total, twelve experts of seven relevant organisations (Clingendael Institute, Europol, Institute for Security and Crisismanagement – "COT", International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – "ICCT", NCTV, police, University of Leiden and Utrecht) were approached via e-mail, in which they were asked to participate in an interview. Four people agreed on an interview, three people declined an interview because of their lack of time and the large number of requests for interviews. Five experts did not respond. In total, four CT experts were interviewed. With respect to the anonymity of the CT experts, the experts are referred to as expert A, B, C and D. A description of the expertise per interviewee is given in the table below. One expert works at the National Police in the cluster counterterrorism, extremism and radicalisation (CTER). One expert works at the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) at Europol. The other two experts work as terrorism researcher at Leiden University, of which one is also as research fellow connected to the ICCT.

Table 3
Description CT experts, interviews (N=4)

ID expert	Description expertise
Expert A	Researcher Leiden University & research fellow ICCT
Expert B	Researcher Leiden University
Expert C	Specialist ECTC, Europol
Expert D	Strategic Security Analyst CTER, National Police

Data analysis

Survey

After the data has been collected, it is crucial to analyse the data and look for existing relationships between the variables. The retrieved data from the survey research has been inserted in the program IBM SPSS Statistics, which is a statistical software platform that allows its users to extract valuable insights from their data (Field, 2013). The dataset has been coded according to SPSS standards. The statistical program has been used to execute frequency tables,

correlation tests and Analyses of Variances (ANOVA) to determine statistical and significant relationships.

Interviews

The audio-recorded interviews have been transcribed in Dutch, because the interviews were held in the native language of the experts. The quotes used in this thesis have been translated to English. The audio-recorded interviews have been processed into near-verbatim transcripts, because this research is only interested in the content of the conversation and leaves the details about the pronunciation of words out of scope (Schrauf, 2016). The program Atlas.ti Cloud has been used to code the transcripts, which is a program to analyse qualitative data. The process of coding consists of two phases: initial coding, which is the first step to reduce the large amount of data and make a distinction between relevant and non-relevant information, and axial coding, in which different dimensions and patterns can be identified and connected to each other (Decorte & Zaitch, 2009). A coding paradigm has been created as a way to construct certain classifications derived from the conceptual model in figure 2. This coding paradigm still provides some leeway to extract information from the interviews to form a theory and complement the survey data. The coding paradigm is presented in Appendix E.

ANALYSIS

The analysis section presents and integrates the findings of the data gathered through the survey and interviews. The themes in the data collection methods are derived from the research question and sub-questions, which are essentially concerned with the geographic proximity and the threat perception of terrorism. The answer category 'prefer not to answer' was coded as 'missing data' in SPSS. As shown in table 3 in the methodology, the interviewed experts are referred to in this research as (1) expert A (researcher Leiden University/research fellow at ICCT); (2) expert B (researcher Leiden University); (3) expert C (specialist ECTC, Europol); and (4) expert D (security analyst CTER, National Police). The interviews were transcribed in Dutch, however, the quotes used in the analysis have been translated to English. In the essence, the threat perception of terrorism is measured by three components: perceived likelihood, fear and protective behaviours. The findings and correlations of these separate components are only presented for their relation to geographic proximity and the familiarity with Dutch CT policy, as these variables represent the central themes of this research.

Exploration of the data

A first exploration of the survey data has been included in the methodology, which presented the demographic variables and showed that the scale variables (threat perception for the three categories of geographic proximity) indicated acceptable or good reliability. The next step is to measure whether the variables are normally distributed. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (Test of Normality) is used to test the normal distribution. The null hypothesis claims that the sampled population is normally distributed (H_0), rebelling against the alternative hypothesis that claims that the sampled population is not normally distributed (H_1). If the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicates significance (*Sig.* less than .05), the variables are not normally distributed. As the table below illustrates, the first assumption is that none of the variables are normally distributed (because the significance levels are lower than .05). However, when looking at the Normal Q-Q plots (included in Appendix F), the quantiles for every scale variable fall close to the diagonal line (which indicates a normal distribution). As Field (2013) emphasizes, large samples can lead to the conclusion that minor deviations from normality (as shown by the Normal Q-Q plots) are significant (as shown by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test in table 4), but still represent a normal distribution. Hence, H_1 can be rejected and it can be stated that the data is normally distributed. With regards to the data collection through the interviews, eleven codes were used to code the transcripts, which are presented in the coding paradigm in Appendix E. A total of 35 quotations are included in this research.

Table 4

Test of Normality – Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Threat perception and low geographic proximity	.074	350	.000	.986	350	.001
Threat perception and average geographic proximity	.067	350	.001	.989	350	.012
Threat perception of terrorism and high geographic proximity (within the Netherlands)	.069	350	.000	.985	350	.001

a Lilliefors Significance Correction

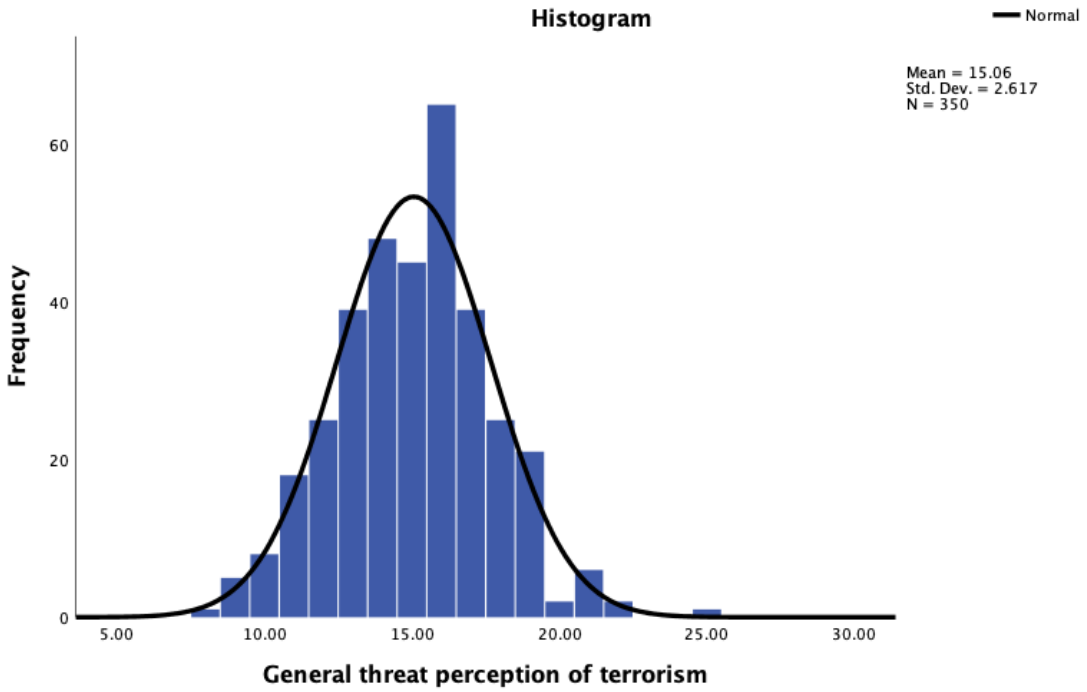
General threat perception of terrorism

Five questions in the survey relate to the general threat perception of terrorism, which are computed into one variable. The histogram in figure 4 illustrates that high numbers suggest a high perception of the terrorist threat. The majority of the respondents, 18.6% (N=350), are situated in the middle; they do not experience a very high or very low threat perception of terrorism. In this regard, expert C states that "there are a lot of things we do not see, which makes it seem nothing is going on. But a lot is going on. There are a lot of people who have extremist ideas in that regard, and at least say that they are willing to commit an attack or approve of an attack if one is committed" (Appendix G3). Expert D adds that:

> "A lone actor attack can happen anytime. A large-scale attack such as Brussels, Paris, well that chance has become less significant. That distinction is being made. I think that that is a lot bigger for a lone actor than large, organised, coordinated attacks". (expert D, Appendix G4)

Figure 4

Histogram for the general threat perception of terrorism (N=350)



To gain more insight in the general threat perception of terrorism, the perception per component is measured. The histograms per component (figure 5-9) present the frequencies of

every statement per component. The findings indicate that a vast number of the Dutch citizens perceives a high likelihood of terrorism in the Netherlands: 64% agrees that every public space has a risk of terrorism and 71.4% agrees that the terrorist threat is greater in metropoles. Moreover, Dutch citizens in general do not feel concerned about terrorism (figure 7). With respect to protective behaviours, the majority of the Dutch citizens (54.3%) does not travel less because of terrorism, but indicates they are more alert in public spaces (32.3%).

Figure 5

Histogram statement 1 (perceived likelihood)

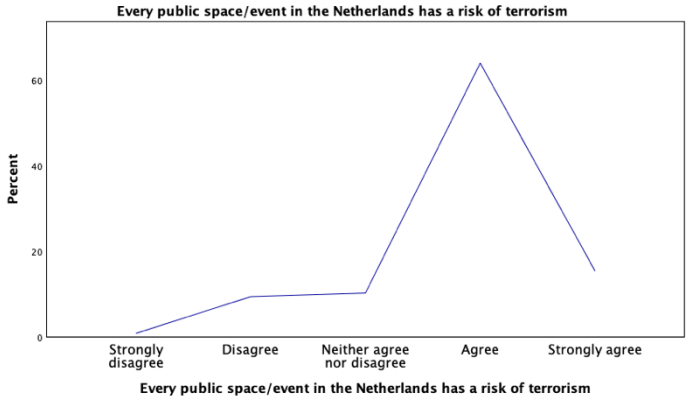


Figure 6

Histogram statement 2 (perceived likelihood)

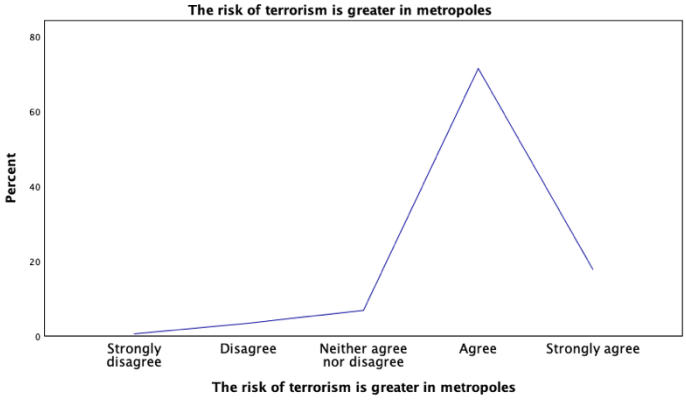


Figure 7

Histogram statement 3 (fear)

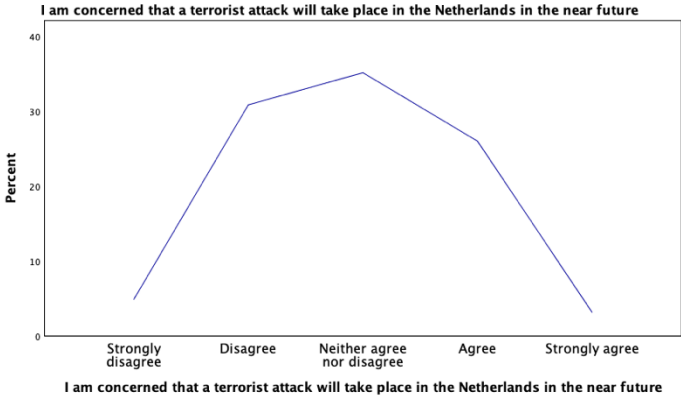


Figure 8

Histogram statement 4 (protective behaviour)

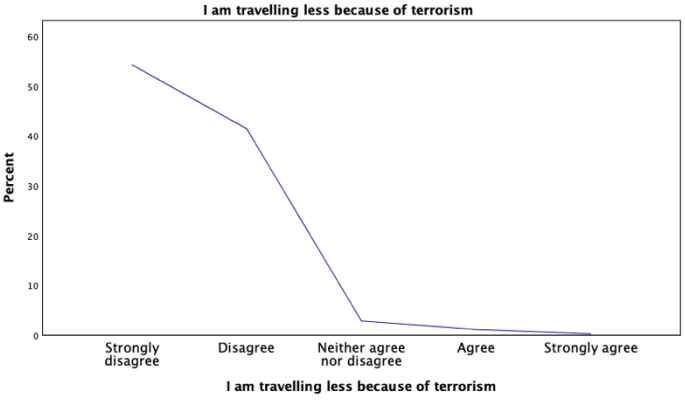
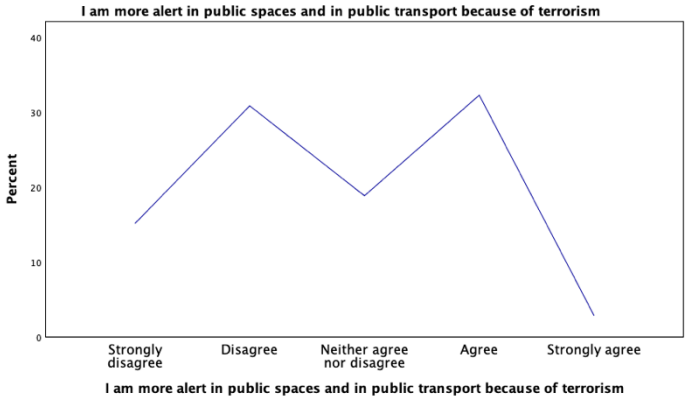


Figure 9

Histogram statement 5 (protective behaviour)



Link between geographic proximity and threat perceptions of terrorism

General threat perception and threat perceptions combined with geographic proximity

The survey measured both the general threat perception of terrorism and the threat perception of terrorism combined with the three categories of geographic proximity. In order to gain more insight in the relationship between threat perceptions and geographic proximity, the survey included statements that linked the geographic proximity of terrorist attacks to the threat perception of terrorism. As explained in the methodology, geographic proximity is divided into three categories of proximity: low geographic proximity (outside of Europe), average geographic proximity (within Europe) and high geographic proximity (within the Netherlands). The methodology section also explained that a total of five cases of terrorism that fall within these three categories have been presented in the survey. The statements were computed into three separate variables in SPSS: threat perception of terrorism with *low* geographic proximity (case in New Zealand and in the United States), threat perception of terrorism with *average* geographic proximity (case in Germany and in France) and threat perception of terrorism with *high* geographic proximity (case in the Netherlands). The variables can be considered ordinal, because the survey questions contained Likert scales. To determine whether statistically, significant relationships are present between the variables, a bivariate analysis is executed in SPSS. It is important to note that the findings of a bivariate analysis only indicate whether the variables are significantly related; the bivariate analysis does not provide any indication of causal relationships (Field, 2013). Nonetheless, conducting a bivariate analysis provides an impression of potential correlations. In this regard, the Spearman's

Correlation is selected for the bivariate analysis because the variables contain ordinal data. The results of Spearman's Correlation are presented in the matrix in table 5.

Table 5
Spearman's Correlation – threat perceptions of terrorism

Correlations					
		1	2	3	4
1. General threat perception of terrorism	Correlation Coefficient	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	350			
2. Threat perception and low geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.511**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	350	350		
3. Threat perception and average geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.539**	.684**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	350	350	350	
4. Threat perception and high geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.485**	.665**	.687**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	350	350	350	350

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The matrix in table 5 gives an indication of the strength of the linear relationships between the general threat perception and the three ordinal variables (threat perception per category of geographic proximity). In this regard, the null hypothesis is that "there is no relationship between the variables" (H_0). The alternative hypothesis (H_1) reads that "there is a relationship between the variables". The significance values are less than 0.01, indicating that the relationships are statistically significant. First, the significant relationships correlated to the general threat perception of terrorism are provided. The general threat perception is significantly and positively correlated to all the ordinal variables. This means that when one variable increases, the other variable increases as well. The significant, positive relationship between the general threat perception and the threat perception for low geographic proximity is moderate (r_s=0.511≤0.01). More specifically, Dutch citizens with a high general threat perception of terrorism also have a high threat perception of terrorism with low geographic

proximity (outside of Europe). The general threat perception is also significantly correlated to the threat perception for average geographic proximity (r_s=0.539≤0.01), implying that people with a high general threat perception of terrorism also experience a high threat perception of terrorism with average geographic proximity (within Europe). Lastly, table 5 illustrates that there is a statistically, significant relationship between the general threat perception of terrorism and the threat perception for high geographic proximity (r_s=0.485≤0.01). In other terms, Dutch citizens with a high general threat perception of terrorism, also have a high threat perception of terrorism with high geographic proximity (within the Netherlands). All these correlations are between 0.41-0.60, thus substantiating that the linear relationship between the variables is of moderate strength.

In addition, table 5 also illustrates that there are statistically significant relationships between the ordinal variables. Table 5 shows a significant, positive relationship between the threat perception for low geographic proximity and the threat perception for average geographic proximity (r_s=0.684≤0.01). The relationship is strong, because the value is bigger than 0.61 and smaller than 1. The results indicate that people with a high threat perception of terrorism with low geographic proximity, also have a high threat perception of terrorism with average geographic proximity. There is also a statistically, significant relationship between the threat perception for low geographic proximity and the threat perception for high geographic proximity (r_s=0.665≤0.01). The statistics present a strong, positive relationship, which suggests that people with a high threat perception for low geographic proximity, also have a high threat perception for high geographic proximity. Finally, the matrix in table 5 shows a positive, significant relationship between the threat perception for average geographic proximity and the threat perception for high geographic proximity (r_s=0.687≤0.01). This relationship can be interpreted as people with a high threat perception for average geographic proximity, also have a high threat perception for high geographic proximity. As the findings indicate significant correlations, H_0 can be rejected.

Components threat perceptions and geographic proximity

To determine whether Dutch citizens differ in their threat perception of terrorism between the three categories of geographic proximity, the findings of the components of threat perceptions are presented separately. The components of the threat perception of terrorism are the perceived likelihood, fear and protective behaviours. The findings of the components are presented in table 6. The perceived likelihood was measured by the statements “the risk of

terrorism in the Netherlands has increased after…" and "every public space and public transport in the Netherlands have an increased risk of terrorism since…". Table 6 illustrates that the number of respondents that agreed or strongly agreed with both statements is the highest for the Paris attacks (average geographic proximity) and the lowest for the attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando (low geographic proximity). The findings also suggest that Dutch citizens perceived the likelihood of terrorism in the Netherlands higher after the Christmas market attack in Germany and the Paris attacks compared to the tram-attack in the Netherlands, which represents a high geographic proximity.

With regards to the second component, fear of terrorism, one statement was presented: "I am concerned about terrorism in the Netherlands since…". The findings show that the majority of the respondents agreed (42.9%) or strongly agreed (10%) with this statement for the Paris attacks, but also showed high numbers for the attack in Germany (33.1% agreed, 4% strongly agreed) and the attack in the Netherlands (28.9% agreed, 6.9% strongly agreed). In other words, Dutch citizens especially experience fear of terrorism since the Paris attacks, followed by the attack in Germany and the Netherlands. Expert B argues that "more attacks took place and massive ones, which caused heightened levels of fear, because it suddenly became imaginable that it could happen to you too" (Appendix G2). Table 6 shows that Dutch citizens have a lower level of fear of terrorism after the attack in Orlando (11.4% agreed, 0.9% strongly agreed) and New Zealand (16% agreed, 1.1% strongly agreed). In the interviews, expert D indicates that "when you see it happening in the countries surrounding you and also the size of the attacks, with explosives and bomb vests… that threat was certainly felt. By me personally as well. Those were hectic times. And yes, links to the Netherlands were discovered, logistics or arms trade, the threat was more imminent then, and was experienced as such" (Appendix G4). Another expert relates to this:

> "An attack as Paris and Brussels for me were also like, what if this is the beginning of something that is going to happen every three months or are these exceptions? Then you are afraid that, if it is true that so many returning fighters commit terrorist attacks, we are really going to have a big problem here in Europe". (expert A, Appendix G1)

Lastly, the component of protective behaviours was measured by two statements: "I am travelling less since…" and "I am avoiding large public events and public spaces since…". Regarding the first statement, none of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement. The

findings indicate that the majority of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, implying that Dutch citizens do not travel less because of terrorism. The majority of the respondents also strongly disagreed or disagreed with the second statement, which suggests that Dutch citizens do not avoid public areas because of terrorism. In other words, Dutch citizens do not seem to adopt protective behaviours after a terrorist attack in the Netherlands, Europe of outside of Europe.

Table 6

Frequencies of the components of threat perception of terrorism

		N				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
The risk of terrorism in the Netherlands has increased after	The tram-attack in Utrecht	22 (6.3%)	129 (36.9%)	95 (27.1%)	92 (26.3%)	12 (3.4%)
	Christmas market attack in Berlin	16 (4.6%)	82 (23.4%)	122 (34.9%)	121 (34.6%)	9 (2.6%)
	Paris attacks	13 (3.7%)	54 (15.4%)	87 (24.9%)	165 (47.1%)	31 (8.9%)
	Attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando	23 (6.6%)	138 (39.4%)	137 (39.1%)	50 (14.3%)	2 (0.6%)
	Mosque shooting in Christchurch	22 (6.3%)	133 (38%)	122 (34.9%)	69 (19.7%)	4 (1.1%)
Every public space and public transport in the Netherlands have an increased risk of terrorism since	The tram-attack in Utrecht	19 (5.4%)	110 (31.4%)	88 (25.1%)	114 (32.6%)	19 (5.4%)
	Christmas market attack in Berlin	22 (6.3%)	103 (29.4%)	106 (30.3%)	106 (30.3%)	13 (3.7%)
	Paris attacks	16 (4.6%)	87 (24.9%)	88 (25.1%)	137 (39.1%)	22 (6.3%)
	Attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando	30 (8.6%)	146 (41.7%)	115 (32.9%)	56 (16%)	3 (0.9%)
	Mosque shooting in Christchurch	29 (8.3%)	143 (40.9%)	110 (31.4%)	63 (18%)	5 (1.4%)
I am more concerned about terrorism in the Netherlands since	The tram-attack in Utrecht	27 (7.7%)	110 (31.4%)	88 (25.1%)	101 (28.9%)	24 (6.9%)
	Christmas market attack in Berlin	25 (7.1%)	93 (26.6%)	102 (29.1%)	116 (33.1%)	14 (4%)
	Paris attacks	18 (5.1%)	71 (20.3%)	76 (21.7%)	150 (42.9%)	35 (10%)
	Attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando	42 (12%)	145 (41.4%)	120 (34.4%)	40 (11.4%)	3 (0.9%)
	Mosque shooting in Christchurch	39 (11.1%)	146 (41.7%)	105 (30%)	56 (16%)	4 (1.1%)
I am travelling less since	The tram-attack in Utrecht	205 (58.6%)	131 (37.4%)	12 (3.4%)	2 (0.6%)	0
	Christmas market attack in Berlin	207 (59.1%)	125 (35.7%)	15 (4.3%)	3 (0.9%)	0
	Paris attacks	201 (57.4%)	127 (36.3%)	16 (4.6%)	6 (1.7%)	0
	Attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando	207 (59.1%)	122 (34.9%)	20 (5.7%)	1 (0.3%)	0
	Mosque shooting in Christchurch	212 (60.6%)	119 (34%)	18 (5.1%)	1 (0.3%)	0
I am avoiding large public events and public spaces since	The tram-attack in Utrecht	175 (50%)	138 (39.4%)	30 (8.6%)	6 (1.7%)	1 (0.3%)
	Christmas market attack in Berlin	175 (50%)	129 (36.9%)	28 (8%)	17 (4.9%)	1 (0.3%)
	Paris attacks	170 (48.6%)	125 (35.7%)	30 (8.6%)	22 (6.3%)	3 (0.9%)
	Attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando	184 (52.6%)	129 (36.9%)	32 (9.1%)	4 (1.1%)	1 (0.3%)
	Mosque shooting in Christchurch	190 (54.3%)	127 (36.3%)	28 (8%)	4 (1.1%)	1 (0.3%)

Impact of control variables on the link between threat perceptions and geographic proximity of terrorism

Gender and threat perception of terrorism

The methodology section explained that several sub-groups are created to include the control variables in the relationship between geographic proximity and threat perceptions of terrorism. In order to determine whether males or females have a higher threat perception of terrorism, an Independent Samples T-Test is executed. The T-test is the appropriate test when the independent variable is categorial (in this case gender) and the dependent variable is

continuous (in this case threat perception). In SPSS, the variable gender is selected as grouping variable and the threat perception per category of geographic proximity are selected as test variables. The grouping statistics in Appendix A illustrate that the mean is highest for females for every ordinal variable.

The Levene's Test indicates whether variances are different in the different groups (Field, 2013). The assumption (H_0) is that there is no significant difference between males and females regarding their threat perception of terrorism (for every category of geographic proximity). The alternative hypothesis (H_1) assumes that there is a significant difference between males and females regarding their threat perception of terrorism. The results of the Levene's Test are presented in table 7. If the values in the Levene's Test are non-significant ($p \geq 0.05$), which is the case for all the variables as illustrated in table 7, it can be assumed that the variances are roughly equal (Field, 2013). The test score in the same row ('equal variances assumed') can then be interpreted. The two-tailed value for the threat perception of terrorism with low geographic proximity is 0.088, which is greater than 0.05 ($p \geq 0.05$). Therefore, there is no significant difference between females and males regarding their threat perception of terrorism with low geographic proximity (outside of Europe). For this relationship, H_0 can be accepted. The test score for the threat perception of terrorism with average geographic proximity is 0.040, which is smaller than 0.05 ($p \leq 0.05$). This significance value implies that there is a significant difference between females and males with regards to their threat perception of terrorism with average geographic proximity (within Europe). When looking at the grouping statistics in Appendix A, the mean for threat perception of terrorism with average geographic proximity is highest for females (25.85>24.40), thus implying that females have a higher threat perception after terrorist attacks in Europe compared to males. Finally, a significant difference exists between females and males regarding their threat perception of terrorism with high geographic proximity (within the Netherlands), because the test score is smaller than 0.05 ($0.015 < 0.05$). The mean in the grouping statistics for threat perception after terrorism in the Netherlands is also highest for females ($12.19 > 11.28$), thus suggesting that females have a higher threat perception than males after a terrorist attack in the Netherlands. H_1 can be accepted for the latter two relationships.

Table 7

Independent Samples T-Test: gender versus threat perception of terrorism

Independent Samples Test							
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Threat perception and low geographic proximity	Equal variances assumed	.191	.663	-1.71	345	.088	-1.147
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.66	178.54	.097	-1.147
Threat perception and average geographic proximity	Equal variances assumed	2.070	.151	-2.06	345	.040	-1.439
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.94	167.66	.053	-1.439
Threat perception and high geographic proximity	Equal variances assumed	.741	.390	-2.43	345	.015	-.908
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.37	178.42	.019	-.908

Age and threat perception of terrorism

With concern to the difference between young Dutch citizens (18-35 years old), middle-aged Dutch citizens (35-55 years old) and older Dutch citizens (55+ years old) regarding their threat perception of terrorism with low, average and high geographic proximity an Analysis of Variances (ANOVA) is executed. It is assumed that there are no statistically significant differences between the age categories regarding their threat perception of terrorism (H_0). The alternative H_1 assumes the opposite. The ANOVA test is the appropriate test to analyse variances and is especially applicable when the independent variable is categorical with three categories or more (as is the case with the recoded variable age) and the dependent variable is continuous. The results of the ANOVA test are presented in table 8. The ANOVA results indicate that statistically significant differences exist between the variables: the significance levels are lower than the alpha level (0.05), because $0.000 \leq 0.05$ and $0.007 \leq 0.05$. As such, the null hypothesis (H_0) can be rejected.

Table 8

ANOVA results for threat perception of terrorism with low, average and high geographic proximity

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Threat perception and low geographic proximity	Between Groups	1141.728	2	570.864	19.309	.000
	Within Groups	10259.140	347	29.565		
	Total	11400.869	349			
Threat perception and average geographic proximity	Between Groups	554.412	2	277.206	8.026	.000
	Within Groups	11984.506	347	34.537		
	Total	12538.917	349			
Threat perception and high geographic proximity	Between Groups	99.966	2	49.983	5.020	.007
	Within Groups	3455.123	347	9.957		
	Total	3555.089	349			

However, the ANOVA test can only indicate whether there is a difference, but not between which groups. The post hoc test can determine these differences, which are presented in table 9. The threat perception of terrorism with low geographic proximity significantly differs between young adults and middle-aged adults ($0.001 \leq 0.05$) and between young adults and older adults ($0.000 \leq 0.05$). This suggests that middle-aged (35-55 years) and older adults (55+ years) have a higher threat perception after a terrorist attack outside of Europe than young adults (18-35 years). Older adults also have a higher threat perception of terrorism with low geographic proximity than middle-aged adults ($0.029 \leq 0.05$). With regards to the threat perception of terrorism with average geographic proximity, there is a statistically, significant difference between young adults and middle-aged adults ($0.008 \leq 0.05$) and between young adults and older adults ($0.002 \leq 0.05$). More specifically, young adults have a lower threat perception after a terrorist attack in Europe than middle-aged adults and older adults. There is no statistical, significant difference between middle-aged adults and older adults regarding their threat perception of terrorism with average geographic proximity. Lastly, table 9 shows a statistically, significant difference between young adults and older adults for their threat

perception of terrorism with high geographic proximity ($0.006 \leq 0.05$). This suggest that older adults have a higher threat perception after a terrorist attack in the Netherlands than young adults. The post hoc test does not show any significant difference between young adults and middle-aged adults for this variable. Moreover, middle-aged adults do not significantly differ in their threat perception of terrorism with high geographic proximity from older adults.

Table 9

One-Way ANOVA – Post hoc Bonferroni

Multiple Comparisons				
Bonferroni				
Dependent Variable	(I) Recoded Age	(J) Recoded Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Threat perception and low geographic proximity	18-35 years old	35-55 years old	-2.438*	.001
		≥55 years old	-4.584*	.000
	35-55 years old	18-35 years old	2.438*	.001
		≥55 years old	-2.145*	.029
	≥55 years old	18-35 years old	4.584*	.000
		35-55 years old	2.145*	.029
Threat perception and average geographic proximity	18-35 years old	35-55 years old	-2.189*	.008
		≥55 years old	-2.900*	.002
	35-55 years old	18-35 years old	2.189*	.008
		≥55 years old	-.711	1.000
	≥55 years old	18-35 years old	2.900*	.002
		35-55 years old	.711	1.000
Threat perception and high geographic proximity	18-35 years old	35-55 years old	-.662	.263
		≥55 years old	-1.377*	.006
	35-55 years old	18-35 years old	.662	.263
		≥55 years old	-.715	.406
	≥55 years old	18-35 years old	1.377*	.006
		35-55 years old	.715	.406

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Terrorism related work/study and threat perception of terrorism

The respondents in the survey were asked whether their work or study relates to the development, implementation or researching of terrorism policy in any way. The frequency

table is presented in Appendix A, which shows that the majority of the respondents, 279 (79.9%), does not have terrorism related work or does not participate in a study in which terrorism policy forms a subject of the degree. The remaining 63 respondents (18.9%) indicated that they are currently involved in terrorism related work or study. The respondents that selected the answer category 'prefer not to answer' were coded as missing data in SPSS.

Spearman's Correlation can determine whether respondents with terrorism related work/study have higher threat perceptions of terrorism. The null hypothesis (H_0) assumes that terrorism related work/study is not significantly correlated to threat perceptions of terrorism. H_1 assumes a significant correlation does exist. The findings in table 10 imply that the variable "terrorism related work/study" is only significantly correlated to the threat perception of terrorism with low geographic proximity (r_s=0.141≤0.01). H_1 can only be accepted for this relationship. The significant relationship suggests that Dutch citizens who are involved in a position at work or study that is related to terrorism policy have a higher threat perception after terrorism outside of Europe. In contrast to this finding, expert D states:

> "when it is outside of Europe, then the physical distance is somewhat bigger and the chance smaller and also less logical that they would turn op in the Netherlands". (expert D, Appendix G4)

Moreover, table 10 does not show a significant relationship between terrorism related work/study and threat perceptions of terrorism with average and low geographic proximity. Nonetheless, a quote by one of the experts indicates that CT experts (i.e. experts with terrorism related work) did perceive the terrorist threat to the Netherlands as imminent after terrorism incidents in Europe:

> "Most terrorism experts and analysts expected that more large-scale attacks would take place" and that "they were kind of surprised how fast it all declined, apart from the lone actor attacks". (expert A, Appendix G1)

Table 10

Spearman's Correlation – terrorism related work/study versus threat perception of terrorism

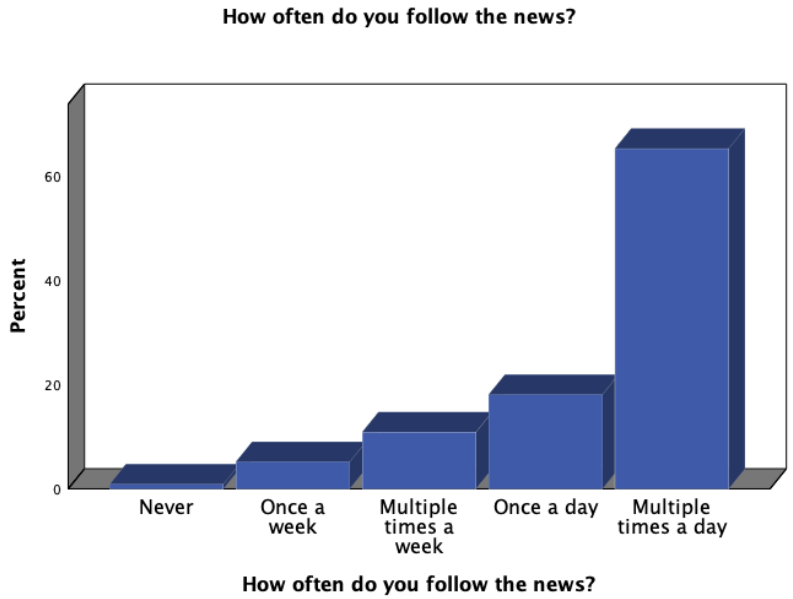
Correlations		
		Terrorism related work/study
Threat perception and low geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.141**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009
	N	342
Threat perception and average geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.027
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.620
	N	342
Threat perception and high geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.018
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.734
	N	342

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

News interest and threat perception of terrorism

One of the control variables in this research is news interest, measured by the frequency that Dutch citizens follow the news. Figure 10 illustrates that the majority of the respondents (65.1%) follows the news regularly ('multiple times a day'). Moreover, 0.09% never follows the news and 5.1% only once a week.

Figure 10
Bar chart - Statistics news interest



To determine any correlation between news interest and the ordinal variables that combined the threat perception and geographic proximity, the Spearman's Correlation is executed in SPSS. H_0 assumes that news interest is not significantly correlated to threat perceptions of terrorism; H_1 assumes an opposite relationship. The results are presented in table 11. The table shows that news interest is significantly correlated to the threat perception of terrorism for both low (r_s=0.114≤0.05). and average geographic proximity (r_s=0.122≤0.05). H_1 can be accepted for these relationships. These significance values imply that the higher the news interest ("the more regularly one follows the news"), the higher the threat perception after a terrorist attack either outside of Europe (low geographic proximity) and within Europe (average geographic proximity). The fact that news interest is correlated to threat perceptions of terrorism with low geographic proximity is substantiated by expert A, who states that "media plays a very big part… we know within half an hour or even within ten minutes what has happened in New Zealand, then it does not even matter that it occurred at the other side of the world" (Appendix G1). One of the experts argues that:

> "Everyone is media focused. If there are no attacks, no images of screaming sirens, flashing lights, shootings etcetera, then it is very easy to think that there is nothing going on". (expert C, see Appendix G3)

Moreover, there is no significant relationship between news interest and the threat perception of terrorism with high geographic proximity. In other words, news interest is not correlated to the threat perception of Dutch citizens after the tram-attack in the Netherlands. Expert B explains that:

> "An enormous manhunt was organised, so we all know the images of the heavily armed units crossing through the streets of Utrecht. The advantage was that the guy was localized and arrested at the end of the day and at that moment the threat was gone, compared to Brussels, which was in lockdown for three days". (expert B, Appendix G2)

Table 11

Spearman's Correlation matrix – news interest versus threat perception of terrorism

Correlations		
		1
1. How often do you follow the news?	Correlation Coefficient	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	350
2. Threat perception and low geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.114*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032
	N	350
3. Threat perception and average geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.122*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.022
	N	350
3. Threat perception and high geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.059
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.274
	N	350

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Closely related to the intensity of news interest, is the familiarity with cases of terrorism, which could potentially shift the relationship between geographic proximity and threat perceptions. One of the CT experts argues that:

> "If there are more images, and you are looking at what circumstances make the event more frightening or create a higher impact, one attack has a higher impact than the other, for example when there is more footage, when the event has been livestreamed, details that come out, how horrible they are. Even then you do not know how people are going to react, but you assume that the more footage, the more horrible, the higher the impact". (expert C, Appendix G3)

Respondents in the survey were asked to indicate how familiar they are with the selected cases of terrorism in this research. The frequency table is included in Appendix A. This table illustrates that the respondents are very familiar with the terrorism case in the Netherlands (71.4%), the Christmas market attack in Berlin (43.7%) and the Paris attacks (74.3%). In contrast, the respondents are somewhat familiar or not familiar with the mosque shooting in Christchurch and the attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando.

A bivariate analysis can illustrate whether the degree to which the familiarity of Dutch citizens with the presented cases of terrorism is correlated to the threat perception of terrorism

with low, average or high geographic proximity. The findings of this Spearman's Correlation are presented in table 12. The findings indicate that the familiarity with terrorism cases is only significantly related to the threat perception of terrorism with average geographic proximity (r_s=0.153≤0.01). In other words, the more familiar Dutch citizens are with a case of terrorism, the higher the threat perception of terrorism with average geographic proximity. This observation only applies to terrorist attacks within Europe, not within the Netherlands or outside of Europe.

Table 12

Spearman's Correlation - familiarity with terrorism cases and threat perception

Correlations		
		1
1. Familiarity with terrorism cases	Correlation Coefficient	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	350
2. Threat perception and low geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.069
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.199
	N	350
3. Threat perception and average geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.153**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004
	N	350
4. Threat perception and high geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.044
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.414
	N	350

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Dutch CT policy and threat perception of terrorism

This research is particularly interested in the impact of Dutch CT policy on the relationship between geographic proximity and threat perceptions of terrorism. The respondents were asked two questions regarding their familiarity with the efforts of the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) and their familiarity with the Threat Assessment Terrorism for the Netherlands. The data set implies that high numbers do not represent a high familiarity with Dutch CT policy, because the variables are coded as 1=very familiar, 2=somewhat familiar and 3=not familiar at all. Hence, the variable was recoded into a different variable "RQ1.2" and "RQ1.3" in which the values are "mirrored" (1=3, 2=2, 3=1). This way, the results can be interpreted as high numbers representing a high familiarity with Dutch CT policy. The frequencies of the variables are presented in Appendix A. The frequency table in

the appendix shows that 40.9% of the respondents is not familiar with the Threat Assessment Terrorism and 46% is not familiar with the practices of the NCTV. These findings are substantiated by the CT experts as emphasized in the following quotes:

> "1/3 of the population does not know of the existence of something as a Threat Assessment Terrorism. We also have a very complicated system with complicated labels". (expert A, Appendix G1)

> "The disadvantage of the Dutch system the way it is, is that at some point you do not notice the difference between the one or the other level";

> "There needs to be communication just like in other countries, for a long time, also in the Netherlands there is a structural threat of terrorism". (expert C, Appendix G3)

The Spearman's Correlation determines whether the familiarity with Dutch CT policy is significantly correlated to the threat perception of terrorism. H_0 assumes that the familiarity with Dutch CT policy is not significantly correlated to threat perceptions of terrorism; compared to the alternative hypothesis (H_1) that assumes a significant relationship. The findings in table 13 illustrate that the familiarity with Dutch CT policy is significantly related to the general threat perception (r_s=0.243≤0.01). and to the threat perception of terrorism with average geographic proximity (r_s=0.130≤0.05). H_1 can be accepted. In other words, Dutch citizens who are very familiar with Dutch CT policy have a higher threat perception of terrorism in general and specifically after terrorist attacks in Europe. The following quotes support this notion:

> "If a threat level is raised or lowered, it gives a certain message to the citizens. The question is how strong will the effect be and where, but I think we can say with certainty that it does have effect if the highest counterterrorism professionals emphasize the severity of the situation and that there is a threat, of course people will be influenced". (expert A, Appendix G1)

> "It is not the job of the police or the NCTV to increase the level of fear, minimize it when there is too much. But the Threat Assessment Terrorism is meant to warn people.

If it goes up, it is not to scare people, but to encourage people to be more alert and make them aware of the threat". (expert D, Appendix G4)

Furthermore, Spearman's Correlation Matrix shows there is no significant relationship between familiarity with Dutch CT policy and the threat perception of terrorism with low and high geographic proximity. Regarding the latter and specifically concerning the tram-attack in the Netherlands, one of the experts stresses that:

"The Threat Assessment Terrorism was temporarily raised at the local area, but it did not apply to the rest of the Netherlands. It did have some effect briefly, but I think it was over pretty soon. I do not have the feeling that it lasted very long, that the Netherlands was very busy with the incident, or has been scared for follow-up attacks". (expert D, Appendix G4)

Table 13

Spearman's Correlation – familiarity with Dutch CT policy and threat perceptions

Correlations

		1
1. Familiarity with Dutch CT policy	Correlation Coefficient	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	350
2. Threat perception and low geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.055
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.308
	N	350
3. Threat perception and average geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.130*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015
	N	350
4. Threat perception and high geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.066
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.221
	N	350
5. General threat perception of terrorism	Correlation Coefficient	.243**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	350

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Components of threat perception/geographic proximity and Dutch CT policy

When zooming in on the three components that determine the threat perception of terrorism, Spearman's Correlation illustrates significant correlations. These correlations are

illustrated in table 14. The familiarity with Dutch CT policy is significantly correlated to fear of terrorism with average geographic proximity (r_s=0.139≤0.01). implying that the higher the familiarity with Dutch CT efforts, the higher the fear of terrorism after a terrorist attack in Europe. The familiarity of Dutch CT policy is also significantly correlated to protective behaviours after terrorism outside of Europe (r_s=0.135≤0.05), in Europe (r_s=0.162≤0.01) and in the Netherlands (r_s=0.133≤0.05). This means that Dutch citizens who are very familiar with Dutch CT policy, adopt more protective behaviours after a terrorist attack in the Netherlands, Europe or outside of Europe. The familiarity with Dutch CT policy is not significantly correlated to the perceived likelihood of terrorism, as shown in the table.

Table 14

Spearman's Correlation – familiarity with Dutch CT policy and components of the threat perception

Correlations		
		Familiarity with Dutch CT policy
Perceived likelihood and low geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.003
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.959
Perceived likelihood and average geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.070
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.189
Perceived likelihood and high geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	-.003
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.959
Fear of terrorism and low geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.047
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.381
Fear of terrorism and average geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.139**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009
Fear of terrorism and high geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.070
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.193
Protective behaviour and low geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.135*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011
Protective behaviour and average geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.162**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
Protective behaviour and high geographic proximity	Correlation Coefficient	.133*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Other confounding factors of relevance

This research was particularly interested in the control variables presented in the analysis. Nonetheless, a variety of other confounding factors emerged from the interviews with the CT experts. The first is the temporal proximity of terrorism, which was also included in the survey.

The frequency table for the temporal proximity of terrorism is presented in Appendix A. These results indicate that 9.1% of the respondents is still concerned about terrorism since the Paris attacks, compared to 6.6% of the respondents since the tram-attack in the Netherlands and the attack in Germany. A high number of the respondents was concerned for weeks after the attack in the Netherlands (42.9%) and after the attack in Germany (32.6%) and Paris (39.4%). With regards to the attacks with low geographic proximity the majority of the respondents never felt concern for terrorism in the Netherlands (57.4% for the attack in Orlando and 44% for the attack in Christchurch). In sum, the findings suggest that the concern for terrorism in the Netherlands lasted longer after a terrorist attack in Europe and in the Netherlands compared to terrorism outside of Europe. Moreover, the findings suggest that most of the respondents were either only concerned on the day of the incident or in the weeks following the incident, but the numbers decline when time passes by (comparing the N for weeks of concern with the N for months of concern). In this regard, CT experts stress the following:

> "We literally got questions with a map 'if there has been an attack in France, an attack in Belgium, in Germany, an attack in the United Kingdom, then we must be next'. Only that did not happen. Then the massive attacks also did not occur anymore. Then you see the fear declining and fading away". (expert B, Appendix G2)

> "I also notice how the media acts on these kinds of incidents. It is not completely new and unconceivable and incredible what is happening. So, then you see the media dynamics change and that always does something with the perceptions people have". (expert B, Appendix G2)

> "Look, everyone can remember 9/11, Brussels, Paris, but even the arrest in Arnhem last year in 2018 is already fading in people's memory. That was very exciting at that moment, but it is not engraved in your memory. I think it is just the human… it just goes away". (expert C, Appendix G3)

Another topic of relevance in the interviews is the identity of the countries. The following quotes substantiate the relevance of this factor:

> “We have an extreme western focus, so when it concerns New Zealand or America or Canada, then everyone here is in turmoil as well. But if it happens in Kabul or Nigeria, then a lot of people do not even know of the attack” (expert A, Appendix G1).

> “Europe invested tremendously in counterterrorism after 9/11. They are somewhat the same type of society with the same type of threats”. (expert A, Appendix G1)

> “Geographic proximity, in the sense of ‘it can happen here as well’ certainly played a role in Europe, which also explains that when something happens in Russia or Thailand, we do not really have the feeling that it could have happened here”. (expert A, Appendix G1)

> “Partly, that has to do with the degree to which people can relate to the battle there or the attacks, the degree to which they recognize the situation of feel connected”. (expert B, Appendix G2)

Furthermore, CT experts argue that the nature and size of terrorist attacks are of relevance for the threat perception of citizens. Expert A supports this and states the following:

> “Paris in a concert theatre, we can all imagine that, or Manchester, we visit concerts here as well. Then you also have the idea that the target, or the location of the attack, is something you recognize”. (expert A, see Appendix G1)

Expert B substantiates this and states that “something in the Netherlands has occurred that when the first officially recognized terrorist attack took place at the central station in Amsterdam, it was not very impressive. If you have the images in mind of the attacks in Paris and Brussels, it paints a different picture” (Appendix G2). The experts claim that media have a crucial part in this as well. Another expert referred to the terrorist attack in Christchurch New Zealand (2019) and stresses the following:

> “Brenton Tarrant referred to Europe, to the situation in countries he visited. You can see on the internet that people respond to that. But you can also see that even though that takes place at the other side of the world, it is a lot closer than what is happening in Nigeria for

example. Admittedly in a different field, but on social media and also on right extremist social media, that is a concern, also for Europe". (expert C, Appendix G3)

In addition, the experts argue that the modus operandi and the target of the terrorist attacks are important factors in how they themselves perceive the threat of terrorism. Expert C argues that "there are different movements. And they all have their own threat, their own appearance, their own modus operandi, and their own way of creating effect" (Appendix G3). When adding the factor of geographic proximity, expert D states that "terrorist attacks abroad are also being looked at: what targets are hit? Are they western targets for example? That can be decisive, also for our country" (Appendix G2). A terrorist attack can also result in "a counterattack" or be seen as "an inspiring event to which someone connects himself" (expert B, see Appendix G2). The expert adds that "this way, you can see that the world has literally become smaller and that attacks that occur thousands of kilometres away can also have an effect here or in another country". The motive of the terrorist(s) is of relevance here. Regarding the attack in New Zealand, "Brenton Tarrant was seen as a hero" and "people were called upon to follow his lead" (expert C, see Appendix G3). Expert C also emphasizes the following:

"Then it becomes a different type of attack which we consider in a different manner and with which we are more occupied, even it is at the other side of the world than what is happening in Africa right now. Maybe a lot closer in kilometres, but which has little effect on the jihadist population in Europe". (expert C, Appendix G3)

The extent to which government organisations take these attacks into account also depends on the interests attached to the attack.

"You need to draw a line. Look at what is happening in Somalia and Nigeria, very active the last few weeks, a lot of attacks on soldiers. Currently, that is less relevant for us in Europe. There could be European interests attached to it, but we do not see them, so we leave it alone for now". (expert C, see Appendix G3)

Expert C states that these interests could involve "whether there are Dutch or European victims or whether it concerns something that can easily be adopted by local groups... what they do in Somalia for example, you will not see that happen in Amsterdam any time soon".

DISCUSSION

In the discussion, possible answers to the research question and sub-questions will be explored and discussed. In order to do so, the results presented in the analysis are critically evaluated and connected to the literature. The collective securitisation model by Sterling and Webber (2019) is applied to explain the findings. The posed research question reads: *'To what extent has the geographic proximity of terrorist attacks that took place between 2015-2019 affected the threat perception of terrorism among the Dutch population?'* For research purposes, the Dutch population was divided into two separate groups: Dutch citizens and CT experts. Hence, three sub-questions were formulated to gain more insight in the different target groups: (1)'*How does the threat perception of terrorism differ between "regular" Dutch citizens and CT experts?'*; (2)*'How is geographic proximity related to threat perceptions of terrorism?'* and (3) *'To what extent does Dutch CT policy impact the relationship between geographic proximity and threat perception of terrorism?'* A total of three hypotheses were formulated in relation to the sub-questions.

Difference threat perception Dutch citizens and CT experts

As explained, the threat perception is measured by three components: perceived likelihood, fear and protective behaviours (Cohen-Louck, 2019; Lemyre et al., 2006; Stevens et al., 2011). The geographic proximity of terrorism was divided into three categories that all included one or two cases of terrorism: low geographic proximity (case in New Zealand and the United States), average geographic proximity (case in France and Germany) and high geographic proximity (case in the Netherlands). One hypothesis was formulated regarding the general threat perception of terrorism between Dutch citizens and CT experts: '"Regular" Dutch citizens have a higher threat perception of terrorism compared to CT experts' (H_1). The findings indicate, however, that Dutch citizens do not have a very high or very low threat perception of terrorism. Dutch citizens do indicate that they think that every public space in the Netherlands has a risk of terrorism, but they are not very concerned and do not seem to adopt protective behaviours. The findings do indicate, however, that Dutch citizens are more alert in public spaces and public transport because of terrorism. Nonetheless, the general threat perception of terrorism can be considered moderate. In contrast to Dutch citizens, CT experts stress that CT efforts, such as foiled attacks, are not always noticed by the public because they are not covered in the news or only briefly (expert C). The CT experts acknowledge that there is a structural

terrorist threat to the Netherlands, especially from lone actor terrorists, who can commit a terrorist attack anytime. The findings do not seem to support H_1, which can thus be rejected.

Importance of geographic proximity

In the essence, this research examined the importance of geographic proximity and did so by zooming in on the components of the threat perception of terrorism. Figure 11 provides an overview of the most common choices per case of terrorism. The figure shows that Dutch citizens perceive the Paris attacks as most threatening to the Netherlands. The risk for terrorism in the Netherlands is perceived the lowest after the attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando. It is remarkable that the tram-attack in Utrecht (the Netherlands), which represents a high geographic proximity of terrorism, never came out first for any of the components. Essentially, these findings seem to provide some support for the second hypothesis, which reads: 'A high geographic proximity of terrorist attacks results in heightened threat perceptions of terrorism among the Dutch population' (H_2). However, this only applies when comparing the threat perception of terrorism with low geographic proximity and high geographic proximity. But terrorism with average geographic proximity (Paris and Berlin) is perceived a greater threat to the Netherlands than the tram-attack in Utrecht. Regarding H_2, this is an interesting finding. One would assume that Dutch citizens would perceive terrorism on national soil a greater threat to their country compared to terrorism in another country (Thoresen et al., 2012; Woods et al., 2008). This observation can also be made for the component of fear, which is also highest for Dutch citizens after the Paris attacks. CT experts relate to this, because the incidents in Paris were part of a period in which terrorist attacks took place with a higher regularity. Moreover, the attacks in Paris (November 2015), of which links to the Netherlands were also detected, made it "suddenly imaginable that it could happen to you too" (expert B, Appendix G2). The CT experts add that the fact that terrorist attacks were taking place in the countries surrounding the Netherlands, contributed to the consideration of the terrorist threat to the Netherlands as imminent. In this regard, the relatively short geographical distance from the Netherlands to Paris (i.e. average geographic proximity) is relevant in explaining the heightened threat perception amongst both Dutch citizens and CT experts.

Figure 11

Findings of most chosen case per component

Component	Items per component	Chronological order of chosen cases
Perceived likelihood	Risk of terrorism for the Netherlands	1. Paris 2. Berlin 3. Utrecht 4. Christchurch 5. Orlando
	Every public space and public transport have an increased risk of terrorism	1. Paris 2. Utrecht 3. Berlin 4. Christchurch 5. Orlando
Fear of terrorism	Concerned about terrorism	1. Paris 2. Utrecht 3. Berlin 4. Christchurch 5. Orlando
Protective behaviours	Travelling less	1. Paris 2. Berlin 3. Utrecht 4. Orlando / Christchurch
	Avoiding large public events and public spaces	1. Paris 2. Berlin 3. Utrecht 4. Orlando / Christchurch

Overall, the findings indicate that Dutch citizens do not adopt protective behaviours after terrorism. This finding applied to all the categories of geographic proximity. A small number of Dutch citizens travels less or avoids public spaces since the Paris attacks. This is an interesting finding, regarding the literature that suggests a continuous overlap of the components of threat perception and which argues that fear of danger (i.e. terrorism) results in protective behaviour (Haner et al., 2019; Kim, 2016; Lin & Margolin, 2014). This raises the question why Dutch citizens who perceive the terrorist threat for the Netherlands as high and who have heightened levels of fear of terrorism do not adjust their behaviour in accordance with their perception. As scientific literature claims, emotions drive behaviour which would justify the notion that a high perception of the terrorist threat and fear of terrorism results in proportionate behaviour (Fischhoff et al., 2004; Göritz & Weiss, 2014). Nonetheless, the findings do not support this claim and rather illustrate a discrepancy between Dutch citizens' perception and fear of terrorism and their actual behaviour. In sum, a high geographic proximity does not necessarily lead to a high threat perception of terrorism, as suggested by H_2. Indeed, Dutch citizens perceived the tram-attack in Utrecht (high geographic proximity) a bigger threat than the attacks in Christchurch and Orlando (low geographic proximity), but the attacks in Berlin and Paris (average geographic proximity) were perceived even more imminent to the

Netherlands. Therefore, the support for H_2 depends on which categories of geographic proximity are included in the comparison.

CT efforts by Dutch government

With concern to geographic proximity, the question rises how Dutch citizens and CT experts can perceive a terrorist attack in France and Germany a more imminent threat to the Netherlands than a terrorist attack in their own country? To explain these findings, other confounding factors proved to be significantly relevant. The theoretical framework included a third hypothesis with a specific focus on the impact of Dutch CT policy: 'A low or average geographic proximity of terrorist attacks results in heightened threat perceptions of terrorism among Dutch citizens, when citizens are very familiar with Dutch CT policy' (H_3). First, the analysis shows that the majority of the Dutch citizens is not familiar with the efforts of the Dutch government in the battle against terrorism. These findings are supported by CT experts, who confirm that it is very likely that most of the Dutch citizens do not know of the existence of a system that indicates the threat level for the Netherlands (Threat Assessment Terrorism). CT experts also stress that the Threat Assessment Terrorism is not meant to raise fear or concern of terrorism among the public, but they acknowledge that it can serve as a communication instrument to make people more aware of the structural threat of terrorism. The findings indicate that Dutch citizens who are fairly familiar with Dutch CT policy have a high threat perception after terrorism in another European country (average geographic proximity).

The model of collective securitisation is able to explain this relationship (Buzan et al., 1998; Sterling & Webber, 2019). In this regard, the precipitating event is a terrorist attack with average geographic proximity, for example the attacks in Paris in November 2015. The political actor, in this case the Dutch government in general and the NCTV specifically, identified the Paris attacks in their Threat Assessment Terrorism report in July 2016 as threatening to Europe and also to the Netherlands (NCTV, 2016). This represents the securitising move. The NCTV adds in the Threat Assessment Terrorism that every participating country of the anti-ISIS coalition forms a target for jihadists groups, among which the Netherlands (p. 2). This explains how the Paris attacks were accepted by the audience (Dutch CT professionals) as an existential threat to the Netherlands. As a result, intensified international cooperation followed the Paris attacks, which represents the policy output. As every participant of the anti-ISIS coalition is threatened by terrorists, every subsequent terrorist attack on one of the participants of this coalition thus confirms the ongoing terrorist threat (NCTV, 2016). However, this way of

reasoning only explains how the Dutch government considers terrorism abroad as a threat to the Netherlands, but it does not explain the acceptance of the threat by Dutch citizens.

Relevance of other characteristics of terrorism

In order to explain the audience response of Dutch citizens when a terrorist attack takes place in another country (both Europe and outside of Europe), other factors need to be considered. CT experts acknowledge that besides the consideration of the geographical distance to terrorist attacks, other factors contribute significantly to strengthen the relationship between geographic proximity and threat perceptions. These factors are able to explain why terrorism in another European country, such as France and Germany, has a higher impact on the threat perception among the Dutch population compared to terrorism in the Netherlands. The findings showed that the threat perception was the highest after the Paris attacks and also lasted the longest after these attacks. The threat perception after the tram-attack in Utrecht and the attack in Berlin were also considerably high; yet declined more rapidly compared to the duration of the concern after the Paris attacks ("temporal proximity"). The size and nature of the Paris attacks possibly contributed to the lasting concern of the Dutch citizens. The great number of fatalities, the relatable location of the attacks (e.g. theatre, stadium, restaurant) and the continuous broadcasting of horrible images substantiated the consideration of the Paris attacks as a danger, thus resulting in increased levels of fear and concern among Dutch citizens and even CT experts (Aly & Green, 2010). CT experts emphasize that these factors can help to explain how even terrorist attacks that occur hundreds or thousands of kilometres away from the Netherlands, still affect Dutch citizens and the Dutch government in their threat perception of terrorism. With respect to the model of collective securitisation, the confounding factors help to explain why Dutch citizens accepted the Paris attacks as a more imminent threat to their own country (audience response) compared to the tram-attack in Utrecht (Buzan et al., 1998; Sterling & Webber, 2019). This acceptance thus seems to build on the combination of and the interaction between various factors, in addition to the geographic proximity of the attacks, such as the size, nature and media coverage of terrorism.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed at examining the relationship between geographic proximity and threat perceptions of terrorism in the Dutch context. An extensive body of research has been devoted to explaining threat perceptions of terrorism, whereas the geographic aspect of terrorist attacks

has not gained proportionate attention (Thoresen et al., 2012; Woods et al., 2008). Moreover, recent studies on threat perceptions in the Netherlands were conducted before the tram-attack in 2019 and generally did not include geographical distance in the research. In this regard, the following research question has been formulated: *'To what extent has the geographic proximity of terrorist attacks that took place between 2015-2019 affected the threat perception of terrorism among the Dutch population?'* To gain a comprehensive insight in the Dutch population, a distinction was made between "regular" Dutch citizens and Dutch CT experts, thus complementing existing literature on threat perceptions. Data was gathered through interviews and a survey, thus combining quantitative with qualitative methods of research. In general, CT experts seem to have a higher threat perception of terrorism than Dutch citizens. CT experts recognize that a structural terrorist threat in the Netherlands exists and continues to be a part of the Threat Assessment Terrorism in the Netherlands. They acknowledge, however, that the threat is felt most imminent in the immediate aftermath of a terrorist attack, which applies to CT experts as well as to Dutch citizens. The concept of temporal proximity can explain how perceptions of the terrorist threat decline after a certain period of time (Kwon et al., 2017). Overall, Dutch citizens do not adopt protective behaviours despite their perception of the terrorist threat. A decline of massive terrorist attacks and a reduction of media coverage could explain this observation. Moreover, CT experts stress that terrorism is not perceived as new and unimaginable anymore, which suggests a degree of habituation among the Dutch population (Bleich et al., 2003). After a certain period of time, prioritizations of both CT professionals and citizens tend to shift, only until a new attack takes place and the topic of terrorism regains its position at the top of political agendas and media. The model of collective securitisation proved to be the appropriate framework to explain this finding (Buzan et al., 1998; Sterling & Webber, 2019).

Moreover, a high geographic proximity does not automatically result in a high threat perception of terrorism. In fact, Dutch citizens are most affected by terrorism with average geographic proximity (within Europe), followed by terrorism in the Netherlands (high geographic proximity). Especially the Paris attacks in 2015 were perceived as highly threatening to the Netherlands. However, when comparing the threat perception between terrorism with low and high geographic proximity, Dutch citizens do perceive terrorism in the Netherlands a bigger threat than terrorism outside of Europe. These findings illustrate that geographic proximity alone is considerably impotent to explain changes in threat perceptions of terrorism. The size of the attacks and the degree to which citizens can relate to the situation

seem to shift the relationship between geographic proximity and threat perceptions of terrorism. This also applies to news interest and Dutch CT policy. With a specific interest in the latter, citizens' familiarity with Dutch CT policy contributes to heightened threat perceptions, particularly after terrorism in Europe. This supports the idea that governmental communication about CT efforts creates awareness among the public, while at the same this finding opposes the notion that governmental communication can help to reduce fear (Crijns et al., 2017; Hoffman & Shelby, 2017; Van Der Does et al., 2019). Nonetheless, even though CT professionals do not aim to raise the level of fear among Dutch citizens, the Threat Assessment Terrorism of the NCTV can serve as a communication instrument to encourage people to be more alert. Nonetheless, even though Dutch citizens seem to accept the threat as presented by Dutch CT professionals via the news, they do not change their behaviour accordingly. When objective information about the current terrorist threat does not reach the public, the Threat Assessment Terrorism loses its effect to communicate. This is particularly important, because Dutch citizens do not change their behaviour after the occurrence of terrorism, even if they perceive the threat as imminent and feel concerned about terrorism in the Netherlands. As such, it appears that the Dutch government needs to take further steps to enhance their communication approach to the Dutch public. In sum, when considering the impact of Dutch CT policy, the relationship between geographic proximity and threat perceptions tends to shift. More specifically, the assumption is that a high geographic proximity results in high threat perceptions, yet when considering other factors, a lower geographic proximity can still result in the same high threat perceptions of terrorism. With respect to the central research question, the findings lead on the one hand, to the conclusion that geographic proximity, when interacting with other relevant factors (e.g. CT policy, size and nature of terrorism) is positively related to threat perceptions of terrorism. On the other hand, the findings and CT experts also demand the conclusion that it seems almost impossible to completely isolate a factor, such as geographic proximity, to determine its effect on threat perceptions of terrorism.

On a final note, the period between 2015-2019 is characterized by terrorist attacks that were massive in intensity and fatalities, among which the infamous Paris attacks in November 2015. The combined effect of the geographical distance to terrorism with factors such as the impact of CT policy, news interest and the size of the attacks, created a world in which terrorism has become conceivable and, in some ways, unavoidable. Nowadays, (social) media helps news to travel faster than ever and when CT professionals highlight the severity of the current terrorist threat, threat perceptions of people worldwide are capable of rising. It can be argued that

terrorists dominated the security agendas on a global scale in the period 2015-2019, also in the Netherlands. As an inevitable consequence of this "rule" of terrorists, Dutch citizens and CT professionals perceive terrorism as close, even from a distance.

Strengths and limitations

As any research, this research has strengths as well as limitations. Regarding the first, this research conducted both survey research and interviews, thus combining quantitative with qualitative research. Through the use of mixed methods, this research was not only able to gain insight in two separate groups of the Dutch population (i.e. Dutch citizens and CT experts), but the information provided by the CT experts proved a valuable addition to the survey data and added a considerable degree of detail about the central themes in this research. Moreover, the information extracted from the interviews enabled this research to look at the relationship between geographic proximity and threat perceptions of terrorism from different perspectives. Lastly, this research went beyond existing literature by including the impact of (Dutch) CT policy on the link between geographic proximity and threat perceptions of terrorism. While the interviews elucidated ongoing CT practices in the Dutch context, the survey findings shed light upon how Dutch citizens perceive these practices.

This research is also limited in several ways. First, respectfully considering the valuable information and expertise provided by the CT experts, an interview with an expert from the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) would have been beneficial in exploring the process for determining the Threat Assessment Terrorism and the communication efforts of the NCTV towards the public (for example, how the NCTV tries to mitigate fear among the public or create awareness). Second, due to the way the survey was constructed (items that combined threat perceptions with cases of terrorism), this research was not able to determine any causal relation between the variables. Consequently, the concluding remarks solely included the major findings concerning significant relationships and the impact of confounding factors on these relationships. And third, the data was collected during the first period of the crisis regarding the disease COVID-19, which potentially dominated citizen's worry about their safety at the time of the data collection and could have shifted their concern about terrorism. In line with this, it is very likely that threat perceptions of terrorism during the period of data collection differ from a period when a terrorist attack has just taken place.

Recommendations

Based on the collected data through the survey and interviews, a number of recommendations are provided for both the scientific world and the practical field. First, this

research showed that various confounding factors are of considerable importance in the relationship between geographic proximity and threat perceptions of terrorism. Future research should examine the interaction among these confounding factors (e.g. size, nature, relatable character of terrorist attacks) and their impact on the relationship between geographic proximity and threat perceptions of terrorism. This could be done through an experimental study in which respondents are randomly assigned to different cases or conditions that represent the confounding factors. Such research would complement the arguments made by CT experts in this research and would thus provide a more comprehensive framework to explain certain discrepancies and patterns in the relationship between geographic proximity and threat perceptions of terrorism.

Second, the notion that (protective) behaviour is determined by emotions (e.g. fear or worry) is not supported by the findings of this research (Fischhoff et al., 2004; Göritz & Weiss, 2014; Haner et al., 2019; Lin & Margolin, 2014). Dutch citizens do not appear to change their behaviour or adopt protective behaviours, even if they are worried about terrorism in the Netherlands. Based on this contradictory finding, researchers are recommended to research the reasons behind the question why citizens with a high threat perception and a high level of fear of terrorism, do not change their behaviour or adopt more protective behaviours (e.g. avoiding public transport, being more alert in public spaces, travelling less etc.). This opens the field for researchers to do a more in-depth study to explain the passive attitude of Dutch citizens in changing their behaviour in accordance with their threat perceptions. This research could also compare protective behaviour after terrorism of Dutch citizens with citizens of other (European) countries. This research would possibly require a psychological perspective.

Finally, with respect to the practical field and the previously given recommendations, a re-assessment of the communication towards Dutch citizens concerning the Threat Assessment Terrorism (DTN) is recommended. The findings in this research indicate that Dutch citizens have limited or no knowledge of the CT efforts of the Dutch government. As claimed by the literature, governmental communication can help to maximize the awareness of the structural terrorist threat CT experts claim exists (Crijns et al., 2017; Hoffman & Shelby, 2017; Van Der Does et al., 2019). Sufficient and clear communication about the current terrorist threat towards the public can be a first step in encouraging Dutch citizens to match their behaviour with their perception of the terrorist threat.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A Frequency tables

Table 1

Frequencies demographic variables

Statistics						
		Gender	Age	Education	Religion	Industry of employment
N	Valid	347	348	350	342	348
	Missing	3	2	0	8	2
Mean		1.71	39.14	4.56	4.61	11.79
Median		2	37	4.00	6.00	12.00
Mode		2	24	4	6	9
Std. Deviation		.456	15.435	1.456	2.193	6.046
Minimum		1	18	1	1	1
Maximum		2	77	7	6	20

Table 2

Group statistics for Independent Samples T-Test

Group Statistics			
	Gender	N	Mean
Threat perception and low geographic proximity	Male	102	20.90
	Female	245	22.05
Threat perception and average geographic proximity	Male	102	24.40
	Female	245	25.84
Threat perception and high geographic proximity	Male	102	11.28
	Female	245	12.19

Table 3

Frequencies for terrorism related work/study

Is your work or study in any way related to terrorism policy (e.g. development, implementation, research)?					
		N	%	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	63	18.0	18.4	18.4
	No	279	79.9	81.6	100.0
	100.0	342	97.7	100.0	
Missing	Prefer not to answer	8	2.3		
Total		350	100.0		

Table 4

Frequencies for familiarity with terrorism cases

Statistics		N	%
Familiarity with tram-attack in Utrecht	Not familiar at all	4	1.1
	Somewhat familiar	96	27.4
	Very familiar	250	71.4
	Total	350	100.0
Familiarity with mosque shooting Christchurch	Not familiar at all	17	4.9
	Somewhat familiar	181	51.7
	Very familiar	152	43.4
	Total	350	100.0
Familiarity with Christmas market attack Berlin	Not familiar at all	18	5.1
	Somewhat familiar	179	51.1
	Very familiar	153	43.7
	Total	350	100.0
Familiarity with attack Pulse Nightclub Orlando	Not familiar at all	123	35.1
	Somewhat familiar	150	42.9
	Very familiar	77	22.0
	Total	350	100.0
Familiarity with Paris attacks	Not familiar at all	1	.3
	Somewhat familiar	89	25.4
	Very familiar	260	74.3
	Total	350	100.0

Table 5

Frequencies familiarity with Dutch CT policy

Statistics			
		N	%
How familiar are you with the current Threat Assessment Terrorism (DTN?)			
Valid	Very familiar	15	4.3
	Somewhat familiar	192	54.9
	Not familiar at all	143	40.9
	Total	350	100.0
How familiar are you with the practices of the NCTV?			
Valid	Very familiar	17	4.9
	Somewhat familiar	172	49.1
	Not familiar at all	161	46.0
	Total	350	100.0

Table 6

Frequencies temporal proximity

How long did your concern last after						
	N					
	Missing	I never felt concern	Only on the day of the incident	In the weeks following the incident	In the months following the incident	I am still concerned
The tram-attack in Utrecht	1	53 (15.1%)	98 (28%)	150 (42.9%)	25 (7.1%)	23 (6.6%)
Christmas market attack in Berlin	1	81 (23.1%)	105 (30%)	114 (32.6%)	26 (7.4%)	23 (6.6%)
Paris attacks	2	48 (13.7%)	55 (15.7%)	138 (39.4%)	75 (21.4%)	32 (9.1%)
Attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando	1	201 (57.4%)	85 (24.3%)	47 (13.4%)	2 (0.6%)	14 (4%)
Mosque shooting in Christchurch	2	154 (44%)	112 (32%)	66 (18.9%)	3 (0.9%)	13 (3.7%)

APPENDIX B Data collection for survey: Thesis Questionnaire (translated to English)

Welcome to my MSc Thesis Questionnaire!

For the Master Crisis & Security Management, I am writing a master thesis about the relationship between geographic proximity of terrorism and the threat perception among Dutch citizens. In this regard, your participation is extremely valuable.

All of your answers will be kept anonymous and confidential. The data will solely be used for academic purposes. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. The expected duration of the questionnaire is **6-8** minutes. Read the questions/statements carefully, before giving your answer. There are no right or wrong answers.

With your participation you agree with the following statement: "I have been informed about the research and I understand that my answers will be kept anonymous and confidential. I will answer the questions to the best of my ability. I understand that I may withdraw at any time for any reason".

If you have any questions, please contact me via: d.j.van.leeuwen.2@umail.leidenuniv.nl

If you have read the above and you are above 18 years old, please continue with the questionnaire.

1. **How often do you follow the news?**

( ) Never
( ) Once a week
( ) Multiple times a week
( ) Once a day
( ) Multiple times a day

2. **Do you know what the National Coordinator Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) is?**

( ) Yes
( ) No

Displayed when the respondent chooses 'no' in question 2
The NCTV is a governmental organisation that coordinates the combat against terrorism in the Netherlands. By cooperation with a number of other organisations, the NCTV determines the Threat Assessment Terrorism (Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland).

3. **How familiar are you with the current Threat Assessment Terrorism (DTN)?**

( ) Very familiar
( ) Somewhat familiar
( ) Not familiar at all

4. **How familiar are you with the practices of the NCTV?**

( ) Very familiar
( ) Somewhat familiar

( ) Not familiar at all

This study is particularly interested in how you perceive the terrorist threat in the Netherlands. Read the following statements carefully, before giving your answer.

5. Every public space/event in the Netherlands has a risk of terrorism
( ) Strongly disagree
( ) Disagree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Agree
( ) Strongly agree

6. The risk of terrorism is greater in metropoles
( ) Strongly disagree
( ) Disagree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Agree
( ) Strongly agree

7. I am concerned that a terrorist attack will take place in the Netherlands in the near future
( ) Strongly disagree
( ) Disagree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Agree
( ) Strongly agree

8. I am travelling less because of terrorism
( ) Strongly disagree
( ) Disagree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Agree
( ) Strongly agree

9. I am more alert in public spaces and in public transport because of terrorism
( ) Strongly disagree
( ) Disagree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Agree
( ) Strongly agree

This study is interested in the geographic proximity of terrorism. The following statements are related to five cases of terrorism.

10. How familiar are you with the following cases of terrorism?
- *The tram-attack in Utrecht, the Netherlands (2019)*
- *The Mosque shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand (2019)*
- *The Christmas market attack in Berlin, Germany (2016)*
- *The attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, United States (2016)*
- *The Paris attacks (2015)*

( ) Not familiar at all
( ) Somewhat familiar
( ) Very familiar

Tram attack in Utrecht: In March 2019, Gömen T. killed 3 people and injured another 7 in a shooting on a tram.

The Mosque shooting: In March 2019, two mosque shootings in Christchurch, New Zealand, resulted in the death of 51 people.

The Christmas market attack: In December 2016, a terrorist drove a truck into a Christmas market in Berlin, killing 12 people.

The attack in the Pulse Nightclub: In June 2016, Omar M. killed 49 people in a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

The Paris attacks: In 2015, several terrorist attacks took place in Paris, among which the Charlie Hebdo attack and the attack in the Bataclan theatre.

11. The risk of terrorism in the Netherlands has increased after…
- *The tram-attack in Utrecht, the Netherlands (2019)*
- *The Mosque shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand (2019)*
- *The Christmas market attack in Berlin, Germany (2016)*
- *The attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, United States (2016)*
- *The Paris attacks (2015)*

( ) Strongly disagree
( ) Disagree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Agree
( ) Strongly agree

12. Every public space and public transport in the Netherlands have an increased risk of terrorism since…
- *The tram-attack in Utrecht, the Netherlands (2019)*
- *The Mosque shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand (2019)*
- *The Christmas market attack in Berlin, Germany (2016)*
- *The attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, United States (2016)*
- *The Paris attacks (2015)*

( ) Strongly disagree
( ) Disagree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Agree
( ) Strongly agree

13. I am more concerned about terrorism in the Netherlands since…
- *The tram-attack in Utrecht, the Netherlands (2019)*
- *The Mosque shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand (2019)*
- *The Christmas market attack in Berlin, Germany (2016)*
- *The attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, United States (2016)*

- *The Paris attacks (2015)*

( ) Strongly disagree
( ) Disagree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Agree
( ) Strongly agree

13. I am travelling less since…

- *The tram-attack in Utrecht, the Netherlands (2019)*
- *The Mosque shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand (2019)*
- *The Christmas market attack in Berlin, Germany (2016)*
- *The attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, United States (2016)*
- *The Paris attacks (2015)*

( ) Strongly disagree
( ) Disagree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Agree
( ) Strongly agree

14. I am avoiding large public events and public spaces since…

- *The tram-attack in Utrecht, the Netherlands (2019)*
- *The Mosque shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand (2019)*
- *The Christmas market attack in Berlin, Germany (2016)*
- *The attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, United States (2016)*
- *The Paris attacks (2015)*

( ) Strongly disagree
( ) Disagree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Agree
( ) Strongly agree

15. How long did your concern last after every case of terrorism?

- *The tram-attack in Utrecht, the Netherlands (2019)*
- *The Mosque shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand (2019)*
- *The Christmas market attack in Berlin, Germany (2016)*
- *The attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, United States (2016)*
- *The Paris attacks (2015)*

( ) I never felt concern
( ) Only on the day of the incident
( ) In the weeks following the incident
( ) In the months following the incident
( ) I am still concerned

This questionnaire will end with a number of general questions related to your background.

16. What is your gender?

( ) Male
( ) Female
( ) Prefer not to answer

17. What is your age?
< text >

18. What is your highest level of completed education?
( ) High school, no diploma
( ) High school, diploma or equivalent
( ) Intermediate Vocational Education (MBO)
( ) Higher Vocational Education (HBO)
( ) Bachelor's Degree (University)
( ) Master's Degree (University)
( ) Professional/Doctorate Degree

19. What is your current employment status? (multiple answers possible)
[ ] Employed full time
[ ] Employed part time
[ ] Unemployed, looking for work
[ ] Unemployed, not looking for work
[ ] Self-employed
[ ] Retired
[ ] Student
[ ] Unable to work
[ ] Prefer not to answer

20. Please indicate which of the following categories best describes the industry you work in.
( ) Administrative/secretarial
( ) Agriculture
( ) Arts, entertainment
( ) Communication, marketing
( ) Cultural/linguistics
( ) Facility services
( ) Finance and insurance
( ) Government (e.g. ministries, municipalities, prison system)
( ) Health care/social well-being
( ) Hotel and food services
( ) ICT / IT
( ) Nature/environment
( ) Legal services (e.g. court of justice, law firm, legal advisor)
( ) Public order/security (e.g. police, fire department, emergency services)
( ) Research/science/education
( ) Retail
( ) Technical industry
( ) Other, namely
( ) Currently not working

21. Is your work or study in any way related to terrorism policy (e.g. development, implementation, research)?
( ) Yes
( ) No

( ) Prefer not to answer

22. What is your religion?
( ) Catholicism/Christianity
( ) Judaism
( ) Islam
( ) Buddhism
( ) Other, namely
( ) Not religious
( ) Prefer not to answer

Thank you for your participation in my thesis questionnaire!

APPENDIX C Data collection for interviews: General topic guide

Introduction
• The interviewer explains the purpose and content of the research. The interviewer also explains the value of the interview with the expert for the research. • Informed consent: the interviewer explains how the information will be analysed, that the interview will be transcribed, and that the data will be anonymised.
Topics relating to terrorist attacks period 2015-2019
• Trend 2015-2019 of terrorist attacks in Europe • Impact of attacks in Europe on the terrorist threat in the Netherlands
Topics relating to geographic proximity of terrorist attacks
• Impact of certain terrorist attacks outside of Europe on the terrorist threat in the Netherlands • Impact of these attacks on Dutch counterterrorism policy • The impact of geographic proximity • The importance of geographic proximity
Topics relating to Dutch counterterrorism policy
• Approach Dutch government regarding counterterrorism • Focus of Dutch counterterrorism policy • Threat Assessment Level of the Netherlands (DTN) • Perception respondent on the current threat level
Topics relating to the threat perception
• Threat perception of Dutch citizens • Threat perception of respondent (expert) • What aspects does the respondent focus on after a terrorist attack? • Distinction threat perception after terrorist attack in Utrecht (March 2019) and after other terrorist attacks in Europe?
Perception expert of current threat
• Perception respondent of the current terrorist threat in the Netherlands • Is a terrorist attack in the Netherlands currently realistic?
Closing interview
• Are there any topics the respondent or interviewer wants to address before ending the interview? • An agreement on sharing the master-thesis at the end of the trajectory with the respondent • The interviewer emphasizes her gratitude for the expertise and time of the respondent

APPENDIX D Reliability analyses SPSS output

Table 1

Reliability Analysis – Cronbach's alpha for threat perception of terrorism with high geographic proximity

Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
The risk of terrorism in the Netherlands has increased after the tram-attack in Utrecht	9.06	6.151	.614	.648
Every public space and public transport in the Netherlands have an increased risk of terrorism since the tram-attack in Utrecht	8.88	5.834	.653	.630
I am more concerned about terrorism in the Netherlands since the tram-attack in Utrecht	8.94	5.944	.575	.667
I am travelling less since the tram-attack in Utrecht	10.43	8.504	.384	.737
I am avoiding large public events and public spaces since the tram-attack in Utrecht	10.27	8.282	.321	.752

Table 2

Reliability Analysis – Cronbach's alpha for threat perception of terrorism with average geographic proximity

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
The risk of terrorism in the Netherlands has increased after the Christmas market attack in Berlin	22.29	28.631	.647	.828
The risk of terrorism in the Netherlands has increased after the Paris attacks	21.94	28.495	.621	.830
Every public space and public transport in the Netherlands have an increased risk of terrorism since the Christmas market attack in Berlin	22.41	27.646	.693	.823
Every public space and public transport in the Netherlands have an increased risk of terrorism since the Paris attacks	22.19	27.945	.642	.828
I am more concerned about terrorism in the Netherlands since the Christmas market attack in Berlin	22.36	28.053	.630	.829
I am more concerned about terrorism in the Netherlands since the Paris attacks	22.04	27.930	.609	.832
I am travelling less since the Christmas market attack in Berlin	23.89	32.811	.383	.850
I am travelling less since the Paris attacks	23.86	32.386	.408	.848
I am avoiding large public events and public spaces since the Christmas market attack in Berlin	23.68	31.302	.418	.848
I am avoiding large public events and public spaces since the Paris attacks	23.61	30.645	.438	.847

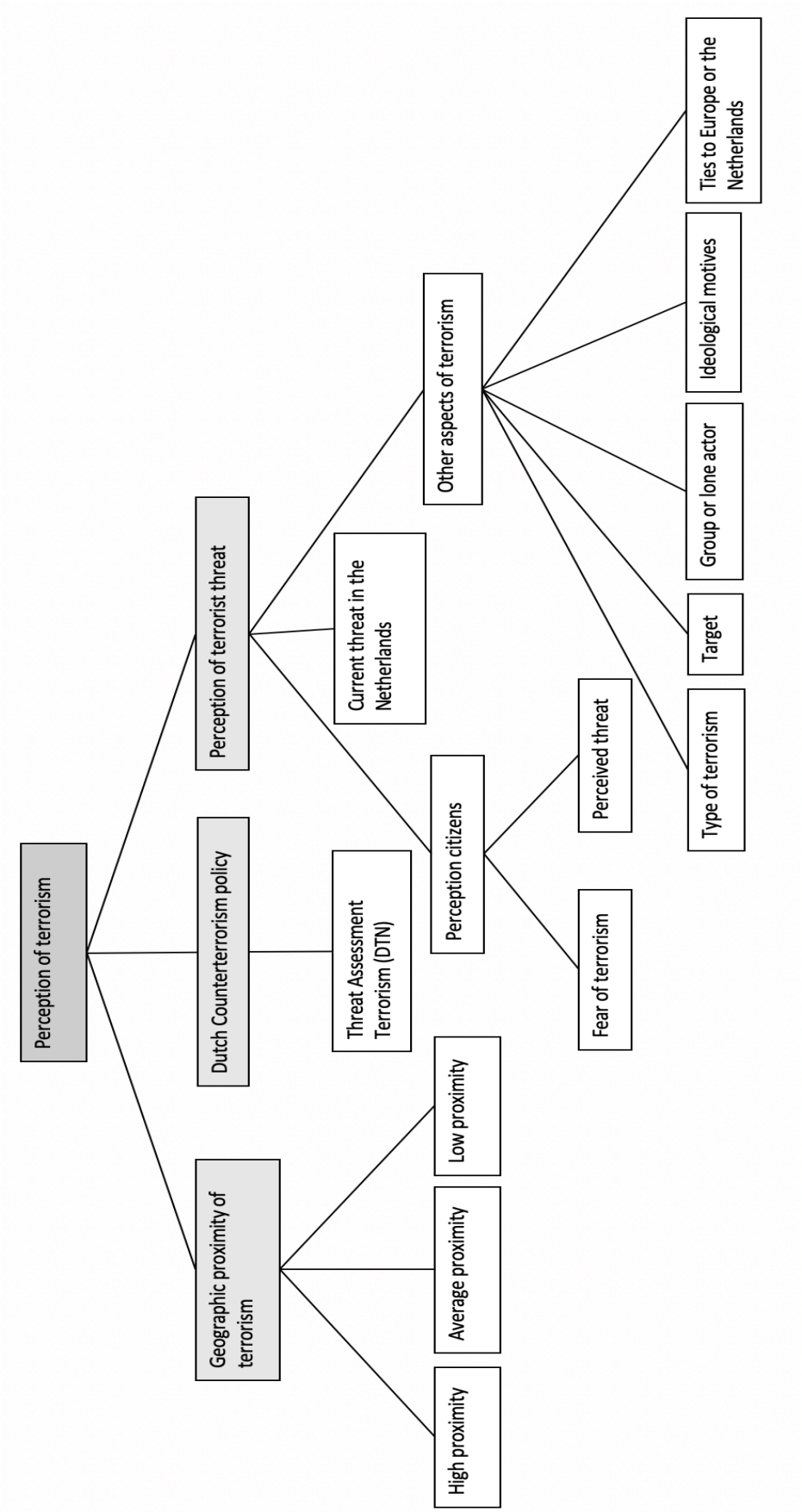
Table 3

Reliability Analysis – Cronbach's alpha for threat perception of terrorism with average geographic proximity

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
The risk of terrorism in the Netherlands has increased after the Mosque shooting in Christchurch	18.96	26.210	.620	.879
The risk of terrorism in the Netherlands has increased after the attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando	19.05	26.198	.682	.874
Every public space and public transport in the Netherlands have an increased risk of terrorism since the Mosque shooting in Christchurch	19.04	25.059	.734	.870
Every public space and public transport in the Netherlands have an increased risk of terrorism since the attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando	19.09	25.293	.738	.869
I am more concerned about terrorism in the Netherlands since the Mosque shooting in Christchurch	19.13	25.301	.696	.873
I am more concerned about terrorism in the Netherlands since the attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando	19.20	25.666	.700	.872
I am travelling less since the Mosque shooting in Christchurch	20.22	28.987	.506	.886
I am travelling less since the attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando	20.20	28.810	.524	.885
I am avoiding large public events and public spaces since the Mosque shooting in Christchurch	20.11	28.272	.512	.885
I am avoiding large public events and public spaces since the attack in the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando	20.08	28.077	.528	.884

APPENDIX E Hierarchical coding paradigm: Perception terrorism experts



APPENDIX F Normal Q-Q plots Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

Figure 1

Normal Q-Q Plot threat perception and low geographic proximity of terrorism

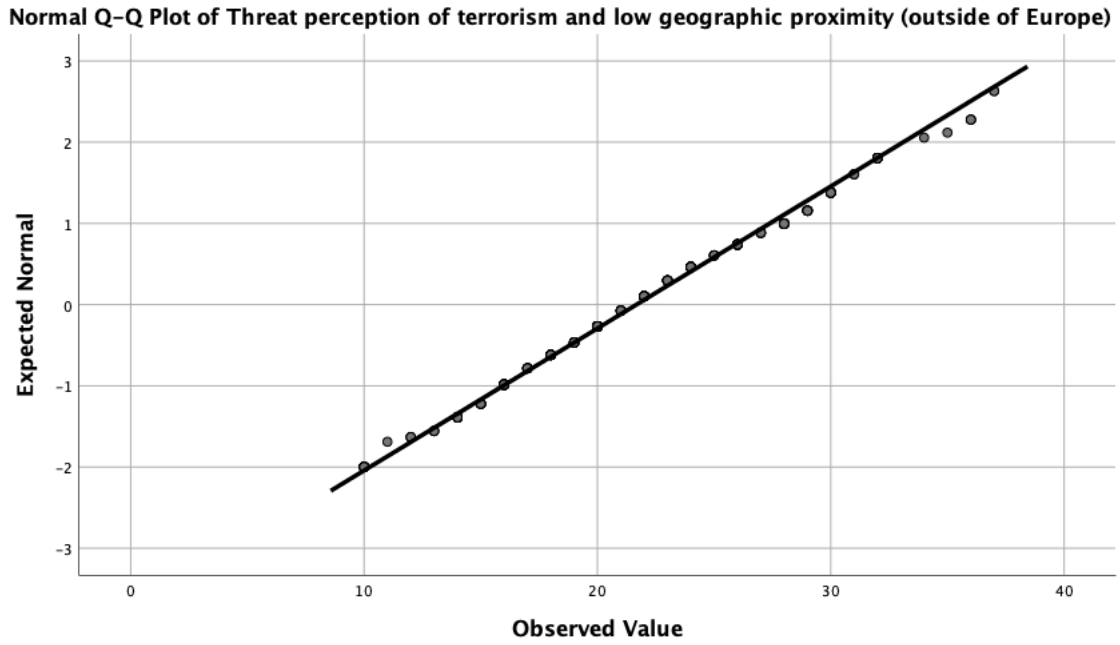


Figure 2

Normal Q-Q Plot threat perception and average geographic proximity of terrorism

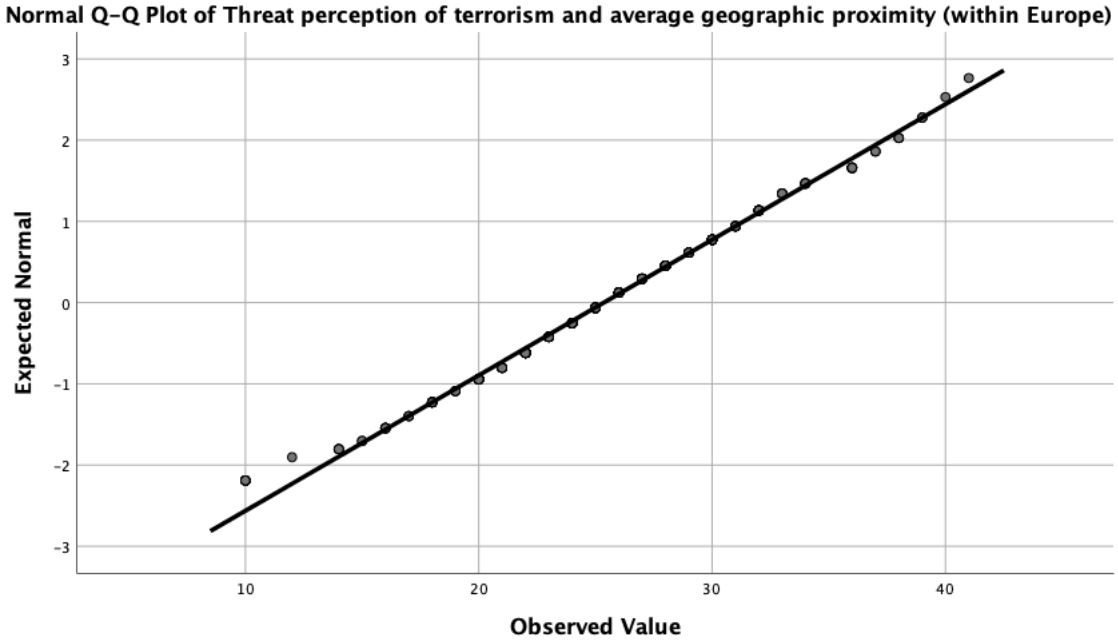


Figure 3

Normal Q-Q Plot threat perception and high geographic proximity of terrorism