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Why NATO Persists: A Case Study of the Netherlands

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Abstract

This thesis explores collective action problems in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the post-Soviet era. Collective action theory does not have plain explanations for the fact that NATO is still operating. As long as member states invest in the alliance in terms of financial contributions and by participating in operations, NATO is likely to persist. By focusing on the case of the Netherlands, the study addresses a state's incentives for contributing to NATO-led out-of-area operations. More specifically, this thesis has selected Kosovo Force, Resolute Support, and NATO Mission Iraq to analyze why the Netherlands has participated in NATO missions. Through a content analysis of letters in which the government justifies its decision for participating in these missions, the study can collect, categorize, and interpret the arguments of the Dutch government. Following the theories of institutionalism and constructivism, this research argues that the Netherlands has contributed to NATO-led out-of-area operations because it strived to sustain the institutional assets of NATO and to promote liberal-democratic values.

Keywords: Collective action, NATO, institutionalism, constructivism

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Why NATO Persists: A Case Study of the Netherlands

Recently, tensions overshadowed the 2019 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit in London. A month before the world leaders gathered, French President Emmanuel Macron declared NATO to be "brain dead" (Karni & Rogers, 2019). In his speech, American President Donald Trump has been complaining about NATO allies that are not following the guidelines of spending two percent of their GDP on national defense. And as icing on the cake, during the 70th-anniversary celebrations of NATO, President Trump abruptly left the gathering after seeing footage of four world leaders mocking him (Karni & Rogers, 2019).

When NATO was established in 1949, its main goal was to provide collective security against the Soviet expansion (Oneal, 1990). After the collapse of the Soviet-Union, students of realist theories (e.g. Mearsheimer, 1990; Waltz, 1993) expected NATO to fade out because its very reason for existence disappeared. For example, prominent realist scholar Mearsheimer stated that "it is the Soviet threat that provides the glue that holds NATO together" (1990, p. 52). Nevertheless, three decades later, NATO is still operating as it celebrates her 70th-anniversary. This thesis focuses on the explanations of two grand theories for the fact that NATO persists. Whereas constructivists would argue that Western countries use NATO as a tool for promoting liberal democratic values (Schimmelfennig, 1998), institutional theorists point out the institutional practices and procedures that appear to be capable of addressing other emerging political and military concerns as well (Wallander, 2000).

In the light of recent tensions between the NATO governments, this contribution raises the question about the effective persistence of the alliance. By combining collective action theory with institutionalist and constructivist perspectives, this research aims to find out what incentives countries have for joining NATO missions. For this purpose, the study scrutinizes the motives of one particular country for joining NATO operations. More specifically, the central question of this research is *Why did the Netherlands contribute to NATO-led out-of-area operations in the post-Cold War era?* Kosovo Force, Resolute Support, and NATO Mission Iraq are the missions that are selected to identify patterns in the motives of the Dutch government to participate in these operations. By performing a content analysis of letters in which the government communicates to join NATO operations, the study can collect and categorize the arguments. With this approach, the thesis attempts to yield specific insights that contribute to broader discussions about the continuance of NATO. The first section of this research focuses on collective action problems in NATO. In the second section, to solve the puzzle collective action theory leaves behind, the thesis addresses the theoretical

underpinnings of institutionalism and constructivism. The third section explains the method that is used to find out what incentives the Netherlands has for contributing to NATO missions. Finally, the last section discusses the empirical findings followed by some concluding remarks.

Literature Review

Collective action

Collective action theory fits NATO because the alliance is considered to provide the public good of security to its members. According to Kaul (2012), public goods "tend to be underprovided because individual actors are tempted to free-ride. They may wait for others to step forward and provide the good, reckoning that when it becomes available, they, too, will benefit from it—free of charge" (p. 72). Together, NATO allies strive to ensure collective defense for their territories. However, because allies cannot be excluded from the public good of security, they tend to underprovide the production of collective defense. Collective action theory is established in multiple disciplines, and a broad spectrum of academics worked on collective action problems and similar concepts like the tragedy of the commons (Hardin, 1968), common-pool resources (Ostrom, 1992), global public goods (Kaul, 2012), and the public good problem (Olson, 1971).

According to Sandler (2015), "collective action arises when the efforts of two or more individuals or agents (e.g. countries) are required to accomplish an outcome" (p. 196). In his work on collective action, Olson (1971) demonstrates that rational and self-interested individuals are not likely to contribute to the group interest. However, he argues, because communication is possible and actors have better means to observe each other, actors in smaller groups have better opportunities for strategic behavior and explicit bargaining (p. 3). As a result, members of smaller groups are more likely to produce a public good. Nevertheless, because of individual self-interests, members still tend to underprovide the production of public goods (Oneal, 1990, p. 380). Sandler (2004) argues that there is better hope for producing a public good when it is not accessible for everyone (excludable) and when actors do not have to compete for it (non-rivalry) – a club good. When providing such goods, because the contributing actors enjoy a bigger ratio of the benefits the club good gives, they have more incentives for collective action (p. 98).

Collective action in NATO

When the alliance was founded, NATO's main task was to provide the public good of security to its member states. Obviously, during the times of the Soviet expansion, NATO members had much interest in providing the good of security. After 1990, when the Soviet threat vanished, the nature of European security threats changed. As a reaction to new threats such as international terrorism, NATO started to shift its mandate from collective defense towards peace operations (Ringsmose, 2010, p. 319). In the past decades, the majority of security problems originate from places beyond NATO's territory. In order to meet these challenges, NATO has increased the amount of out-of-area operations (Barany & Rauchaus, 2011, p. 296).

Kimball (2019) argues that NATO members still benefit from collective defense. European countries face challenges from Russia ranging from cyber-attacks and media manipulation to military pressures in eastern Europe (p. 1). Threats from Russia but also transnational threats like terrorism create incentives to keep investing in NATO. The alliance provides products that are essential for security (strategic defense and operational planning). If states attempt to attain these goods without NATO, it will be far more costly (Kimball, 2019, p. 14). Whereas the club good of collective defense (article 5) is non-rival and excludable, facilitating out-of-area peacekeeping operations often produces a pure public good (Lepgold, 1998, p. 104). Not only NATO members benefit from out-of-area peacekeeping missions, but other states take advantage of peace and stability as well. This reaches to the very essence of collective action problems, why would states produce a good that mostly benefits other states? According to collective action theory, states tend to underprovide the production of public goods (Lepgold, 1998, p. 104). Based on this assumption, Lepgold questions if NATO governments still have enough incentives for effectively contributing to dangerous interventions and peace operations (pp. 104-105).

To fund NATO's proceedings, the alliance distinguishes two kinds of financial burdens. First, states must pay common contributions based on their relative GDP. And secondly, when states contribute to NATO operations, the costs lie where they fall. This means that, when a country provides troops to a NATO mission, it will bear the costs for its own account (Foucault & Mérand, 2012, p. 428). On one hand, research shows us that the burdens of the alliance are unfairly divided (Sandler & Shimizu, 2014). On the other hand, rules from the NATO treaty require members to share the burden in terms of financial contributions. Moreover, member states show their credibility by maintaining national defense capabilities

and by participating in military missions and exercises (Kimball, 2019, p. 15). Although these rules are not enforceable, states are encouraged to jointly shoulder the burdens of NATO, and consequently, will restrain from free-riding.

Motives to join NATO missions

Kimball states that "as long as partners invest in the institution…NATO will continue to play a vital role in defending Europe and beyond" (2019, p. 16). Under the condition that member states keep investing in the alliance in terms of financial contributions and by participating in operations, NATO is likely to persevere. In the next part, the thesis elaborates on the motives individual countries have for contributing to NATO operations. Ringsmose (2010) emphasizes that the United States (US) is facilitating security for its European junior partners. Smaller NATO countries highly depend on security and defense produced by American investments. Therefore, it is crucial for weaker states to make sure that NATO remains a vital alliance in world politics. Consequently, regardless of a lack of direct incentives, junior partners contribute to out-of-area NATO operations because they believe it is a short-cut to national security. In brief, European countries assume that the credibility of the security guarantees provided by NATO is dependent on their efforts in operations (Ringsmose, 2010, p. 320).

Kimball (2019) studies NATO from the perspective of Canada. She recommends the Canadian government to fulfill its operational and financial commitments to NATO and, whenever possible, step into leadership roles. As Canada does in Operation Reassurance in Latvia, a NATO mission to socialize new partners, it is crucial to seize opportunities to lead. In such a manner, Canada is able to maintain its credible and respected position in NATO (Kimball, 2019, p. 2). Rottem (2007) focuses on the motives Norway has to take part in NATO operations. He distinguishes three dimensions that legitimize Norwegian participation in NATO-led military interventions. Firstly, as Norway is located close to Russia, its security policy is often justified in terms of territorial integrity and protection of national sovereignty. Secondly, Norway means to fulfill its commitments to the alliance. And thirdly, such interventions attempt to encourage human rights and democracy (Rottem, 2007). Constructivists argue that states seek to promote their identities and interests that are socially constructed by interaction processes (Karns & Mingst, 2010, p. 51). From this perspective, Norway contributes to NATO missions because it attempts to spread the norms that form its identity and interests.

For the Netherlands, Wiltenburg and van der Vorm (2019) see two main reasons to participate in international missions. The first reason to take part in such missions is to promote the international rule of law. Besides domestic support and territorial defense, promoting the international rule of law is one of the three constitutional reasons for the use of armed forces (Wiltenburg & van der Vorm, 2019). Following Ringsmose's argument (2010, p. 320), fostering the relationship with the US is the second reason for the Dutch government to participate in international missions. US security guarantees via NATO are crucial to the security of the Netherlands (Wiltenburg & van der Vorm, 2019). Because the US is the main contributor to the alliance, the Netherlands desires to maintain good relations with the US. By supporting American efforts in world politics, the Netherlands attempts to present itself as a good ally. Although the Dutch government is not following NATO's guidelines of spending two percent of its GDP on national defense, the Netherlands does make efforts to regularly contribute to NATO operations (Wiltenburg & van der Vorm, 2019).

In their research on peace-keeping missions of the European Union (EU), Haesebrouck and Thiem (2017) focus on contributions of member states relative to their capabilities. They argue that EU members are more likely to actively contribute to out-of-area operations when the member state has a strong peacekeeping tradition and elections are distant. However, as Rottem (2007) argues because domestic factors might influence decisions on joining NATO missions, we have to be careful with making generalizations about the incentives states have for participating in operations. He states that, because Norway differs from other states regarding its role as an energy exporter and its domestic norms and values, the motives for Norway are hard to generalize to other NATO allies (p. 619).

In summation, the literature on collective action demonstrates the complexity of arguments about the effective persistence of NATO. Scholars have different views about the good NATO is providing. Does the alliance produce the club good of collective security (Kimball, 2019) or is NATO providing the pure public good of peace and stability (Lepgold, 1998)? Besides, it is difficult to determine whether NATO allies are shouldering the burdens in a way that is fair enough to ensure the effective persistence of the alliance. Generally, it is unclear to what extent states are committed to NATO. By contributing to operations, the Netherlands shows a willingness to invest in the alliance. Therefore, examining the justification for contributing to missions forms a thorough foundation to study why the Netherlands is still committed to NATO. Although we should be careful making generalizations, examining the

incentives for the Netherlands to remain committed to NATO might yield findings that can be applied to other allies as well.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses two grand theories to yield expectations on why the Netherlands has participated in NATO missions. First, I discuss institutionalism and its theoretical implications about the institutional assets of NATO. Thereafter, the research shifts its focus to constructivism to elaborate on the transatlantic identity the NATO members share. By applying these theoretical perspectives on the collective action problems in NATO, I will present the hypotheses (H1 and H2) of this study. In such a manner, the thesis combines different disciplines to examine states' incentives for contributing to NATO operations.

Institutionalism

A very broad definition of an institution is "a formal organization, often with public status, whose members interact on the basis of the specific role they perform within the organization" (Hague & Harrop, 2010, p. 26). In political science, institutional theories focus on the informational role of institutions (Keohane & Martin, 1995, p. 51). As March and Olsen (2011) explain, new institutionalism is a "set of theoretical ideas and hypotheses concerning the relations between institutional characteristics and political agency, performance, and change" (p. 160). Institutionalism is a very broad approach to politics that is held together by the assumption that "institutions are the variables that explain most of political life" (Peters, 1999, p. 150).

In a sense, institutions can help to resolve collective action problems. An institution like NATO offers a stage for its members to make credible long-term commitments. Moreover, because it structures actions and offers predictability, a shared institutional context makes it easier to conduct business with strangers. In this way, NATO glues the cooperation between its members in a way that would be impossible for states acting alone (Hague & Harrop, 2010, p. 28). Within the alliance, member states do have the willingness to cooperate because it yields expectations for peace as well as reductions in defense spending (Chun, 2013, p. 75).

During the times of the Soviet expansion, cooperation within NATO generated the development of institutional assets for military planning and coordination as well as mechanisms for swift decision-making. In this way, NATO members integrated practices and procedures to deal with European security problems (Wallander, 2000). As a reaction to new

security concerns, NATO governments kept returning to the alliance because NATO's military and political assets still proved to be effective (Wallander, 2000, p. 731). Therefore, governments are more likely to use NATO when dealing with current security threats instead of creating new institutions, which may entail high costs and risks (Barany & Rauchaus, 2011, p. 291). To illustrate NATO's ability for institutional adaptation, the alliance originally focused on military coordination and integration. As a reaction to recent developments (e.g. cyber-attacks), NATO established a common cybersecurity capacity that provides a platform to deal with cyber threats. In this way, the institution proved to be capable of shifting its focus evident in its change to cybersecurity (Burton, 2015).

This thesis specifies institutional assets as rules, procedures, norms, memberships, and purposes that constitute an institution. These assets enable states to cooperate by providing resources for information sharing, by creating incentives to conform to international standards necessary for multilateral action, and by establishing rules for decision-making and implementation (Wallander, 2000, p. 709). NATO governments realize that the institutional assets of NATO are still essential for their security. Though it seems that states often have little interest to participate in a mission, maintaining a strong and cohesive institution motivates NATO members to reconsider their participation. States want to ensure that they can rely on the procedures and practices of NATO in the future, and therefore, *NATO governments contribute to missions because they attempt to sustain the ability to use the institutional assets of the alliance (H1).*

Constructivism

Like institutionalism, constructivism is a broad approach with different theoretical arguments. Constructivist findings have in common that they are based on the notion that "people only arrive at certain actions due to their adoption of certain social constructs to interpret their world" (Parsons, 2010, p. 97). Parsons defines social constructs as "ideas, beliefs, norms, identities, or some other interpretive filter through which people perceive the world" (p. 80). Constructivists believe that actors' interests and identities are socially constructed by interaction processes. In international politics, international organizations influence these processes because they embody dominant norms that shape behavior. Scholars of constructivism argue that institutions like NATO can be teachers as well as creators of dominant norms and values (Karnst & Mingst, 2010, p. 51). When constructivists study international institutions, they are mainly interested in how institutions teach norms and change state preferences (Barany & Rauchaus, 2011, p. 292).

When NATO governments decided to institute collective defense against a common enemy, they also started to create a shared identity. According to Schimmelfenning (1998), liberal human rights are at the center of the community's identity. The main principles of the liberal social order such as democracy and the rule of law derive from these rights (p. 214). Whereas institutionalists emphasize the practices and procedures of NATO, constructivists focus on how Western countries attempt to promote multilateral norms and values through NATO (Schimmelfennig, 1998, p. 198). In his work on NATO enlargement, Schimmelfennig argues that NATO expanded to the east because of international socialization. In this way, Western countries were able to enlarge the liberal-democratic community. After the Cold War, NATO started to focus on socializing post-communist polities. The alliance used mechanisms of teaching and persuasion to stimulate former communist countries to adopt liberal-democratic norms of governance (Gheciu, 2005).

According to constructivists, in addition to enlarging NATO by socializing new partners, the alliance uses out-of-area operations to expand its identity. A shared history, mutual trust, and sympathies among allies strengthen the common values of the North Atlantic community. Once these values are challenged, NATO governments want to protect and promote their dominant liberal-democratic view on world politics. By performing out-of-area interventions (e.g. in the Balkans and Iraq), NATO aims to defend the values of the transatlantic identity (Webber, 2009b, p. 20). When the objective of cooperation reaffirms the shared identity, member states have a reason to participate in out-of-area operations (Webber, 2009b, p. 21). In short, NATO allies share a common transatlantic identity based on liberal-democratic values. States esteem this identity and aim to protect and promote its values. Therefore, this thesis expects that *states participate in NATO missions because they attempt to promote liberal-democratic values (H2).* In this research, the liberal-democratic values that form the transatlantic identity are specified as the rule of law, democracy, capitalism, fair treatment for minorities, and peacefully settling international disputes (Barany & Rauchaus, 2011, p. 292).

Methodology

In order to test the validity of the hypotheses, this research has selected the single case of the Netherlands to find out what incentives it has for contributing to out-of-area NATO operations. As Lepgold (1998) points out, facilitating such missions creates the non-excludable good of peace and stability. The Netherlands does not seem to have many incentives to deplete its resources to provide peace and stability in other regions (p. 104). Additionally, territorial threats from Russia are at the center of the Norwegian security

discourse (Rottem, 2008, p. 626). This is not the case for the Netherlands, and therefore, it should not be the first to be worried about the collective-defense capabilities of NATO. According to these assumptions, the Netherlands is not expected to actively contribute to NATO. Nevertheless, the Dutch government often chooses to participate in out-of-area operations. In this way, the case deviates from what collective action theory would expect.

Content analysis is "a research method that uses a set of procedures to make to valid inferences from text" (Weber, 1990, p. 9). Following this methodology, the study aims to collect the arguments given by the Dutch government about why it has decided to participate in NATO-led out-of-area operations. In a qualitative manner, the arguments will be coded into categories that are important for the topic of this thesis (Liakopoulos, 2000). Because the government must justify its policies to the parliament, letters from the Dutch government to the parliament form a foundation to study the reasons for participating in out-of-area operations. By analyzing the content of letters in which the government communicates to join a NATO mission, this study can collect and categorize the arguments. To find patterns and make interpretations from the data, the method uses grounded theory (institutionalism and constructivism) to classify the arguments the Dutch government gives for participating in out-of-area operations (Morgan, 1993).

This thesis considers a state to contribute to a NATO-led out-of-area operation when it supplies at least one soldier in the area of conflict. Physical presence is a well measurable operationalization of contributing to NATO missions. Moreover, both NATO members and the alliance itself have released explicit information about the amount of troops states have deployed during operations. To explain why the Netherlands has contributed to NATO missions, the thesis distinguishes three categories of arguments the Dutch government gives. The first set of arguments is about the willingness to sustain the institutional assets of the alliance (H1), the second set of arguments is linked to promoting liberal-democratic values (H2), and the third set is a collection of other arguments. In the coming paragraphs, I will elaborate on the categories and their indicators.

H1 covers the arguments that refer to sustaining the ability to use the institutional assets of the alliance as a reason to participate in NATO operations. When the Netherlands indicates that its efforts in NATO missions aim to preserve the rules, procedures, norms, memberships, and purposes that enable NATO allies to cooperate, it comes down to this category. The coding scheme established four indicators to operationalize the category of H1. The first indicator refers to the importance of maintaining strong relationships with NATO allies. When allies

have strong relationships, they are more likely to sustain the institutional assets of the alliance. The second indicator points to the urgency to build a reputation as a reliable ally. When the Netherlands proves to be solidary and loyal, it is making efforts to invest in the institution, which may encourage other allies to take their responsibilities as well.

The third indicator is appreciating NATO's capacities that derive from the institutional assets. The institutional assets form the foundation of integrated practices and procedures to deal with European security problems. Hence, the experience and capacities of NATO ensure assets for military planning and coordination as well as mechanisms for swift decision-making (Wallander, 2000). Whenever the Ministers note to value NATO's capacities such as its command structures, they imply that they want to sustain the institutional assets. Finally, the fourth indicator refers to NATO as a mechanism to share the responsibility regarding the resolution of conflicts. Because this indicator is mentioned quite often, and because it overlaps with both the second and third indicator, the coding scheme established a separate indicator for this institutional asset.

The category of H2 includes the arguments that refer to promoting liberal-democratic values consisting of the rule of law, democracy, capitalism, fair treatment for minorities, and peacefully settling international disputes. The amount of arguments in this category is measured through four indicators. As Schimmelfennig (1998) points out, the liberal democratic values of the transatlantic identity derive from liberal human rights that are at the center of the community's identity (p. 214). Therefore, the first indicator of this category refers to safeguarding human rights. When the government points to protecting women's rights, the rights of displaced people, the rights of minorities, or human rights of other natures as a reason to participate in a NATO mission, it will be coded in this category. Secondly, the rule of law is inextricably linked with the transatlantic identity (see Schimmelfenning, 1998, p. 214; Barany & Rauchaus, 2011, p. 292). A well-functioning rule of law is impossible when there is no regional security managed by national authorities. Therefore, when the Dutch Ministers refer to either establishing regional security or improving the rule of law (or both) as a reason for taking part in NATO operations, it relates to H2.

According to Etinski and Tubić (2016), the peculiar characteristics of the international legal order do not harm the rule of law. The third indicator includes the arguments that refer to protecting the international legal order. This indicator overlaps with the second. However, the second indicator mainly focuses on the rule of law regionally as this is specified to safeguarding the international rule of law. For example, combating international terrorism,

which is violating international laws and standards, is part of protecting the international legal order. As Wiltenburg and van der Vorm argue (2019), promoting the international rule of law is an important reason for the Netherlands to participate in international missions. Finally, the last indicator of this category is facilitating economic prosperity in the area of conflict. When NATO countries support economic growth in the conflict area, they can influence economic developments in accordance with capitalistic standards like the free market principle. In this way, NATO allies are in a position to promote their transatlantic identity.

Because different arguments barely use the exact same rhetoric, and because the repetition of arguments does stress the importance of those arguments, the coding scheme keeps adding up the arguments in case of repetition. Additionally, although all NATO allies decided together on the mandates and objectives, it is likely that these overlap with the incentives the Netherlands has for participating in a NATO mission. Because of this, the motives of the Dutch government may correspond with the objectives or mandate of the operation itself. Moreover, the research does not make distinctions between core motives and minor reasons, all arguments are weighted equally.

In a sense, this study reasons from a broad perception of what is considered to be an argument. However, the argument must (in)directly refer to participating in the out-of-area NATO mission. For example, when the letters describe reasons for offering financial aid or when they simply give context on the humanitarian circumstances in the conflict area, the coding scheme does not include these arguments. From the context of the argument, it must be clear that it is a motive for taking part in a NATO mission. In some passages, the government refers to two or more indicators of the categories. In this case, the coding scheme codes multiple arguments from a small piece of text. By acknowledging these aspects, the coding strategy aims to classify the arguments as detailed as possible.

Based on the most-different case selection (Gerring, 2008), the methodology has selected Kosovo Force, Resolute Support, and NATO Mission Iraq to analyze why the Netherlands has contributed to these missions. The three NATO-led out-of-area operations differ in their variables like time, location, intensity, and the number of soldiers deployed by the Netherlands. Moreover, the government coalitions that authorized the operations are composed of different configurations of political parties. Yet, in all three cases, the Dutch government did decide to participate. By selecting a heterogeneous sample of cases, the method aims to test the hypotheses (H1 and H2) as causal variables that explain why the Netherlands has contributed to NATO missions (Gerring, 2008).

Analysis

For each mission, the thesis provides brief information about the operation and it introduces the letters that are subject to the analysis. After having introduced the missions, the study presents the main results of the research. Subsequently, the analysis elaborates on both hypotheses and the category of other arguments. To contextualize the findings, the study demonstrates the nature of the arguments by giving examples from the different categories.

Kosovo Force (1999)

At the end of the 20th century, former Yugoslavia was the center of multiple conflicts. Not without pain, countries like Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia sought independence from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1998, when the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) attacked the Yugoslav authorities, the situation in Kosovo started to escalate. Milošević, the then Serbian President of Yugoslavia, reacted violently by pursuing KLA sympathizers and other political opponents. But more importantly, the humanitarian circumstances in Kosovo deteriorated (Webber, 2009a). At this point, NATO decided to back the KLA by facilitating air support. The air attacks (Operation Allied Force) aimed to end military activities and ethnic cleansing by Yugoslav forces in Kosovo. Eventually, on the 9th of June 1999, the NATO intervention forced Yugoslavia to sign the Kumanovo Treaty. The content of this treaty included the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovar territory (Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie, 2010).

After the withdrawal of Yugoslav troops from Kosovo, following the UN Security Council Resolution 1244, NATO countries and partners sent over 40.000 troops to Kosovo to prevent a power vacuum. This has been the official start of Kosovo Force (KFOR), a NATO-led mission that is still operational. “KFOR’s original objectives were to deter renewed hostilities, establish a secure environment and ensure public safety and order, demilitarize the KLA, support the international humanitarian effort and coordinate with the international civil presence” ("NATO's role in Kosovo", 2019). Being the main suppliers of troops to KFOR, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, and France were each responsible for their sector in Kosovo. When KFOR started, the Netherlands deployed 2050 soldiers to the area of conflict (Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie, 2019).

At that time, Wim Kok headed the Dutch cabinet that was formed by the Social Democrats (PVDA), Conservative Liberals (VVD), and the Social Liberals (D66). This research focuses on the initial moment, in June 1999, when the Dutch government communicated to the

parliament that the Netherlands is participating in KFOR. In the parliamentary papers from the 8th and 10th of June (Kamerstukken II, 22181 no. 281 and 284), the cabinet informed the Dutch parliament about its decision. The two letters contain information about the situation in Kosovo, preparations to intervene, and national decision-making regarding KFOR. According to the letters, in line with the mandate of the mission, the main reason for the Netherlands to participate in KFOR was to improve the humanitarian circumstances and to guarantee safety in Kosovo. To illustrate, the government argued that it is "essential to restore the humanitarian situation and to guarantee peace and safety in Kosovo" (Kamerstukken II, 22181 no. 281, p. 1).

Resolute Support (2015)

From 2001 until 2014, NATO countries stationed troops in Afghanistan to participate in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission. A broad NATO-led coalition sent military forces to help the national authorities in their efforts to expel military militias like the Taliban and Al-Qaeda from Afghan soil (Münch, 2015, p. 1). When ISAF ended, the international community withdrew most of its troops and only left about 13.000 non-combatant soldiers under the authority of a new mission, named Resolute Support (RS). RS is designed to train, advise, and assist Afghan national security forces (Doğan, 2015, p. 163). In June 2018, during the meeting of NATO Ministers of defense in Brussels, NATO allies and partners expressed their intentions to increase their contributions to RS. According to NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg, RS aims to "strengthen the Afghan security forces so they can create the conditions for a peaceful solution. An Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process is essential to a long-term, inclusive political settlement" ("Press conference by NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg", 2018).

When the mission started, the Netherlands contributed 160 soldiers to a total of 16.000 troops under the authority of RS. At that time, Mark Rutte headed the grand coalition government (Rutte II) incorporating the Conservative Liberals (VVD) and the Social Democrats (PVDA). This study uses two documents to analyze the reasons why the government decided to participate in RS. The first letter (Kamerstukken II, 29521, no. 254), dating from the 1st of September 2014, focuses on the initial moment the cabinet communicated its decision to participate in RS. In the second letter (Kamerstukken II, 27925 no. 630), dating from the 15th of June 2018, the cabinet sent word to the parliament about prolonging and increasing the contribution to RS with 60 soldiers. In comparison with the two other missions, because the

letters on RS contain the most information, the analysis of this mission features the largest amount of data.

NATO Mission Iraq (2018)

NATO Mission Iraq (NMI) is the third and last operation that is a subject of this analysis. Iraq has a long history of conflict and intervention. In the eighties and nineties, Iraq took part in two Gulf Wars, and in 2003 the Coalition of the Willing intervened in Iraq to overthrow the Hussein regime. From 2004 until 2011, after the Iraq War, NATO established the NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I) to train, mentor, and assist the Iraqi security forces ("NATO Mission Iraq", 2020). In 2014, another conflict emerged. Peace was far gone when the Iraqi government, ISIS, and other military militias fought a civil war. As a reaction to the expansion of ISIS, the international community decided to intervene in Syria and Iraq (Marr & al-Marashi, 2018). Currently, in the aftermath of the conflict, the Global Coalition is still (partially) represented in Iraq. In addition to other efforts to restore the rule of law in Iraq, NATO countries agreed on NMI to train Iraqi security forces.

In 2018, at the request of the Iraqi government, NATO decided to send around 500 trainers, advisors, and supporting personnel from allied and partner countries. By sending only 500 men and women, in comparison to both KFOR and RS, NMI is a relatively small operation. NATO considers NMI to be part of broader international efforts of the UN, EU, and the Global Coalition to establish long-term stability in Iraq ("NATO Mission Iraq", 2020). More specifically, the goal of NMI is helping to “strengthen Iraqi security forces and Iraqi military education institutions so that Iraqi forces can prevent the return of ISIS” ("NATO Mission Iraq", 2020). Like the mandate of RS, the mandate of NMI focuses on training and advising national security forces. In this way, NATO aims to establish an independent and sustainable security apparatus in both Afghanistan and Iraq. The decision to contribute to NMI has been made by the current Rutte III cabinet that is formed by a coalition consisting of the Conservative Liberals (VVD), Christian Democrats (CDA), Social Liberals (D66), and the Social Christians (CU). When the mission started, the Netherlands deployed about twenty soldiers and civil experts in Iraq (Kamerstukken II, 27925 no. 637, 2018, p. 2).

This study uses two parliamentary papers to examine the motives the Netherlands has for participating in NMI. In the first letter (Kamerstukken II, 29521 no. 363), dated June 15th, 2018, the Dutch government announced NATO’s plans for NMI. In this letter, the Ministers make preliminary considerations about Dutch contributions to the mission. In the second letter

(Kamerstukken II, 27925 no. 637), dating from the 14th of September 2018, the cabinet presented its final decision to take part in NMI. Both letters focus on the Dutch involvement in Iraq in a broader sense, there are no letters that specifically focus on the decision to participate in NMI. According to the government, the Dutch contribution to NMI is part of integrated efforts to establish security and stability in Iraq. Contributions to the Anti-Isis coalition, the EU Advisory Mission, and endeavors for reforms in the Kurdish region are also part of the integrated approach towards Iraq (Kamerstukken II, 27925 no. 637, p. 10). Because the government aims to pursue a coherent policy in Iraq, the motives for participating in NMI are intertwined with the justification of other efforts in Iraq. For this reason, and because NMI is a relatively small-scale operation, reasons for participating in NMI have been processed in conjunction with information about other operations. Consequently, the coding scheme includes both the specific reasons for participating in NMI as well as motives for the comprehensive Iraq approach. Arguments that specifically refer to the contributions to the Anti-Isis coalition or the EU Advisory Mission are excluded from this research.

Table 1 – Arguments for participating in NATO missions

Description	**Example**	**Frequency**				
		KFOR	RS	NMI	Cumulative	%
H1						
Reputation	*The government values the reputation of the Netherlands as a reliable partner*	0	2	1	3	3.85
Maintaining strong relationships	*In RS, the military cooperation with one of our strategic partners, Germany, is further intensified*	3	2	1	6	7.69
Sharing responsibility	*NATO allies are willing to contribute, this ensures broad support*	1	2	1	4	5.13
NATO's capacities	*The NATO command structures ensure that the operational management is well-tuned*	1	0	1	2	2.56
Total		**5 (31.25%)**	**6 (17.65%)**	**4 (14.29%)**	**15**	**19.23**
H2						
Regional rule of law	*The Netherlands has an interest in a good functioning rule of law in Afghanistan*	5	13	10	28	35.90
International legal order	*The Dutch contributions aim to…promote the legal order in accordance with international standards*	0	3	2	5	6.41
Human rights	*The Netherlands is committed to facilitate a safe return for displaced people to their homes and to protect minorities*	5	7	4	16	20.51
Economic prosperity	*In this way, we can create conditions for sustainable development and reducing long-term poverty and social inequality*	0	2	3	5	6.41
Total		**10 (62.50%)**	**25 (73.53%)**	**19 (67.86%)**	**54**	**69.23**
Other						
National (and allied) security	*The government is therefore committed to an international approach to the security of the Netherlands*	0	1	3	4	5.13
Irregular migration	*Improving the security situation in Afghanistan can help prevent irregular migration to Europe*	0	2	2	4	5.13
Self-determination	*The goal will be reached when the autonomy envisaged for Kosovo…can do without robust support from the international community*	1	0	0	1	1.28
Total		**1 (6.25%)**	**3 (8.82%)**	**5 (17.86%)**	**9**	**11.54**
Total H1/H2/Other		**16**	**34**	**28**	**78**	**100**

Main findings

As table 1 demonstrates, the research identified a total of 78 arguments given by the Dutch government about participating in either KFOR, RS, or NMI. From the total amount arguments, the coding scheme coded 15 arguments in H1, 54 in H2, and 9 in the category of other arguments. The data indicates that the motives that appear in the letters support the hypotheses of this research. For each mission, the government has referred several times to both reasons that support H1 and reasons that support H2. Moreover, the letters demonstrate that the total amount of arguments in the categories of both H1 and H2 outnumber the category of other arguments. Therefore, this study found strong evidence for the assumption that the Netherlands has contributed to NATO-led out-of-area operations because it aimed to sustain the ability to use the institutional assets of the alliance and because it attempted to promote liberal-democratic values. With this finding, the study confirms the hypotheses (H1 and H2) originating from institutionalism and constructivism. This does not mean that the government had no other incentives to join the missions, however, the data demonstrates that H1 and H2 are crucial variables that explain the participation of the Netherlands in NATO operations. Besides, although the missions differ in many aspects, the motives for participating in these missions are quite similar in terms of proportions of the collected arguments. The data shows that the ranges of percentages for each category are not very big (H1: 14%-31%; H2: 63%-74%; Other: 6%-19%). This indicates that there are similarities in the reasoning of the Dutch government to participate in these operations. However, because the data collection of this study is too small, further research is needed to confirm this assumption.

Institutional assets

To demonstrate the evidence for H1, in all three missions, the Dutch government has referred more than once to arguments that imply its will to sustain the institutional assets of NATO. For example, in its justification to participate in KFOR, the government stated that the cooperation within NATO leads to “a distribution of costs and responsibility” (Kamerstukken II, 22181 no. 281, p. 2). Additionally, the responsible Ministers mentioned that the operational management structures of NATO will ensure good coordination between the participating states (Kamerstukken II, 22181 no. 281, p. 3). In the case of RS, the cabinet explicitly noted that being loyal to NATO is an important motive for participating in this mission. According to the Ministers, by contributing to RS, “the Netherlands proves its solidarity to NATO as well its reputation as a reliable ally” (Kamerstukken II, 29521 no. 254, p. 4). In the letters that

communicate the decision to participate in NMI, the government also demonstrates its ambition to prove the Dutch reputation of being a reliable ally. To realize this ambition, the Netherlands must "take a fair share concerning the deployment of armed forces in NATO operations" (Kamerstukken II, 29521 no. 363, p. 2). Moreover, the Ministers mentioned that "the experience and capacities of NATO will prove to be useful during the NMI" (Kamerstukken II, 27925 no. 637, p. 8).

In two of the three missions, the Dutch government demonstrated to favor close operational cooperation with German forces. In the case of KFOR, the responsible Ministers stated that "Dutch soldiers must be deployed as much as possible within the context of the German-Dutch brigade" (Kamerstukken II, 22181 no. 281, p. 3). The Ministers even explicitly noted that "necessary decisions regarding the Dutch contribution to KFOR depend on German decision-making" (Kamerstukken II, 22181 no. 281, p. 5). In its communication to take part in RS, the Dutch government made similar statements. The letters indicate that the cabinet strived to "further intensify (military) cooperation with its strategic partner Germany" (Kamerstukken II, 29521 no. 254, p. 4). By showing the desire for closer operational cooperation with NATO allies like Germany, the Netherlands demonstrates to be willing to invest in close institutional ties with its allies. In this way, the government can maintain good relationships with NATO allies and Germany specifically. Therefore, Dutch Ministers expressing that they would like to deepen the Dutch-German relationship by closely cooperating in NATO operations will be coded in the H1 category.

Table 1 shows that almost twenty percent of the arguments for participating in NATO operations refer to sustaining NATO's institutional assets. By proving its solidary reputation, maintaining good relationships, and by appreciating NATO's capacities such as mechanisms for responsibility-sharing, the Dutch government suggests to be interested in NATO's institutional assets. This finding is consistent with institutionalist explanations for NATO's persistence. Though it seems that states often have little interest to participate in a mission, maintaining a strong and cohesive institution motivates NATO members to reconsider their participation. For this reason, the Netherlands has contributed to NATO missions because it attempted to sustain the ability to use the institutional assets of the alliance.

Liberal-democratic values

Consisting of 54 arguments, the category of H2 covers almost seventy percent of the total amount of arguments. Most of the motives that promote the transatlantic identity refer to

either safeguarding human rights (16) or establishing the rule of law in the conflict area (28). To illustrate the nature of the arguments that are coded into this category, in its decision to participate in KFOR, the Dutch cabinet emphasized the need "to facilitate humanitarian organizations with help… and to create circumstances in which refugees can return to their homes" (Kamerstukken II, 22181 no. 284, p. 3). Regarding RS, the government has stated that it aimed to "restore the rule of law by improving the capacities of law enforcement bodies in Afghanistan". In this way, the Netherlands contributes to preventing Afghanistan from "becoming a breeding place for terrorism, which would be a threat to both the Afghan population and the international legal order" (Kamerstukken II, 29521 no. 254, p. 3).

By supporting the process of building a well-functioning constitutional state in Afghanistan, the Netherlands hoped to establish "trustworthy authorities that facilitate physical protection to Afghan citizens" (Kamerstukken II, 29521 no. 254, p. 4). This is not the only reference to human rights, the Ministers frequently mention the promotion of women's rights and human rights of other natures as an important reason to station troops in Afghanistan (Kamerstukken II, 29521 no. 254, pp. 3, 4, 7, 8). Similar to its approach in Afghanistan, by training Iraqi security forces in cooperation with NATO allies, the Netherlands attempts to establish long-term peace and stability in Iraq (Kamerstukken II, 27925 no. 637, pp. 1, 2, 3). Besides ensuring safety in Iraq, the integrated efforts of the Dutch government aim to foster the international legal order and to protect Iraqi civilians (p. 11).

These examples confirm constructivist explanations about how Western countries use NATO to promote multilateral norms and values (e.g. Schimmelfennig, 1998). The majority of the motives for the Netherlands to participate in NATO missions come down to promoting liberal-democratic values such as human rights. The data shows that more than half of the arguments the Dutch government has given for contributing to NATO missions refer to spreading the transatlantic identity. Therefore, one can argue that promoting liberal-democratic values is the most important justification mechanism for participating in NATO-led out-of-area operations.

However, some components of the transatlantic identity, like human rights and the rule of law, may give a distorted picture of the motives for the Netherlands to participate in NATO missions. From a realist perspective, Bellamy & Wheeler (2008) argue that political leaders are responsible for their own citizens, and therefore, they do not have the moral right to shed the blood of their own citizens on behalf of suffering foreigners. Consequently, because states are driven by self-interest, they act selectively when they decide to intervene. To illustrate,

“NATO's intervention in Kosovo could not have been driven by humanitarian concerns because it has done nothing to address the very much larger humanitarian catastrophe in Darfur” (Bellamy & Wheeler, 2008, p. 525). The selectivity of interventions questions the humanitarian motives states have when they decide to intervene. States tend to hide behind human rights when they justify their choice to participate in a mission. Therefore, the data of this research possibly gives a distorted picture of the Dutch motives for participating in out-of-area operations. For the Dutch government, humanitarian incentives might not be as dominant as the data demonstrates.

Other arguments

Focusing on the category of other arguments, this research identified 9 arguments that do not fit in H1 and H2. By participating in KFOR, the government intended to accomplish sustainable autonomy for Kosovo, without the backing of the international community (Kamerstukken II, 22181 no. 281, p. 3). While this is the only deviant argument for participating in KFOR, in its justification to take part in the other missions, the Dutch government referred more frequently to motives that do not fit in H1 and H2. For both RS and NMI, the responsible Ministers addressed removing root causes for irregular immigration and safeguarding national security as reasons for participating. To illustrate, the Ministers noted that by establishing stability in Afghanistan, “we take away the reasons for Afghan people to seek refuge in Europe” (Kamerstukken II, 27925 no. 630, pp. 1, 3). Additionally, the government stated that for the sake of national security, it is essential to fight terrorism (Kamerstukken II, 27925 no. 630, p. 1).

Only four arguments are found that refer to safeguarding (allied) national security. This is interesting because, for a long time, defending national territories was the very essence of NATO’s existence (Lepgold, 1998). Because only five percent of the data refers to national security, one could argue that defending (allied) national territory is currently not the main motivation for the Netherlands to join NATO operations. Keeping in mind that collective defense is the main principle of NATO’s constitution (e.g. Kimball, 2019), one might expect that NATO members act based on considerations of either national security or the security of allied states. Nevertheless, the data demonstrates that the Dutch government barely refers to defending national territories as an argument to join NATO missions. By mentioning safeguarding the international legal order (Kamerstukken II, 29521 no. 254, pp. 2, 3; Kamerstukken II, 27925 no. 630, p. 3), the government might indicate that it acts in order to guarantee (allied) national security. However, since the international legal order is a much

broader concept that covers the transatlantic identity (Schimmelfenning, 1998), arguments that refer to this concept are coded in the category of H2.

On the other hand, in its decision about participating in RS and NMI, the Netherlands does reason from the perspective of national security. In this respect, the Dutch government still uses NATO to deal with national security challenges. This supports the idea that states are more likely to use NATO when dealing with current security threats instead of creating new institutions, which may entail high costs and risks (Barany & Rauchaus, 2011, p. 291). The Netherlands addressing national security as a reason to participate in NATO missions confirms that it remained interested in the security provided by NATO. From this point of view, when the Soviet-Union collapsed, the incentives for the Netherlands to provide the club good of collective security did not vanish.

Conclusion

By categorizing the arguments the Dutch government had for contributing to three NATO missions, this study addressed patterns in the reasoning of the Netherlands for participating in these missions. The method distinguishes two categories that originate from the grand theories of institutionalism (H1) and constructivism (H2), and the third category includes the other arguments. The motives for contributing to missions that appear in government documents have been classified in either one of the three categories. From the total amount of arguments, the coding scheme coded 15 arguments in H1, 54 in H2, and 9 in the category of remaining arguments. For each mission, the government has referred several times to reasons that support both institutionalist and constructivist expectations. Moreover, the letters demonstrate that the total amount of arguments in the categories of both H1 and H2 outnumber the category of other arguments.

With these findings, the study confirms two explanations for the fact that the Netherlands has contributed to NATO missions. Firstly, though it seems that the Netherlands has little interest to participate in a mission, maintaining a strong and cohesive institution motivates the Dutch government to reconsider its participation. For this reason, the Netherlands has contributed to NATO missions because it strived to sustain the ability to use the institutional assets of the alliance (H1). Secondly, the Netherlands uses NATO to spread norms and values. The letters demonstrate that the government decided to participate in NATO missions because it wanted to promote liberal-democratic values (H2). This does not mean that the government had no other incentives to join the missions, however, the data indicates that H1 and H2 are key

variables in explaining the participation of the Netherlands in NATO operations. These explanations are not mutually exclusive, on the contrary, they might enhance each other. Possibly, the Dutch government strives to sustain NATO's institutional assets to assure that the Netherlands remains able to promote the transatlantic identity. Vice versa, the Netherlands might want to spread liberal-democratic values through NATO missions because it desires to sustain NATO's institutional assets. The data of this study cannot validate this suggestion, and therefore, more research is needed to examine how both motives relate to each other.

Another interesting feature that emerged from the data is that, in its justification to participate in NATO missions, the government still reasons from the viewpoint of national security. Since the collapse of the Soviet-Union, it is unclear to what extent states are motivated to provide the good of collective security. Although it is not the main motivation of the Netherlands, the data shows that the government has contributed to NATO operations for security reasons. From this perspective, the Dutch government still uses NATO to deal with national security challenges. Therefore, one can argue that, when the Soviet threat vanished, the Netherlands remained interested in the club good of collective security.

Although the classification strategy aimed to be as accurate as possible, categorizing the arguments leaves room for interpretation. In some passages, it is not fully clear whether or not the government addresses a text fragment to justify its participation in a mission. Additionally, the research only focuses on the arguments that are communicated by the government to the parliament. Behind closed doors, the Ministers might discuss matters that require secrecy. Therefore, the arguments that are included in this study do not fully reflect the actual composition of the government's incentives to participate in NATO operations. For instance, because states tend to hide behind human rights when they justify their decision to intervene, the Dutch government might be exaggerating the humanitarian motives for participating. However, since the Netherlands is a mature democracy, examining the justification to the parliament is the best shot to study the actual composition of reasons for the Dutch government to take part in NATO missions.

In sum, as Kimball states, "as long as partners invest in the institution…NATO will continue to play a vital role in defending Europe and beyond" (2019, p. 16). By contributing to NATO operations, the Netherlands shows a willingness to invest in the alliance. Therefore, examining the motives for contributing to missions forms a thorough foundation to study why the Netherlands is still committed to NATO. From this perspective, one could argue that the Netherlands strives to sustain NATO because it offers a platform to promote liberal

democratic values and because the alliance provides valuable institutional assets. Studying the commitment of the Netherlands to NATO through the lens of institutionalism and constructivism proved to be useful. When generalizing the results to other NATO allies, this research suggests that NATO persists because member states value the institutional assets of the alliance and because they want to promote the transatlantic identity through NATO. Consequently, despite the recent tensions between NATO governments, states are still committed to the alliance. To validate this suggestion, more research is needed about the motives of NATO allies other than the Netherlands. As this thesis has demonstrated, examining the motives for contributing to NATO missions forms a good foundation for studying the reasons why states are still committed to the alliance.

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