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Iraq: the father of political failures

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Iraq: The Father of Political Failures

MASTER PROGRAM CRISIS AND SECURITY MANAGEMENT

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Preface

The thesis “Iraq: the father of political failures” has been written to fulfil the graduation requirements of the Master program Crisis and Security Management at Leiden University.

The world of intelligence is covered in so much secrecy and mystery, that it makes researching this topic very exciting. The feeling of knowing so little about a subject is sometimes frightening, yet it pushes you to dig deeper and explain more. My goal was to explain more about the role of intelligence in middle and smaller powers. We generally look at superpowers such as the United States, to understand phenomena in general. This case was no different. In addition to that, the Iraq case has shown many controversies. The presence of WMD, the violation of resolutions, the war on terror. Decisions that were made by politicians who were too afraid to take the blame when these turned out to be political failures. Scapegoating intelligence services appeared to be easier since their work is secret. During this research, I have tried to combine different perspectives related to this topic and explain how the two worlds of politics and intelligence are intertwined. The title of this thesis could be seen as a reflection of the overall conclusion. Where Michael Fitzgerald and Richard Lebow argued that Iraq was the Mother of all Intelligence Failures, this case study tells us a different story.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my supervisors for their patience, guidance, and support throughout this process. It has been a great honour to be able to work with both Dr. Simon Willmetts and Dr. Constant Hijzen. You both truly inspired me to focus on this topic and got me through the rough times of being locked down. I also wish to thank my second reader mr. drs. Willemijn Aerdts for her time.

Enjoy reading this thesis.

Denise Cornelia van Holstein

The Hague, July 13, 2021

1. Introduction

Per undas adversas – swimming against the stream. Introduced by their first director, the motto of the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) symbolizes their organizational goal. Instead of passively floating along, the AIVD actively ‘swims’ upstream and goes against the current in order to protect national security. One could even conclude that the AIVD chooses not to automatically accept existing perceptions. Rather, they seek to generate objective factual information and evaluate incoming information with those same high standards. It is their job to foresee unforeseeable threats and inform others (AIVD, 2011). Despite the logos’ bright colour pallet of yellow and blue, there is nothing bright about the public appearance of the organization. Their work is conducted in secrecy which makes them highly invisible in a democratic society. This is the same for almost every intelligence service. The power of information is also reflected in the American Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) motto. Unofficially, their motto is an old biblical saying: *Ye shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free*. The CIA seal features an eagle for alertness; a shield for defense; and a compass rose for global intelligence collection. The eagle is also a national bird, used in many other government representations. It stands for freedom and strength but could also be seen as the protector, in this case, of national security. Protecting national security means using information as leverage. The AIVD prefers to predict the future in order to prevent crime and crises while the CIA also uses the power of (secret) information as leverage. One could argue that the CIA has slightly more offensive approach compared to the AIVD.

The organisational goals of both intelligence services were clearly visible during the Iraq war. Highly politicized American intelligence was used to persuade the rest of the world in supporting their war on terror. But also, to believe that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. The CIA used the power of secret information as leverage, and the American politicians used that to influence European policies. That is true, according to several inquiries conducted after the failure of finding those WMDs. However, the conclusions of the Dutch inquiry conducted by Committee Davids (2010) tell us a different story. The AIVD and MIVD (Military Intelligence and Security Service) argued that the Americans were overconfident. Instead, they adopted a much more nuanced perception on the threat of Iraq. One might even argue that they went against the current and swam upstream. Following their motto did not lead to much success. Dutch politicians ignored national intelligence and decided to support

the war in Iraq. In the world of intelligence, this is a rather remarkable development, especially since some scholars previously argued that Iraq was the mother of all intelligence failures (Jervis, 2006). Perhaps the Dutch case is unique, or there might be something wrong with existing theories. At least, this case is one of the most used examples to explain theories on intelligence. That is mainly because failure mostly leads to investigation and openness. In a lot of articles, however, scholars focus on comparative case studies in the UK and the US, leaving other European countries unexplored. The same argument could be applied to the Iraq case (Davies, 2004; Jervis, 2006; Garicano & Posner, 2005; Hedley, 2005; Fitzgerald & Lebow, 2006; Heazle, 2010). Therefore, this research particularly reflects on the decision-making process in the Netherlands. It leads us to the following research question: *Why did Dutch political leaders ignore their national intelligence services during the decision-making process that led to the participation in the Iraq war in 2003?*

This thesis is structured in logical order starting with the methodological justification in which the research design is explained, and the data collection is clarified. Followed by the theoretical framework in which the body of knowledge is projected. We focus on three main theories: the politicization of intelligence, intelligence failure and research on the Iraq case in particular. The analysis consists of three main chapters, divided into smaller sections. We start with discussing the Dutch perception on the presence of weapons of mass destruction. This explains how the national intelligence services developed a much more nuanced point of view. Furthermore, it reflects on how they dealt with incoming information. In the next chapter, the decision-making process is explained. By discussing the different stages that led to the decision, it is shown that other external factors were of influence. This leads us to the last chapter in which we try to apply existing theories to this case. Lastly, the conclusion sums up the main arguments and provides an answer to the research question.

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2. Research design

In order to find an answer to the research question as posed in the introduction, this section explains how the data is collected and analysed. It serves as a bridge between the abstract world of theories and concepts and the empirical world where specific topic related data is collected. That bridge helps us to understand and explain the world around us. In this chapter, a clear methodological justification is explained, and a basic research design is given. Furthermore, the case selection is justified as well as the collection and analysis of the data. Lastly, this chapter explains the operationalisation and the limitation of this research in terms of reliability and validity.

2.1 Methodology

This thesis has a deductive approach as it tests specific theories about intelligence failure and the politicization of intelligence. The research starts by explaining the existing theories which is then applied to the specific case of Iraq. The analysis leads to the answer on the research question, which will be discussed in the conclusion. In case the theory appears not to be applicable, this could lead to the search for a new theory.

Although the scientific relevance shows that this specific case study applied to The Netherlands topic is under researched, the general topic about the presence of weapons of mass destruction is not. As mentioned before, the decision-making process in both the United States and the United Kingdom regarding the Iraq War has been subject to several inquiries and scientific research. Therefore, this thesis is explanatory, as it aims to explain deeper underlying causes and consequences (McCombes, 2019). In order to do so, we analyse qualitative data that helps perceive those in-depth insights. This qualitative data is reviewed and explored for patterns. To narrow down the topic and being able to perceive an even deeper understanding of concepts and processes, the research method of this thesis is a case study.

2.2 Case selection and sources

The case that is selected for this research is the decision-making process by Dutch politicians that led to the invasion in Iraq. As previously mentioned, several other scholars (Jervis, Davies, Butler, Roberts, etc) have researched this process in the US and UK in the past. The outcome

led to the development of theories and insights in the world of intelligence. It not only reflected how decision-making works during a crisis, but it also showed the relationship between intelligence services and policy makers or politicians. Scholars ultimately created theories about the politicization of intelligence and intelligence failures based on the UK's and US' involvement in the Iraq War. This case study focusses on the Dutch involvement in the Iraq War while it questions the theories on applicability. The goal of this research therefore is to find out whether previously made assumptions about the relationship between intelligence and politics are true, and why if not.

The data that is used for the analysis mostly consists of official government documents, research papers conducted by other scholars and independent inquiries conducted in the aftermath of the Iraq War. In order to obtain insights about the relationship between politics and intelligence services, there is a need for very specific topic related information. The opinion of politicians and ministers is not that difficult to find, especially since their appearance is mostly public. All political debates are documented and openly available in The Netherlands. They are referred to as *Handelingen* or *Kamerstukken* and contain a number of other documents as well, for instance: the political agenda; policy proposals and its justification; letters from government officials; reports; all sorts of incoming information that is referred to during the debate (Parlement, nd). Analysing the debates between 1991 and 2004, gives us an insight into the political perception regarding Iraq and into the decision-making process.

It is more difficult to obtain a clear and deep understanding when it comes to intelligence services. The only publicly available sources they generate are annual reports. Due to the inquiry in the aftermath of the war, *Ambtsberichten* were also publicly available in this case. These are official announcements that informs ministers and politicians, given by the intelligence services. The huge lack of available sources makes conducting research in this field difficult. However, as a result of announced public inquiries, documentation deriving from intelligence services have been declassified for these committees. The inquiries summarise and evaluate the events that led to the invasion in Iraq in 2003, but don't include all of their sources as attachments. Nevertheless, the Dutch Argus Foundation (Stichting Argus, nd) made many requests based on the Freedom of Information Act (WOB) which resulted in the declassification of more than 200 intelligence reports regarding Iraq and WMDs. The Freedom

of Information Act describes that any person can, with the right argumentation, submit a request for the declassification of governmental documents (Wet OB, 2018). The available documents have been published on the foundation's website since 2010 (Stichting Argus, 2010), which is a year after the publication of the Dutch inquiry by Committee Davids (2010). The documents that are used in this thesis are: several threat analyses conducted by the AIVD and MIVD; reactions on incoming western intelligence; situational reports dated from 2002 until 2005 (referred to as Sitreps); conducted analyses and daily intelligence summaries (referred to as INTSUM). This data is a mix between military intelligence and general intelligence documents, as well as reports from the ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As mentioned above, inquiries provide for a general summary and a judgement of the events that took place. It is important to note that even though the inquiries were announced to conduct their research independently, they received a lot of criticism for not doing that (Davies, 2012). This thesis uses the conclusions derived from the Dutch Davids report (2010); the British Butler review (2004) and Chilcot (2016) report; the American Senate Report phase I (2004) and the Robb-Silberman Report (2005).

2.3 Limitations

Despite the fact that declassified intelligence documents are primary sources that give us a unique insight, we have to be careful while making conclusions. One of the main downsides of classified information, is that we don't exactly know how much there is left to declassify. The information that is now available might be very one-sided because it only reflects a single point of view. In addition to that, sensitive information could have been removed even though the documents are declassified. The inquiries could also be one-sided while they are meant to be independent. All of this reflects on both the validity and reliability of the research. In terms of validity, the risks are that the conclusions are not truthful or accurate. That risk is diminished by using primary sources or at least data that is close to the source. In addition to that, the case study design results in an in-depth analysis of historic events. That makes this research much more reliable in terms of consistency and confirmability. The decision to conduct a document analysis generally diminishes the risk of not being able to confirm conclusions. Moreover, this risk is reduced by using very detailed information on the Dutch decision-making process as well as the provided intelligence.

3. Literature review

On March 20, 2003, the United States and the United Kingdom invaded Iraq. It was the result of an Anglo-American cooperation and their belief or, as other scholars prefer to address it, their insistence that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD) (Fitzgerald and Lebow, 2006). Whether the possibility of available WMD in Iraq was the cause for the invasion or the result of a post 9/11 blame game, the attack was referred to by at least several scholars as the “mother” of all intelligence failures (Davies, 2004; Fitzgerald and Lebow, 2006; Jervis, 2006; Betts, 2007; Diamond, 2008; Jervis, 2010; Karam, 2017). The question that needs to be asked is why this particular case is referred to as an “intelligence failure”. However, more importantly, to what extent this is an accurate characterization of all the belligerent nations who fought in the Iraq War. Due to inquiries made as a result of public and political pressure, we know that the intelligence given to administrators, policy makers and political leaders was politicized (Jervis, 2006). Or at least, that is what had happened in the UK and the US (Davies, 2012). During the years leading up to the military invasion in Iraq, the Dutch intelligence services provided the government with Military and General intelligence. Both entailed their perception on the presence of weapons of mass destruction. Compared to other Western intelligence services, the Dutch services had a much more nuanced perception. They argued numerous times that gathering intelligence was difficult, but that the information they had, was not very convincing (Davids, 2010). However, Dutch politicians expressed a different opinion compared to their national intelligence services. The Davids report (2010) concluded that Dutch politicians listened more to what the Blair and Bush administration claimed, rather than adopting a nuanced perception from their national intelligence services. But before going deeper into the differences in the conclusions of various inquiries, one first has to establish definitions of the most important concepts for this thesis. The main subject here is not failure itself, but more so the development of intelligence in a democratic society, whether it may or may not influence policy and to what extent intelligence is politicized. Altogether, this ultimately leads to the answer to the research question that is stated as follows: *Why did Dutch political leaders ignore their national intelligence services during the decision-making process that led to the participation in the Iraq war in 2003?*

3.1 Politicization of intelligence

Intelligence helps leaders to receive and apply information against competitors (Stout and Warner, 2018). It is a service to decision makers, which helps them form policy and corroborates stances on topics such as national security, foreign affairs and military strategy. Intelligence is not solely information that a state needs. It is secret information that requires special handling such as having human sources (HUMINT), signals (SIGINT) or imagery (IMINT). In addition to that, how intelligence is acquired – the modus operandi - is mostly covered in secrecy and must be held secret as well. Despite all of the above, there seems to be an agreement (Stout and Warner, 2018) on what the core functions of intelligence services generally are. It may vary per country, but most intelligence organizations perform covert action, counterintelligence, collection, analysis and dissemination (Davies and Gustafson, 2013). These core functions serve a goal, which mostly entails reducing uncertainty for decision makers. In other words, intelligence is a range of activities aimed at preserving security by providing early warning of threats. In such a way, that timely implementation of a preventive policy or strategy is necessary (Dover et al, 2014, p.29). But intelligence does more than providing early warning to decision makers, it often serves to establish conditions to keep threats at distance or how to eliminate those threats. Moreover, intelligence is perceived as a risk managing tool as it functions to reduce uncertainty for decision makers (Wheaton and Beerbower, 2006). According to Wheaton and Beerbower (2006), intelligence is more than just information. They argue that intelligence is beneficiary for decision makers and policy writers because of their need for assurance or certainty in the coming future. This would then imply that policy- and decision makers treat a finished intelligence analysis as the “holy grail”, perceiving them as facts and relying heavily on them, when it is actually an advice that requires interpretation.

Whilst intelligence is required to be objective, nonpartisan and scientific, Betts (2002) argues that politicization of intelligence is to some degree inescapable and in some forms even necessary. The definition of politicization in his article is giving a political tone to information. This means that, according to Betts, intelligence can either be given a political bent in order to persuade or convince decision makers into using the information. But also, that intelligence is politically charged because it points to a specific policy conclusion. Politicization is mostly connotated with fabricated or one-sided information. This is of course the opposite of

independent and objective. However, Betts argues that intelligence conclusions are always somewhat politically charged, and that politics and intelligence cannot live without each other. Betts agrees with Robert Gates, former Deputy Director for Intelligence at the CIA, who argues that useful intelligence analysis should be relatable to the objectives policymakers are trying to achieve (Gates, 1992).

On the contrary, Sherman Kent (Davies, 2002) discouraged intelligence personnel to get too close to policymakers as their objectivity and integrity could be compromised through that sort of involvement. However, it is difficult to imagine politics and intelligence not interfering with each other, especially since intelligence is said to help decision makers determine politics and strategy. In addition to that, taking Betts (2007) arguments into account that intelligence is always somewhat politicized, there are multiple forms of politicization. The first is top-down politicization, whereby policymakers tend to prescribe intelligence conclusions. The second form is bottom-up, in which intelligence analysts colour unconscious bias.

3.2 Intelligence failure

When it comes to failure, Betts argued in one of his early articles (1978) that mistakes have seldom been made by intelligence analysts who collect raw information. Most often, intelligence failures originate from crucial mistakes the consumers of intelligence products, thus decision makers, make. In other words, one that produces objective and scientific intelligence is not prone to make mistakes. The ones that make the decisions and interpret or neglect intelligence, can make crucial mistakes that ultimately lead to failure.

Bar-Joseph and Levy (2009) explain why and how intelligence fails by distinguishing internal sources from external sources that contribute to failure. A lack of information or even too much information could be a primary source of the problem. In addition to that, sometimes it is hard for analysts to conduct strategic deception especially when there is a noisy environment. Analysts have to decide which information stream they want to follow, but that could inevitably be the wrong choice (Bar-Joseph and Levy, 2009). Regarding the internal sources of intelligence failure, the human factor is seen as the weakest link in the intelligence process (Handel, 2012). Although intelligence must be unbiased and objective, intelligence officers remain human beings that are unconsciously under influence of policy preferences, emotional needs and pre-existing belief systems (Bar-Joseph and Levy, 2009).

Policy preferences can be very influential in shaping threat perceptions. In addition to individual psychology, the small group dynamic of intelligence analysts and decision makers is a source of failure as well. In a small group dynamic, the pressure is mostly higher because of the high-stakes decisions they have to make. This leads to, for instance, neglecting contrasting information in order to serve the highest priority goal. Decisions are mostly kept within the small groups, without reflection from outsiders or other experts (Bar-Joseph and Levy, 2009). In the Iraq case for instance, there was not a lot of intelligence cooperation. This resulted in a lack of sources and even faulty information. However, even the organizational behaviour itself could cause an intelligence failure because it controls the information flow. In a bureaucratic organisation with a high level of red tape, it is more difficult to provide decision makers with timely crucial intelligence. It just takes too long to get to the right person. The last internal source for failure is politicization. Bar-Joseph and Levy (2009) explain the risk of politicization slightly differently than Betts (2007). They focus on the impact of politicization on policy rather than whether politicization of intelligence occurs. Jervis (1986) argues that policy influences intelligence as much as intelligence influences policy. Analysts might adjust their estimates and create “intelligence to please” in order to secure a future promotion for example. In this case, intelligence officers consciously alter their analysis to policy preferences. However, it is more common that politicization comes from higher up. Political leaders, some more explicit than others, can and do influence the intelligence cycle in many different ways.

However, according to the Butler, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, and the Chilcot reports, intelligence services were the ones providing decision makers with erroneous information. The Chilcot Report (2016) explains the failure in three phases. The first is regarding the impact of the investigation into weapons of mass destruction that led to the invasion. Secondly, the failure to question the intelligence that supported the mind-set that Iraq possessed WMD. And third, the post-war response to the reality that WMD did not exist. Where Betts (1978) might have argued that the non-existence of WMD in Iraq was an intelligence failure made by decision makers, the inquiries constantly stated that intelligence services had provided the biased and incomplete information upon which the decision was made. Decision makers, the reports argued, did not question the intelligence they were given. At least, not enough to prevent a failure from happening. On the other hand, the reports highlight how the Bush and Blair administration pushed for certain conclusions. Both could definitely be seen as the politicization of intelligence. In this case, intelligence analysts

contributed to America's post 9/11 blame game and the war on terror. From a top-down politicization viewpoint, intelligence analysis could be heavily influenced by politicians who asked for a specific outcome: Iraq was guilty in preparing and possessing weapons of mass destruction. However, from a bottom-up perspective, analysts could have provided intelligence that was politically coloured in order for decision makers and policy writers to find it useful and utilize the given information.

The relationship between policy and intelligence is often unclear. It becomes clearer when secret documents are declassified, and inquiries are conducted. Nevertheless, these inquiries are still a political means to point a finger to someone other than themselves, according to Jervis (2006). He and other scholars (Davies, 2005; Davies, 2012; Phythian, 2005; Danchev, 2004) believed that was also true in the Iraq case. The main argument deriving from the reports was that intelligence had been politicized (Jervis, 2006). The intelligence community was blamed for providing decision makers with faulty information. This made the missing WMD in Iraq an intelligence failure. But the definition of an intelligence failure is in this case misunderstood, according to Jervis (2006). It is seen as a mismatch between the estimates and what later appears to be true. However, the fact that intelligence is erroneous should not surprise policymakers as much as it did. Even Von Clausewitz (1976) argued that a lot of intelligence reports are contradictory; more are false, and most are uncertain. The Iraq case is no different. But by focusing on the mistakes that intelligence services made, political leadership was excused. Nevertheless, both the Bush and Blair administration claimed they would have pursued the war even if Iraq had no WMD (Jervis, 2006). That raises the question why intelligence matters so much when politicians are capable of ignoring it in the first place as they did in the Netherlands. Jervis argues, however, that intelligence is not irrelevant even if it is prone to mistakes because we do not know how it influences policy.

3.3 The Netherlands and Iraq War

When analysing the Dutch inquiry regarding the decision-making process leading to the political and military support for the war in Iraq, it shows a different kind of pattern. Compared to the American and British inquiries, the Dutch inquiry argues that decision makers mostly ignored their own national intelligence products. Moreover, while the MIVD and AIVD repeatedly questioned incoming intelligence from Western intelligence agencies, such as the

CIA, and placed its nuances in the possibility of Iraq possessing WMD, Dutch political leaders did support the war. The Davids report even accused decision makers of neglecting national intelligence services, ignoring their opposing and more nuanced intelligence. In addition to that, Dutch decision makers used intelligence that provided in the stance they had already taken. In that case, it could be argued that the Dutch decision makers had, top-down, politicized intelligence. Even more surprising is that most information was not even coming from their own national intelligence service. This means that any theory of politicization appears not to be applicable to the Dutch case. Yet, it goes further than that because it even questions why one would have a national intelligence service.

Another interesting feature is that the Dutch inquiry took place in 2010, years after the fact. Former Prime Minister Balkenende argued that it was not necessary to investigate the decision-making process since there was no reason to doubt his decision. Nevertheless, even before the Dutch had expressed their support to the US and UK, scholars questioned the legal basis for war. The scholars' interest could derive from previous failures such as the fall of Srebrenica (Van den Aker et.al, 2016). In that specific case, the need for an UN mandate played a crucial role. Dutch literature on Iraq mainly focusses on the legal basis for war, which was an UN mandate based on a resolution (Waele, 2010). When the inquiry was published, de Graaff (2010) questioned what role the intelligence services actually have in the Dutch decision-making process. The necessity of a national intelligence service disappears when a select group of powerful civil servants ignore and neglect intelligence (de Graaff, 2010). However, despite expressing his dissatisfaction, De Graaff had not been able to explain why intelligence was neglected. That is where this thesis fills in the gap. The goal here is to explain the events that led to the participation in the Iraq war and why it happened that way.

4. Weapons of Mass Destruction

In order to examine the Dutch perspective on the presence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq, one first has to analyse the available documents and present them in logical order. The Dutch perspective is in this case from a Military Intelligence and Security Service (MIVD) and a General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) point of view. In the aftermath of the war, several organisations have tried to declassify all intelligence reports, threat analyses and policy advices from the MIVD and AIVD involving the matter of WMDs in Iraq. Dutch national law regulates the declassification of governmental documents via the Wet op Openbaarheid van Bestuur (in English: Freedom of Information Act). With the right argumentation as for why a document should be public, any person can submit a WOB request (Wet OB, 2018). The Dutch Foundation Argus is an independent research and press-agency, specialized in submitting many WOB requests (Stichting Argus, nd). The documents they publish are raw unprocessed and derived directly from the source. The numerous declassified key official documents are analysed in this thesis. In addition to that, the Davids report (the Dutch inquiry of the decision-making process that had led to the support of the war) also contains a great deal of information on the pre-Iraq War Dutch intelligence advice on WMDs. Together with the presentation of the Dutch political perspective on the presence of WMD in Iraq this serves as a basis for the analysis on what exactly happened in The Netherlands. Ultimately, this leads to the bigger discussion of the importance of intelligence for smaller western European countries in light of international relations theories.

This chapter contains broadly speaking three different insights deriving from the Dutch intelligence perspective on the presence of Weapons of Mass Destruction. The first is how the threat of WMD was perceived by the AIVD and what they advised the decision makers. Secondly, the MIVD's perception on Iraq's WMD-program and lastly, how the Dutch intelligence services reacted to incoming information from other western intelligence services. The reason for separating the AIVD's perception from the MIVD's is because they both use different approaches. The AIVD is more focused on the influence of a crisis on the Dutch national security (Davids, 2010), while the MIVD is more specialised in gathering intelligence for military assets. Both perceptions regarding the presence of WMD changed over time. Nevertheless, it is safe to conclude that both intelligence services did not perceive

the threat as imminent. In addition to that, the AIVD and MIVD argued that military intervention was not necessary to resolve any conflicts.

4.1 The threat of WMD

One of the first threat analyses conducted by the AIVD (at that time known as the BVD) regarding Iraq was in 1991, during the Gulf War. The reason for this series of threat analyses, was the possibility of escalation of the crisis in the Gulf region as Iraq suffered from a devastating defeat. The AIVD argued in their analysis that due to the disrupted political order, new conflicts are likely to occur as well as the continuous threat posed to nations who played an active role during the crisis (BVD, 1991). In addition to that, the service had reasons to believe that Dutch companies provided Iraq with components and know-how for advanced conventional weapons as well as chemical weapons. Despite those accusations, the AIVD believed that they had no reason to advise the Dutch government to change their foreign policy. Moreover, they argued that a sudden change in policy is subject to the stance of the coalition – the United States in particular. Even a few years later, in 1997 when the UN Security Council voted unanimously for the Resolution 1137 against Iraq, the MIVD described that the problem of removing UNSCOM observers was mainly an American and British one.

Iraq justified the removal of the observers by claiming that they had met the 687 Resolution. This resolution was an agreement between the UN Member States and Iraq, reached in the aftermath of the First Gulf War. It entailed the dismantling and removal of all present stockpiles and WMDs. Since the UNSCOM-observers did not find any evidence of the presence of weapons of mass destruction, Iraq argued that they had removed all present WMDs and thus met the agreed resolution. The MIVD argued that the situation was perceived differently by the United States, especially since the removal of observers was understood as a criminal act. They interpreted the removal as a starting point of Iraq's redevelopment of the WMD-programs. The MIVD argued that in fact, it was difficult to blame Iraq for their reaction especially since the UNSCOM inspectors indeed did not find any WMDs. In this early stage of what ultimately led to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the MIVD clearly had a more open-minded or objective view towards the presence of WMDs in Iraq opposed to the United States and United Kingdom. In the aftermath of the war, both nations were accused of politically framing the threat of WMDs, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Nevertheless, in this stage of the evolving crisis, the MIVD did not really support their nuanced arguments towards the

presence of WMDs in Iraq with valid sources. Rather, they argued the lack of 'watertight' information was a reason to question the presence of WMDs (Davids, 2010).

It was really in the beginning of 2001 that both the AIVD and MIVD started to heavily report on the situation in Iraq. This was because they had previously established that Iraq relied to a large extent on other countries in providing them with know-how and dual-use goods. It was also known that Iraq was no longer cooperating with the UNSCOM observers, and therefore, the AIVD kept track of the Dutch export of dual-use goods to Iraq. Despite the sanctions against Iraq, which regulated their import and export, the AIVD flagged a few Dutch entrepreneurs who shipped very specific parts and dual-use goods to Iraq. This was not really a surprise for the service, especially since various Dutch companies had previously, during the Gulf War, exported suspicious goods to Iraq. Another reason for the Dutch intelligence services to keep track of exports to Iraq, had a lot to do with conducting their own independent and objective intelligence. It is clear from the warning reports, threat analyses and intelligence evaluations, that both the AIVD and MIVD heavily relied on other western intelligence services. Rarely, in these documents, do they refer to their own sources (Committee Davids, 2010 p427). This was also one of the main concerns mentioned in the inquiry conducted by Committee Davids (2010, p293) in the aftermath of the war, but more on that later.

Despite what is mentioned above, the AIVD had a source that provided the service with intelligence regarding the assumed WMD-programs in Iraq. The information led to the presumptions that the Military Industrial Committee, one of the most important institutes involving the development of WMD, still tested chemical bombs and bio-weapons on prisoners at one of their sites. Furthermore, this source claimed that there were (illegal) procurement activities in Russia and Syria, that a lot of Iraqi scientists were working for WMD-programs and that Iraq was redeveloping long-distance missiles (BVD, nd). However, the credibility of the AIVD's human source was never really confirmed. Therefore, the information that was shared with the policymakers and decision makers was mainly an interpretation of intelligence that was widely shared throughout the Western intelligence community. Nevertheless, over time the AIVD's interpretation and understanding of the presence of WMD in Iraq fluctuated. One of the most used and therefore most important threat analyses of the AIVD was based on the UNSCOM/IAEA investigation. This focussed on the likelihood of Iraq

redeveloping WMD. The AIVD combined what was known since 1998 until then, September 2002, with their own sources and other intelligence and concluded that (1) Iraq was in fact redeveloping nuclear weapons; (2) they possessed stockpiles of biological agents that were not assumed to be utilizable; (3) Iraq was redeveloping the chemical weapons program; (4) the threat of ballistic missiles could only increase if and when Iraq would import certain supplies (AIVD, 2002a). Although the AIVD definitely thought Iraq was capable of redeveloping weapons of mass destruction, they did not perceive the threat as imminent (AIVD, 2002a, p.8). They argued that creating nuclear weapons would take at least more than five years. The possibility of developing chemical weapons was based on the fact that Iraq started the production of what could eventually become chemical agents. Lastly, the AIVD argued that the export to Iraq was heavily regulated and western intelligence agencies had a list of which supplies they would need in order to create WMDs. In other words, Iraq had the potential to develop and re-open their WMD program because of their past and the present know-how, but the AIVD had no reason to doubt the efficacy of export regulations and UN-inspections in addressing the issue. Therefore, the AIVD (2002b) advised decision makers to pursue diplomatic routes in dissolving a potential crisis. In addition to that, the AIVD argued that military intervention was not necessary (2002b p3). Moreover, in January 2003, the AIVD described there was no threat of the beginning of a new war against Iraq. They believed that this threat could only increase when Iraq seriously violated resolution 1441 by hindering the UN-inspections. But even then, the AIVD highly doubted that military intervention would be the only solution to the problem. Therefore, the governmental decision to invade Iraq is surprising and against the recommendations of the Dutch intelligence service.

4.2 Military Intelligence

It is no surprise that the MIVD differs from the AIVD in terms of their goals, structure, modus operandi, expertise and specific intelligence. Although both intelligence services worked the Iraq case, the AIVD was more focused on the effects of the crisis on Dutch national security. The MIVD on the other hand, was more interested in the military, and the power structure of Iraq. As a result of those institutional variances, the MIVD perceived the threat of the possible presence of WMD differently. In one of the early situational reports (Subintreps) in May 2002, the MIVD stated that Iraq had absolutely no nuclear weapons because they were destroyed during the Gulf War and dismantled by the IAEA. Enriched uranium was necessary for the

development of nuclear weapons. Despite the fact that Iraq had kept their knowledge and hardware on how to develop enriched uranium to themselves, the MIVD was absolutely sure that Iraq did not form a threat. They argued that in the current situation with all of the regulations in place against Iraq, there was no chance that a conflict would evolve (MIVD, 2002a). The level of confidence in which the MIVD described whether or not there was a threat, was not any different from other and later reports they wrote. What the MIVD mostly discussed in their analyses was Iraq's military capability, infrastructure and institutionalisation (MIVD, 2002a; Davids, 2010). In addition to that, they monitored the tensions between groups in North-Iraq, that could potentially lead to a civil war or further destabilisation in the region. The MIVD's general perception was that Saddam Hussein wanted Iraq to become the most important military power in the Middle East and in order to become one he would need weapons of mass destruction. Unlike for instance the United States, the MIVD argued that Hussein's vision was somewhat understandable as the ability to produce or possess WMD had often been connected to the idea of power. However, the threat of actually having those WMD increased when the military balance in the Middle East had been disturbed and negatively influenced Iraq (MIVD, 2002b). Nonetheless, the MIVD argued that there was no imminent threat of WMD because it would take Iraq a long period of time to redevelop unconventional weapons, and the import of supplies other than food or oil was regulated.

In the years that followed, the MIVD kept reporting that Iraq had in fact the necessary infrastructure to redevelop unconventional weapons, but that there were no signs of them actually developing or possessing WMD (MIVD, 2002c; MIVD, 2002d). In comparison with the AIVD, the MIVD had a much more nuanced perception towards the presence of WMD which had mainly to do with the interpretation of incoming information. In addition to that, the MIVD had different, more independent sources and did not depend upon intelligence deriving from other foreign services. The reason for their nuanced perception could have had something to do with how they understood Iraq's military competences as a whole, without solely focussing on whether they possessed WMD or not. That was clearly visible in several INTSUM's the MIVD wrote. For example, in December 2002 they explained that they had seen two Short Range Ballistic Missiles (SRBMs). They were part of the scarce number of conventional weapons Iraq possessed. With the transportation of these systems, the MIVD (2002f) argued, Iraq shows its enemies that they are willing to use these missiles but not necessarily that they will. In other INTSUM's, the MIVD described the outcome of the UN

weapons inspections in Iraq. In March 2003 for instance, they argued that the provisional investigation reports lead to even bigger contradictions regarding the presence of WMDs in Iraq (MIVD, 2003b). Both Blix and El Baradel had different outcomes and reported differently about the progress. The MIVD argued that on the one hand, Iraq is willing to dismantle various weapons but on the other hand, they do not fully cooperate in terms of the 1441 resolution. It is therefore difficult to determine whether there are WMD programs and to what extent Iraq violates the resolutions. This makes it even harder to advise the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on how to handle the situation. Despite those difficulties, the MIVD argued that the actual content of both investigations contained no smoking guns (MIVD, 2003b, p3).

4.3 Dealing with incoming information

One of the Davids' Report's main critiques of the intelligence services was that they did not generate enough information from independent sources (Davids, 2010). Rather, they used lots of information that was widely spread throughout the whole western intelligence community, mainly derived from either American or British intelligence services. The AIVD described in one of their early situational reports that Iraq accused the Americans of making propaganda against Iraq and framing the nation in order to legitimise military intervention. Knowing that both Iraq and the United States were not exactly on speaking terms, the AIVD treated those accusations delicately. They would not take a stance unless there was sufficient evidence to support either one of them. After 9/11, the American minister of Foreign Affairs Colin Powell eventually argued that their policy was focussed on 'regime change' in Iraq, and that military intervention would be inevitable (AIVD, 2002c). The reason for that was no longer just Iraq's obstruction in the UNSCOM investigation in WMD, but that Iraq posed a threat of terrorism. The Bush administration believed that Iraq would use the alleged unconventional weapons for terroristic means. Nevertheless, the AIVD described in a review that the CIA possessed some interesting and new information about the alleged threat of WMDs. The accusations, however, were not really corroborated with facts and therefore, the AIVD (2002d) had no reason to perceive this information as useful. Likewise, the MIVD argued in a reaction to the assessment of the British government that the threat of WMD was defined in terms of 'can' and 'could', which was not interpreted as facts by the Dutch (MIVD, 2002e). What appeared to be a 'smoking gun' was not supported with arguments in any way. Both the AIVD and MIVD

perceived this information as a wild guess. The information could have been useful in assessing whether or not Iraq had WMDs, but it was not (AIVD, 2002e). Even when the United States and the United Kingdom decided upon military intervention, both Dutch intelligence agencies argued that there was a huge lack of information, and absolutely no certainty in the presence of WMD (AIVD, 2002d; AIVD, 2002e; MIVD, 2002e; Davids, 2010).

In February 2003, the American minister of Foreign Affairs gave a speech in which he revealed new information regarding the presence of WMDs in Iraq (AIVD, 2003b). Just like any other incoming piece, the MIVD (2003a) evaluated the given information and tested the credibility. Although it did not lead to many new conclusions, the MIVD argued that the connection between Hussein and Al Qa'ida was based on a Kurdish source and therefore, not credible. Other intelligence services had previously questioned the reliability of the Kurds because of their interests in destabilising Iraq. Furthermore, the MIVD (2003a) described that the Dutch minister of Foreign Affairs should be careful about adopting the US' claims as they mostly derive from the need to blame someone. After 9/11, the Bush administration had pushed the war on terror. This led to falsely label Iraq's behaviour as terrorism, according to the MIVD.

5. Politics and decision-making

Given the AIVD's and MIVD's assessment it is surprising that the Dutch government chose to go to war. The intelligence services argued that the Iraqi WMDs did not present an imminent threat and recommended that UN regulations were the most effective means of managing the situation. Dutch decision makers not only supported the war politically when the United States and the United Kingdom invaded Iraq in early 2003, the Dutch government deployed their own troops later that year. This would mean that the Dutch military intervention in Iraq was not an intelligence failure because the Dutch government ignored the intelligence received from both the AIVD and the MIVD. The question here is why Dutch political leaders went against their national intelligence advice. In the inquiry, the Committee Davids argued that politicians used a different approach by which military intervention was legitimized. Nevertheless, the question to whether decision makers were perhaps influenced by other factors rather than their own national intelligence advisors, remains unanswered. Therefore, this chapter focuses on how politicians and decision makers perceived the threat of WMDs in Iraq; what made them militarily participate; and lastly, how they dealt with the international incoming requests. In order to do so, we utilize the situational reports written by policy makers from the ministry of foreign affairs and designed to inform politicians. These documents, together with many intelligence reports, have been declassified in the aftermath of the investigation regarding the legitimacy of the military intervention in Iraq. Furthermore, debates and political viewpoints on the matter of WMDs are publicly available, as well as how other nations dealt with the political discussion.

5.1 Political Perception until 2002

The Netherlands was militarily involved in the First Gulf War as they provided the Israelis and Turkey with Patriot missile systems (Government, 2012). Almost all of the political parties voted in favour of the military mission to support the coalition in operation *Desert Storm*. It is therefore surprising that the threat of WMDs in Iraq after the Gulf War came rather late on the Dutch political agenda. Compared to other nations who supported the coalition in previous military interventions in the area, the Dutch political interest faded over time (Davids, 2010 p.48). The reason for that could be the aftermath of the fall of Srebrenica in 1995, which led to a bloodbath for which the Dutch were deemed responsible. In the public

opinion, the debacle that had happened in Bosnia was perceived as a moral failure (Van de Bildt, 2015). Nonetheless, the Dutch wanted to prove to the members of the United Nations that they could still be counted upon for military support and cooperation. In addition to that, the former secretary-general of Defense argued that the “light” military deployment was the main lesson learned and that it would not happen again (Barth, 2009 in: Davids, 2010). What he meant was that the Dutch deployed troops on the basis of a humanitarian mission with too little firepower. Next time military support or intervention is necessary, they would be more aggressive and at least prepared for escalation.

What is known is that the Dutch eventually agreed on military support in Iraq while the intelligence services questioned the imminent threat of WMDs. At that point in time, and during the investigation, decision makers argued that Iraq’s violation of several UN regulations was the reason to deploy military troops and not the threat of WMD (Davids, 2010). Here is where the Dutch differ from the US and the UK. During the years leading up to the escalation, the Dutch government stated that they favoured a political and diplomatic approach in dealing with a crisis. That perception changed slightly over time, when military pressure or intervention became an option. However, the intentions of the Dutch government remained the same. After the First Gulf War, there was a ceasefire held in place through several UN Resolutions. The Resolutions preserved the goal of peace and order, at least from a Western point of view. Those resolutions were not merely for the sake of global stability, but also for Iraq’s own good. A violation of the rules other nations had created, could potentially lead to a new world war. That was what the Dutch government genuinely believed. Legitimizing the use of military means in accordance with the UN resolutions was their main challenge and concern. The massacre in Srebrenica, and the ensuing scandal for the Dutch government whose troops were accused of failing to protect the civilians there, had convinced subsequent Dutch governments to argue the case for UN-backed military intervention (Van den Aker et. Al, 2016). This had become such an overwhelming concern for the Dutch, that they forgot that the British and the Americans had justified their intervention in Iraq for other reasons (Davids, 2010).

In 1998 Den Dekker and Wessel wrote that military intervention is subject to the decision of the UN Security Council and secondly, that the UN Charter prohibits the use of force and the threat to use force. In their search for a legal basis to use more than diplomatic

pressure, the Dutch overlooked the fact that threatening the other was already illicit. Even though the UN Resolutions developed over time, including what could happen if Iraq would violate them, seeking legal foundation for military intervention was the government's top priority. That was clearly different for the UK and US given the fact that Operation *Desert Fox* happened without the unanimous support of the permanent members of the Security Council. More interestingly however, the Dutch minister of Foreign Affairs, Van Aartsen, supported the operation because of the imminent threat of weapons of mass destruction (Kamerstukken II, 1998/99 in: Davids, 2010). That was the first time an individual in the cabinet had mentioned that those programs were the problem, not the violation of agreements. Most of his colleagues weren't all that happy about his statement, especially since the argumentation for using force shifted from needing a legal basis to doing what was thought necessary (Davids, 2010). Nonetheless, in 2001 the Second Chamber was informed of the 'Toetsingskader'; a policy in which military intervention should at all times be in line with international law, subject to a certain mandate or in accordance with the UN Charter (Kamerstukken II, 2000/001). In 2002, the publication of NIOD's (Dutch organization for war crimes) research led to the fall of the cabinet (Parlement.com, 2002). The outcome of the research had shown how the Dutch were deemed responsible for the massacre in the Balkans. Moreover, that case indicated the importance of an UN mandate for the use of force. The question here is whether this influenced the Dutch perception on the Iraq case. This will be further explored and discussed at the end of this chapter.

5.2 Outgoing Coalition

In the years that followed, tensions deriving from failing attempts to dismantle Iraq's WMD programs, rapidly evolved. After 9/11, the Bush administration started the *war on terror* and the American-British invasion in Iraq took place while the Dutch had an outgoing coalition.

Starting with the war on terror. After 9/11, the UN Security Council argued that the US had the right to defend themselves against terrorism. Therefore, the US launched Operation *Enduring Freedom*. The US' aggression was not merely focused on Afghanistan and Osama bin Laden. Days before the inauguration of George W. Bush, he argued that Iraq's violation of UN resolutions could lead to military intervention (The White House, 2002). Even though Secretary of State Powell argued that Iraq was not capable of developing WMD programs, the

Bush administration connected bin Laden to Hussein and Iraq's WMDs. Meanwhile in The Netherlands, elections took place, and a new coalition was formed. De Hoop Scheffer replaced Van Aartsen as minister of Foreign Affairs. During the months that followed, many politicians questioned the 'hypothetical' military invasion in Iraq and whether the Dutch would participate. The legal department of Defense advised De Hoop Scheffer to be careful because they highly doubted the legal basis that was needed to legitimize such an attack. The latter he acknowledged, however, he informed the Second Chamber that he was sure Iraq developed WMDs and that this would legitimize military intervention (Handelingen II, 2001/02). In other words: violating the UN resolutions by not cooperating was not enough to ensure a legitimate attack, but the actual presence of WMDs was.

The Dutch perception regarding the presence of WMD in Iraq changed over the years. Where ministers first argued that violating agreements could lead to diplomatic or military pressure, they later focused more on the actual threat of WMDs (Kamerstukken II, 2001/02). That change in perception is remarkable given the fact that both the AIVD and MIVD monitored this threat, but their outcome was far more nuanced compared to what other Western services or Dutch ministers claimed. At least, the threat of WMD was not imminent according to the Dutch intelligence services. Therefore, it is even more surprising that De Hoop Scheffer claimed his perception regarding WMD corresponded with the British one. The AIVD described that the British findings in September 2002 were nothing they did not already know. No smoking guns. The claims that were different, were not properly provided with arguments or facts and therefore, the AIVD was rather sceptical.

Yet again, the cabinet offered their resignation due to internal disagreements within the coalition (Parlement.com, nd¹). Normally, an outgoing coalition is not allowed to decide upon controversial or highly sensitive topics. Therefore, it is very unlikely that this outgoing coalition politically supported the war and later provided military assistance in Iraq. The support for military intervention resulted in a troubled formation process as well. When Prime Minister Balkenende decided to support the American-British attack, other political parties questioned his decision because of the belief that there was no legal basis. Balkenende argued that he had to decide between Hussein or Bush and Blair, and that the latter was without a doubt the best option (Kamerstukken II, 2003). In terms of the legal basis, De Hoop Scheffer argued that this discussion became irrelevant (Kamerstukken II, 2002/2003). However, a few

weeks later, the Legal department of Defense argued that without a new UN resolution, military intervention was not legitimized. The Secretary General never sent this memo to De Hoop Scheffer as result of the 'closed' discussion.

In May 2003, the Dutch deployed reconnaissance troops in Iraq, leaving the decision to start a new mission to the reinstated cabinet which eventually happened in June that year. The minister of Defense initially withheld all intelligence reports as more and more questions arose (Davids, 2010). The decision-making process leading up to the deployment of military troops in Iraq is characterized by going back and forth between perceptions. Roughly speaking there are three factors that changed the perception of Dutch politicians continuously; the threat of WMD; the legitimization of military intervention; and to what extent this legal basis was necessary. In the aftermath of the war, Committee Davids (2010) proved that the decision makers were wrong about the first two. First, the threat of WMD turned out not to be present as until this day no WMDs were found. Secondly, the decision makers were wrong in concluding that UN Resolution 1441 provided for a legal basis to start a war. Or in the Dutch case, participate in a war.

5.3 Dealing with Requests

Researcher Philip Davies (2012) argued in one of his books that before 9/11, intelligence communities in the UK and US had failed to connect the dots, but that they had connected too many dots in the years that followed (Davies, 2012, p.373). Both the Bush and Blair administrations went quite far in claiming that Iraq possessed unconventional weapons. However, after the invasion in 2003, the alleged stockpiles of biological and chemical weapons and the presence of a nuclear program turned out to be either absent or severely overrated (Davies, 2012). Davies (2012) describes the inquiries conducted in the aftermath of the invasion as instruments searching for the ultimate scapegoat for their own political failure. Blaming the other was not an option. Administrators on both sides of the Atlantic were guilty of heavily politicizing intelligence analysts. Each had their own manner. The Americans were accused of bullying analysts and pressurizing the production of intelligence. The British, on the other hand, of politically framing intelligence and not fact checking incoming (American) intelligence. The latter is what eventually most intelligence services were accused of, including the Dutch (Davids, 2010). The importance of mentioning these facts lies in the apparent deeply

rooted need to politicize information, framing situations in order to gain political support. The outcome of Davies' research (2012) leads to belief that perhaps both Bush and Blair used this method in order to persuade other nations into joining their military mission. In order to establish whether these harsh accusations are true, one has to analyse incoming requests from both nations.

Starting in 1998, the American Ambassador present in The Netherlands, Terry Dornbush, requested the Dutch government to 'join us, by providing a military contingent, even if initially small' (Dornbush, 1998 in Davids, 2010, p.49). Sending a warship to the Gulf, waiting for further developments in terms of escalation, was their reaction. The Dutch basically met the request while previously, a few months earlier, stating that the evolving crisis in Iraq should be dissolved via diplomatic routes. In the European Union, there was no nation who would exclude further military pressure or intervention if and when Iraq would continue violating the UN resolutions. This is what initially changed the perception and opinion of the Dutch government which led to the change in foreign policy regarding Iraq. First and foremost, they stated, Iraq must meet the UN Security Councils Resolutions and if they don't, using military means is an option (Van Mierlo, 1997 in: Davids, 2010). The argumentation for this change in policy remained rather scarce. The bottom line was that the resolutions served the goal of preserving peace and safety in the region. A violation of these resolutions meant a disruption of this preservation that could ultimately lead to a war (DVB, 1998 in Davids, 2010). Another request for support came in 1998 during Operation *Desert Fox*. The American and British government both argued that Hussein needed to understand the price he was paying for refusing to cooperate with the resolutions. As previously described, Foreign Affairs minister Van Aartsen gave his support without the consultation of his fellow ministers, resulting in several conflicts within the cabinet. Dutch politicians questioned the legitimacy of the operation, as well as the general role of the United States and the United Kingdom. One politician argued that it almost seemed as if the Americans were the police officers of the world and that every other nation should follow them (Kamerstukken II, 2000). Some were very much aware of the political pressure the US tried to exercise, but at the same time they did not care about whether or not the bombings in Iraq were lawful or not (Kamerstukken II, 2000).

Going back and forth between decisions during the years that followed, Prime Minister Balkenende and Minister of Foreign Affairs De Hoop Scheffer received a lot of information as well as requests from both Blair and Bush. Strategic infrastructure was what made The Netherlands interesting as a nation in terms of military tactics (Davids, 2010). Both the Americans and British showed their interest in using the Dutch harbours and airports for military purposes. Fulfilling the request to use Dutch infrastructure was quite controversial, especially since this happened while there was an outgoing cabinet (Parlement.com, nd²). Nevertheless, De Hoop Scheffer maintained a close relation with American minister Powell and implemented several requests. Even if that sometimes meant he had to contradict or drastically change his initial statement which he publicly gave to politicians in the Second Chamber. The sudden change of importance regarding a legal basis for the use of force, is one of many examples. That the threat of WMD was imminent, is another. First, the importance of following the UN resolutions was higher than the threat of WMD itself. It all changed when De Hoop Scheffer received information from the CIA and Blair (Davids, 2010). Even when the AIVD argued that the American and British intelligence reports contained a lot of overconfident conclusions which the Dutch had not been able to confirm, he claimed that it was all roughly the same (Davids, 2010). The for-your-eyes-only document Prime Minister Balkenende received from Blair, days before the attack, is believed to have changed his perception regarding WMD as well (van den Hil, 2002). This makes it very likely to assume that the Dutch were subject to American and British influence.

Conclusions from the Davids Commission (2010) made it clear that a lot of the mistakes that had happened during the decision-making process were in fact political. The Dutch government was for instance selective in the interpretation of UNMOVIC reports. Their decision to support the invasion was based on international relations, not on facts (Davids, 2010, p.530). Furthermore, the often-repeated view that Resolution 1441 gave a legal basis for military intervention was eventually not true. There was no mandate under international law for military action, something that Balkenende had thus been wrongfully using to approve his decision. And last but not least, Balkenende had tried to withhold any form of investigation into the decision-making process by threatening to stop negotiations with political parties if there would be an inquiry (NOS, 2010).

5.4 Pressure or not?

Having reviewed the decision-making process leading to the participation in the Iraq war, a few questions remain unanswered. We know how the decision developed over time, but we do not quite know why. Dutch politicians insisted on having a legal basis via an UN resolution for any form of violence against Iraq. To what extent was this a result of the massacre in Srebrenica? Were the Dutch under pressure due to previous mistakes? One way to establish what role Srebrenica played in the decision-making process, is by analysing political debates between 2000 and 2004. During that period, Minister De Hoop Scheffer decided, together with his fellow ministers, to participate in the Iraq war.

After 9/11, the main point of discussion was the need for an UN mandate that empowered the resolutions against Iraq. Before 2002, Bush had tried to convince European countries of the presence of WMD in Iraq without the involvement of the UN or NATO. Dutch politicians on the other hand, argued that they did not want a second Srebrenica and that they would only support measurements that were in accordance with the UN (Kamerstukken II, 2002). Despite internal differences, the EU pressured the Bush administration to involve the UN Security Council. That slightly changed the political debate in the Netherlands. With the UN involved, the subject shifted towards the question whether existing resolutions provided for a mandate that would allow military interference in Iraq. Nonetheless, left winged and Christian political parties questioned why military interference was necessary. They would rather invest in peacekeeping instead of war. Right winged parties argued military intervention would be inevitable if the Americans would prove the presence of WMD in Iraq. Dutch politician Mat Herben (LPF) even said that the government should not act based on emotions now that they are held responsible for what had happened in Srebrenica (Handelingen II, 2002/03, nr. 38). During that same debate, it became clear that Minister De Hoop Scheffer had already discussed military preparation with the US and their allies. Throughout several debates, the painful legacy of Srebrenica was connected to the importance of having an UN mandate for the use of force. Even the use of force was questioned by mainly left winged parties (Kamerstukken II, 2000 – 2004). When NIOD published their research in 2002 regarding the massacre in Srebrenica, it definitely played a role in the political debate regarding Iraq. Politicians even argued that the cabinet did not learn from their mistakes, as they were about to invade Iraq without a proper UN mandate (Handelingen II, 2002/03. Nr 74). On that same note, it is quite surprising that the Dutch

agreed with the US-UK invasion since the Judicial Department of Defense argued that there was no legal basis to invade Iraq (Davids, 2010). In addition to that, politicians might have mentioned Srebrenica during debates but the final decision to invade Iraq was made by Minister De Hoop Scheffer. It is very important to make the distinction between politicians and decision makers. Srebrenica definitely had a role in the political debate even after the decision to participate in the Iraq war. In 2003, some politicians asked if the MIVD would deploy personnel since intelligence collection on site had appeared to be of high importance in Srebrenica (Kamerstukken II, 2002/03, nr 117). But then again, the cabinet consists of the ministers who make the final decision. Not the politicians in the Second Chamber. It is therefore very difficult to conclude whether the events that had happened in Srebrenica did influence the decision-making process.

A different approach in explaining why the Dutch neglected national intelligence is by looking at international relations. The reason to participate could come from the bilateral relation between the Netherlands and the US. As mentioned earlier, the Dutch had already supported the first Gulf War by providing military equipment. Although the character of this conflict might have been different, the Americans could have used this as leverage to pressurize the Dutch in supporting them again. The basis for this bilateral relationship derives from the post-WW II period. After the Second World War, the United States came out as the strongest power of the world. They used that position to create leverage as the protector of the world against traditional powers. That meant creating the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Bank in order to promote American objectives and peace (Lundestad, 1986). During WWII, the US had shown that they would intervene if Europe would fall under the control of a hostile power. That was one of the reasons why western Europe welcomed the nation into their hearts. Lundestad (1986), for example, argued that the US was an empire by invitation. Most European countries, for instance, favoured a strong US military presence and financial support. While the British might have presented their thoughts on military presence first, the Dutch went a little further. They argued that military arrangements had no practical value if the US was not included (Lundestad, 1986, p269). The pressure to be militarily involved ultimately led to the creation of NATO. However, inviting this superpower in was not without any strings attached. Help was translated into leverage which the Americans used to intervene in Europe's markets and politics. Even though these

arrangements were made more than fifty years before the outbreak of the Iraq war, the bilateral and multilateral relationships still exist.

During the decision-making process, the Dutch received several American intelligence documents. Having reviewed their intelligence, the AIVD argued that the Americans were slightly overconfident when it came to the presence of WMD in Iraq. Nonetheless, Minister of Foreign Affairs De Hoop Scheffer described that the threat of Iraq was imminent and that they had violated the UN resolutions. To substantiate his arguments, he used American intelligence that he received from the Bush administration. In addition to that, De Hoop Scheffer argued that he had numerous private meetings with the American Minister of State Powell, in which they discussed the Dutch political and military support.

These examples show that American influence was present in the Dutch decision to support the war. This presence could be because of the bilateral relationship between the Netherlands and the United States. However, that does not mean that the Dutch were under pressure to make that decision.

That multilateral relations play an important role in providing for military assistance, is no surprise. Regarding the Iraq case, the European Union had a hard time reaching an agreement on their mutual stance. There were too many different opinions on how to deal with Iraq. Let alone, agreeing on going to war. Despite the fact that military intervention is decided upon national level, a mutual decision makes the EU a stronger participant in the international playing field. However, even before Bush had gone to the UN in 2002, the Dutch had already expressed their support. That led to even more disagreement in the EU, especially between the Dutch, French, and Germans (Davids, 2010). That division remained present even after 9/11 when NATO had invoked article 5. Within the EU, the Dutch had a rather unpopular opinion. Some even argued that the Dutch interest to become NATO's Secretary General played an important role in choosing the American side in the Iraq debate (Davids, 2010; NATO, 2003). The committee Davids argued that these rumours were false since De Hoop Scheffer was first contacted by NATO after the attack in 2003. However, it is almost impossible to know for sure that this opportunity had not been discussed in previous meetings.

6. New theories

After reflecting on the theories as discussed in the literature review, it becomes clear that these theories are not applicable to this case. The Iraq case proves existing theories wrong in various ways. Scholars such as Betts and Jervis described the Iraq war as the mother of all intelligence failures. Their analysis, however, was based on inquiries that had been put into place by decision makers who desperately searched for a scapegoat: the intelligence services. That is at least how Davies (2012) would describe it. Nevertheless, the Iraq war is often referred to as an intelligence failure. The question here is whether this is an accurate description or not. Since this thesis only focusses on the Dutch involvement in the Iraq war, the answer can only be derived from that point of view. The decision to participate in the war was political and not based on intelligence. Therefore, the Dutch participation in the war was not an intelligence failure. This already proves one of the three main arguments in this chapter. The first argument is that existing theories are not applicable to this case. Intelligence was neglected and not politicised. Secondly, the decision to participate in the war against Iraq was a political failure, not an intelligence failure. The third argument is that existing theories are very US centred since the Iraq War was an US-led war. This makes it even harder to apply theories to European countries, for instance. Furthermore, our perception of how intelligence works is based on one single nation, which is very misleading and narrow-minded. This case is more than a single case study. Despite the level of detail, it shows how different the decision-making process is in middle or smaller powers.

6.1 Applicability of theories

The Dutch case shows how political leaders were able to ignore intelligence from their national intelligence services. More specifically, decision makers neglected the right information. Where Betts (1978, 2002, 2007) described the inevitable coexistence of politization in intelligence, this case embodies that intelligence sometimes does not matter to politicians when they have taken a certain policy decision. Neither intelligence was influenced by the popular political opinion, nor intelligence tried to affect politics. What the Dutch intelligence services did was collect information and inform decision makers on the latest developments. How political leaders put this information to use, is their responsibility. In addition to that, the document analysis does not show any signs of pressure or influence in

terms of politicization. Betts (2002) described that politicization in intelligence is in some way inescapable and sometimes even necessary. Sherman Kent (Davies, 2002) on the other hand, argued that politics and intelligence should be strictly separated. We cannot agree with either of them. Starting with Betts' theory on politicization. Bottom-up politicization would mean that intelligence services would try to influence the political debate and policies. Yet, the threat of Iraq was not high on the political agenda. The main reason for that were the elections and the immediate outgoing coalition who was not supposed to decide upon controversial topics. Iraq was labelled as one, and therefore, the outgoing cabinet avoided making a statement for a long time. In the meantime, both the MIVD and AIVD had already collected information on the threat of WMD. They argued that Iraq had the knowledge and capabilities to redevelop WMD programs, as they did before the outbreak of the first Gulf War. The threat, however, was not imminent. What changed the Dutch political debate, was 9/11 and America's declaration of the war on terror. Not the intelligence analysis from the AIVD or MIVD.

The intelligence analysis was influenced by politics in a way that both the MIVD and AIVD had to deal with incoming requests and information. These mainly derived from British or American intelligence services and the political leaders of those nations. This is of course different than what Betts (2002) describes to be top-down politicization of intelligence. Dutch intelligence services proved that they were insensitive for the persuasion of the Americans. Until the attack, they kept arguing that there was no proof of the presence of WMD in Iraq. This leads us to the next argument.

6.2 Political failure

The information on whether Iraq possessed WMD was very minimal (Davids, 2010). The UN weapon inspections eventually turned out to be contradictory – the Dutch depended heavily on these reports. Politicians make decisions. There are many more factual arguments that substantiate the fact that the Iraq case was a political failure, and not an intelligence failure. It might have been different for the UK and the US, but in the Netherlands, intelligence was ignored. For that particular reason it is difficult to label the Iraq war as an intelligence failure. Instead, the decision to support the war was political and highly influenced by other factors. For instance, through the bilateral relationship between the Netherlands and the United States that dates from post-WW II. However, that does not mean that Kent's theory (Davies,

2002) is completely true. Intelligence and politics are connected to each other, even if it means that they neglect or ignore one another. From a Dutch perspective, some might even argue that the two depend heavily on each other. Intelligence services have the legal obligation to inform decisionmakers. Political leaders need intelligence in order to be able to make a decision. Nonetheless, this does not explain why the Dutch favoured listening to American and British intelligence. The missing link might be international relations since foreign intelligence appeared to be more important than trusting national intelligence. That is remarkable, especially since international intelligence cooperation has never been truly successful (Aldrich, 2011). In his article Aldrich (2011) argues that because of globalisation, intelligence liaison could act as a more effective measure against terrorism and organised crime. However, that does not mean international intelligence cooperation is easier. Rather, he argues that liaison goes hand in hand with tightening state secrecy. Intelligence liaison had a rather minimal presence in the Iraq case. Cooperation would mean that there is an exchange in information, but also that the involved parties have a similar objective. However, within the EU, there already was a disagreement on whether Iraq possessed WMDs. That also meant that they could not decide whether to invade or not. In addition to that, the French and Germans questioned American intelligence due to a lack of sources (Davids, 2010). On that same note, they argued that they could not be sure about the alleged violation of resolutions by Iraq as they did not have that indication. Instead of sharing information, the French and Germans decided not to trust the US (Davids, 2010). This shows us how there was minimal intelligence cooperation. More importantly, it demonstrates US dominance in sharing information in order to persuade other nations.

6.3 US Centred

The third and final argument is that existing theories are very US centred. Most intelligence theories are based on events that took place on either side of the Atlantic. This leads to an overload of comparative case studies between the UK and the US. The theories deriving from those case studies are being applied to every other European nation. What we forget, is that the US is very dominant when it comes to global security. Moreover, the Iraq war was an US-led war. Therefore, it is not surprising that existing theories are focussed on the US. Invited or not, the US is still one of the most powerful nations in the world. Despite their international

influence on politics, economy and culture, western Europe differs from the US to a great extent.

In the Iraq case, the US had a top-down approach in persuading other nations to support the war. Even if this persuasion was based on politicized intelligence, it does not reflect on how intelligence works in the rest of the world. Nonetheless, we easily adopt those theories and apply them to other cases. From a Dutch point of view, the influence of powerful nations does play a role in the decision-making process. Whether that is because of bilateral relations or the size of a nation, probably depends on the case. However, the pressure and influence on smaller European countries has never been truly reflected on in intelligence. To what extent do powerful nations influence national intelligence? If we continue focussing on the US, we will never receive an answer to this question simply because they do not face this problem. The Dutch case proves that there are other external factors involved in the intelligence cycle, such as dealing with incoming information. The US probably receives information as well, but the dimensions are different when you are the superior. This case tells us a very specific story that does not fit the existing models. That does not mean that these models are wrong. Nonetheless, the overarching argument is that this case study shows the importance of studying middle powers and not just the hegemons.

7. Conclusion

This research started with explaining how different the organizational goal of the AIVD is compared to the CIA. Even though it is difficult to draw any conclusions based on that comparison, this showed the first sign of how different the Iraq case evolved in the Netherlands compared to the US.

The Dutch case tells a very specific story of how national intelligence was ignored by decision makers. Despite the fact that the matter of Iraq came rather late on the political agenda, decisions were mostly based on incoming information. More importantly, the AIVD and MIVD questioned the American and British intelligence as they had trouble in verifying that information. In addition to that, both intelligence services argued that Iraq was in fact capable of reinventing the WMD programs but that the threat was not imminent. The question of whether Iraq possessed WMD never actually played an important role in Dutch intelligence. That was mainly because they adopted a much more nuanced stance in the case compared to the US. They even argued that they did not expect a war and advised policymakers to resolve issues via diplomatic routes. On that same note, the UN resolutions were held in place in order to monitor Iraq's activities. That should have been enough to prevent further escalation from happening, according to the MIVD.

Dutch decision makers argued otherwise. The political debate was never completely focussed on the presence of WMD such as in the US. When the Bush administration had announced their war on terror after 9/11, Dutch politicians stood by the American side. The political debate shifted from questioning the threat of Iraq in general, towards whether the UN resolutions provided for a mandate to use force. The need for a legal basis that would legitimize war dominated the overall debate. At the same time, it completely ignored the fact that the national intelligence services had no indication for an imminent threat. Just days before the attack, Minister of Foreign Affairs De Hoop Scheffer announced the Dutch political and military support for the mission.

The case study tells a very detailed story of how the Dutch made their decision. While the Americans were accused of politicizing intelligence, this case does not fit the model of politicization. It even leads to the bigger overarching discussion on whether theories in the

world of intelligence are too US centred. Of course, the Iraq War was an US-led war and therefore, they have the biggest role in most existing theories (Betts, 2002; Betts, 2007; Jervis, 2006; Jervis, 2010; Fitzgerald & Lebow, 2006). However, middle and smaller powers clearly deal with different factors. Take the US influence for instance. As a superpower they are dominant in terms of international presence and global stability. A lot of smaller nations rely on the US to a great extent. In this case, the Dutch favoured American alliance over their own national intelligence. But for the US it is different. They would have invaded Iraq even without the support of the Dutch. Yes, the Americans needed the Dutch for their strategic infrastructure since the Germans and French could not agree with their mission (Davids, 2010). But it is very likely to assume that the attack did not depend on the Dutch decision. However, the reason why the Dutch ignored national intelligence could be because of the influence the Americans had on their decision. For a small nation it is much more difficult to say no to incoming requests from a superpower. They depend on those bigger nations because of their power and influence. Moreover, the Dutch had previously provided military assistance to the US, so why not help them again?

Another surprising event was when the political debate moved from needing a legal basis to ignoring the statement that came from the Judicial Department of Defense. They argued that there was absolutely no legal basis to use force or to invade Iraq based on the UN resolutions. The sudden change of heart happened after Prime Minister Balkenende received a four-eyes only document from the US-UK alliance. Shortly after that, he announced the support for the war. Even though it is very difficult to specify and explain how the Americans could have influenced the Dutch, it is remarkable that changes in their policies mostly happened after receiving American intelligence or having a meeting with an American ambassador. While this does not provide for a clear answer to the research question, it shows the importance of researching middle powers. They tell a different story because they deal with different factors.

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