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The 'Presidential' Prime Ministers? Comparing PMs' roles in the making of Dutch EU policy

Vellekoop, Sander

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The ‘Presidential’ Prime Ministers?

Comparing PMs’ roles in the making of Dutch EU policy

Thesis MSc. Public Administration
By: Sander Vellekoop

Supervisor: Mr. R. Bekker
Second reader: Dr. K.A. Yesilkagit
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Abstract

In the last few decades, Public Administration research has seen an increase of studies on relations at the centre of the executive in various systems. An important part of this is the question if, and in what way, Prime Ministers have seen an increase in their influence in government. This question also holds particular relevance in the context of European Union member states, as the European Council – the body consisting solely of heads of state and government – has seen an increase in relevance in European cooperation.

Building on these ideas, this thesis discusses the influence of the Dutch Prime Minister on the Netherlands's EU policy. Considering the Netherlands has a tradition of strongly decentralised government and strong departmental ministers, the question of increasing Prime Ministerial influence in EU affairs is of particular interest in this context. The thesis builds on the existing literature by examining *how* two individual Dutch Prime Ministers have shaped their roles in EU policy.

To do so, it draws a comparison of the two most recent Prime Ministers – Jan Peter Balkenende and Mark Rutte. These Prime Ministers are compared using two sets of two case studies, in which they faced similar policy problems in EU policy. On one hand, both Balkenende and Rutte faced the rejection of proposed EU legislation in a national referendum (the European Constitution in 2005 and the Association Agreement with Ukraine in 2016, respectively), and on the other, both faced a significant financial crisis with a European component (the 2008 Banking Crisis and the Euro Crisis which started in 2010, respectively).

This thesis finds that the two Prime Ministers took a very different approach regarding the Prime Minister's role in EU policy. First of all, Balkenende was more reluctant to encroach on the policy areas of other ministers, while Rutte was involved in EU policy to a larger extent. Secondly, in terms of communication on EU policy, Balkenende often communicated broader visions on the EU, while Rutte clearly presented himself as a pragmatic problem-solver in EU policy. What this shows is that the role of the Dutch Prime Minister in EU is by no means developing in a linear way, but rather depends strongly on the actions and beliefs of the individual Prime Minister.

Contents

Introduction

In Public Administration, the study of Prime Ministers (PMs) and the power they wield in various political contexts at different times has a long tradition.[1] However, studies on what some scholars have called Core Executives – which include, but are not limited to, Prime Ministers – have proliferated in recent decades (e.g. Rhodes, 1995, pp. 13-14; Elgie, 2011). Within this line of research, a large number of researchers have focused on the need for increased coordination in modern-day administration, considering that the problems facing government today are increasingly complex and span multiple areas of policy-making. This need for coordination would arguably lead to an increasingly powerful position for Core Executives, and Prime Ministers in particular (e.g. Marsh et al., 2003; Poguntke & Webb, 2005; Corbett et al., 2020). Poguntke and Webb (2005) even go so far as to claim that we are seeing a 'presidentialisation' of PMs, with their position in the Core Executive becoming increasingly influential.

This thesis contributes to this strand of Public Administration literature, by examining the ways in which different PMs of the Netherlands have been involved in Dutch policy towards the EU. As such, it takes the arguments from this theoretical literature to a specific policy area in a specific national context. This focus is relevant for several reasons. First of all, since the 1991 signing of the EU's Maastricht Treaty, the EU has seen a rising influence of the European Council, the institution consisting of Heads of State or Government of the EU's Member States (e.g. Fabbrini and Puetter, 2016, p. 482). EU scholars have found that the strengthening of this EU body also enhances the position of PMs within domestic politics and administration (Goetz & Meyer-Sahling, 2008, p. 14; Borrás & Guy Peters, 2011). This development makes research on the roles of PMs in the EU policy of any country interesting within the study of Core Executives. Furthermore, with its coordinating function, the position of PM is obviously highly important to the political and administrative system of most countries (except the ones which have a President as the leading figure) (e.g. Elgie, 1997, p. 217). This also gives

[1] A 'Prime Minister' is a head of government in countries with a Parliamentary system. They lead the goverment, but depend on (tacit) support from a majority in Parliament. This contrasts with Presidential systems, which are defined by a head of state with an electoral mandate independent of Parliament and strong executive powers (Dunleavy, N.D.).

this thesis a broader relevance for the Netherlands, as it contributes to our knowledge of developments in what is arguably the highest political office of the country.

Only a limited amount of literature has previously focused on the involvement of the Dutch PM in Dutch EU policy (for exceptions, see Fiers & Krouwel, 2005; Van Dorp & Rhodes, 2022). Based on the limited available literature, the PM's role in the European Council also seems to have led to growing involvement of the PM in EU policy on the national level (e.g. Fiers and Krouwel, 2005). However, this research relies on the assumption that PMs have an automatic advantage over other ministers in EU policy, solely by virtue of their 'seat at the table' in the European Council.

This thesis questions the argument that the Prime Minister's position in the European Council inherently leads to centralisation of EU policy towards the Prime Minister in the Netherlands. It does this by drawing a comparison between the two most recent Prime Ministers – Jan Peter Balkenende (CDA, PM from 2001 – 2010) and Mark Rutte (VVD, PM from 2010 – current, as of October 2022). The thesis consists of several case studies, providing an insight into the different roles both Prime Ministers played in Dutch EU policy. Naturally, it is also important to understand the political and societal context in which the PMs had to operate at the time, which is why the context for all four case studies is briefly described in Appendix 2 of this thesis.

As such, the research question of the thesis is as follows:

"***How did the roles of the Prime Minister in Dutch EU policy differ under Prime Ministers Balkenende and Rutte?***"

Before moving on to the literature review, it is important to define some key terms in this research question.

Firstly, 'EU policy' refers to what James (2010, p. 820) calls the '*projection of policy preferences, institutions, norms and values*'. This is the phase before the start of negotiations between EU member states, when these states define what preferences and interests they want to bring forward in the EU. In other words, 'EU policy' refers to how the Dutch government formulates its own preferences on EU matters before decisions are negotiated and adopted at the EU level. As such, this thesis does not discuss how the Dutch government influenced the EU policies that were adopted in the end, nor the implementation of this EU legislation in the domestic context after it has

been passed. According to James (2010, p. 832), the phase of deciding the a country's strategic direction in its EU policy is where the centralisation around the PM can be seen the clearest.

Secondly, the term 'roles of the PM', which will be discussed in more detail in the Literature Review, refers to the different ways in which the PM can (and is expected to) exert influence in Dutch EU policy. Based on the literature on the Dutch PM, the 'roles' this thesis focuses on are the PM's role as coordinator of government policy and the role of the PM as the 'representative' of Dutch EU policy towards Parliament and the public.

After reviewing the literature on Core Executive studies, the growing role of heads of government in EU affairs, and the function of the Dutch PM, this thesis uses four case studies to analyse the involvement of the two most recent Dutch PMs – Jan Peter Balkenende and Mark Rutte – in Dutch EU policy. These four cases make up two sets of two cases, in which Balkenende and Rutte faced roughly similar policy problems: firstly, the rejection of a certain piece of EU policy by the Dutch population under Balkenende in 2005 (the European Constitution), and under Rutte in 2016 (the EU's Association Agreement with Ukraine). Secondly, the (strongly related) financial crisis of 2008/2009 (under Balkenende) and Euro Crisis from 2010-2012 (under Rutte).[2] Comparison of these case studies reveals strong differences between how both PMs executed the two roles discussed above, showing the relevance of research on how individual PMs consider their role in a certain policy area.

[2] While the Euro Crisis did not end in 2012, this case study focuses on Dutch EU policy towards the crisis during the Rutte-I cabinet, which governed the Netherlands in this period.

Literature Review

In setting the stage for answering the research question of this thesis, this literature review sets up both the theoretical framework of this thesis (Core Executive studies), as well as discussing the specific literature on the Dutch PM and recent developments of this function, particularly in the context of EU affairs. Firstly, it discusses the broader theoretical research on the Core Executives of government, and particularly the role of PMs within these. Secondly, it moves more specifically to the role of European Prime Ministers in EU affairs, discussing the growing role of the European Council and its effects on centralization towards Prime Ministers in national Core Executives. Lastly, with these broader theoretical developments in mind, it examines the literature on the roles of the Dutch Prime Minister, as well as on the ways a Dutch PM can execute these.

Core Executive Studies

The term 'Core Executive' was introduced by Dunleavy and Rhodes (1990, p. 4), who defined it as the '*organizations and structures that serve to pull together and integrate central government policies, or to act as final arbiters within the executive […]*'. According to Rhodes (1995, pp. 13-14), the concept was coined in opposition to the ongoing debate among scholars on whether the PM or the Cabinet held the most power in the context of the UK executive. Rather than focusing on this dichotomy, Rhodes (1995), as well as Elgie (1997) argued that both the Prime Minister and other ministers can rely on a wide range of institutions and people to execute their task of coordinating policy, meaning there can be many different models for how Core Executives function.

Having moved away from the dichotomy between Prime Ministerial and Cabinet government, Core Executive scholars have looked at relations within Core Executives in different ways. Broadly, scholars from the Interpretive Approach consider power in the Core Executive to be mostly relational, and therefore emphasize the range of policy actors surrounding PMs in the Core Executive, rather than PMs themselves (Elgie, 2011, p. 67). Meanwhile, scholars from the Structural Approach also consider the Core Executive as a network of different policy actors, but find that the PM does play an essential part within it, and the role of the PM is therefore something worth studying in

itself. The following section of the literature review discusses both major strands of Core Executive research, and concludes by going into how this thesis relates to both of them.

Interpretive Approach

Rhodes's arguments on the Core Executive do more than simply expand the amount of models in the study of policy coordination in central government. Rhodes (2007, p. 1247) also argues that power in the Core Executive lies not in having a certain formal position, but should rather be seen as '*contingent and relational*'. In Rhodes' view, functions of the Core Executive, such as the integration of central government policies, do not necessarily have to be fulfilled by a PM, but can also be fulfilled by other institutions like a Finance Ministry. Who fulfils such functions at a given point fluctuates, and depends on a wide range of contextual variables, such as the power dynamics between different parties or factions in government, as well as more external variables like the state of a country's economy (Rhodes, 2007, p. 1247). As such, for Rhodes (2007, p. 1248), the main questions Core Executive studies should ask are 'who does what?' and 'who has what resources?'

In order to study the networks and power relations in the Core Executive, later work by Rhodes makes use of the concept of Court Politics. Broadly, scholars of the Court Politics approach focus on the beliefs, practices, traditions and dilemmas of the network of actors at the centre of the Core Executive. As such, the approach studies individuals (such as the PM) in the broader context of the traditions of the Court surrounding them (Rhodes, 2022, p. 69). In other words, this approach does not focus on institutions and positions, but rather on beliefs and practices of individuals, the manoeuvring that comes with attaining policy goals, and the intrigue that comes with the success and failure of key personalities. As the term suggests, the object of analysis is usually the network surrounding the PM (Corbett et al., 2020, p. 115; Rhodes, 2013, p. 322).

Recent research has applied the concept of Court Politics to a variety of contexts, such as the 'court' of a premier of the Australian state of Queensland (Rhodes and Tiernan, 2016); a comparison between the responses of the inner circles of British PM Johnson and Danish PM Frederiksen to the COVID-19 crisis (Boswell et al., 2021); and relations

within the Danish Core Executive (Rhodes & Salomonsen, 2021). Van Dorp and Rhodes (2022) also apply it in the context of the Dutch cabinet, concluding that the PM has an increasingly central position within the Dutch Core Executive. What these studies have in common is a focus on individuals within the Core Executive, either examining how beliefs and values of individual PMs have shaped certain policy agendas, or how relations between individuals within the Core Executive (e.g. PMs and Finance Ministers) shape the way policy is made.

In short, the interpretive approach to studying the Core Executive focuses on the individual actors that make up the Core Executives, their beliefs and practices, as well as the networks in which they operate. It takes the power of any individual within the Core Executive, including the PM, as highly dependent on context, and focuses on who does what in the Core Executive at a given time.

Structural Approach

With his approach focusing on individuals and context, Rhodes sets himself apart from most Core Executive studies. According to Elgie (2011, pp. 68-69), most scholars within Core Executive studies agree with Rhodes that actors in the Core Executive depend on one another to make decisions, but, unlike Rhodes, they still consider some positions in the Core Executive to be inherently more powerful than others, at any given time and regardless of context.[3]

An example of this is the 'asymmetric power'-model (Marsh et al., 2003), which accepts that the Core Executive is fragmented and relies on interactions between various actors, but finds that some actors (such as the Cabinet Office and the Treasury) are more influential than others. Similarly, Heffernan (2003), as well as Burch and Holliday (2004), argue that the British PM has access to both personal (e.g. visibility in the public eye) and institutional (e.g. agenda-setting for cabinet meetings) resources which other actors in the Core Executive do not have.

[3] Neither Elgie nor any other literature discussed here has used the term 'Structuralist Approach'. The term 'Structuralist Approach' is used in this thesis as a shorthand to set these scholars apart from scholars who focus primarily on individuals and contexts.

A concept similar to the 'asymmetric power' model that has also been applied outside the British context is that of 'presidentialisation' (Elgie, 2011, p. 69). Initially, this concept was used to describe a trend of the British PM gaining more prominence over time, thus becoming more like a president in a system like in the United States or France (Dowding, 2013, p. 618; Foley, 2004). However, Poguntke and Webb's (2005) book identifies 'presidentialisation' – a growing prominence of PMs in political parties, the government executive, and electoral processes – in a wide variety of democracies (p. 336). This includes a growing role for the PM in parliamentary democracies which have a tradition of power-sharing between different groups in government, such as the Netherlands (Fiers and Krouwel, 2005). Although Poguntke and Webb do not provide universal causes for this 'presidentialisation', they do argue that internationalisation of government is an important cause of the growing prominence of PMs. European integration would have a particularly strong effect, because '*European integration means that a substantial part of domestic politics is decided like international politics, traditionally a domain of leaders rather than parties*' (Poguntke and Webb, 2005, p. 350). In short, this idea of 'presidentialisation' extends the model of 'asymmetric power' in the Core Executive by arguing that leaders in the executive (particularly PMs) have seen a structural increase in power compared to other actors in the Core Executive.

In the last decade, this idea of 'presidentialisation' has come under a large amount of scrutiny (Elgie and Passarelli, 2019, p. 115). This criticism can roughly be divided along two lines. For example, Dowding (2013, p. 620) argues that the increasing power of the British PM is mostly due to a general trend of increasing 'personalisation' (i.e. emphasis on individual politicians) in politics. Meanwhile, Heffernan (2013, p. 643) and Diamond (2021, p. 12) argue that the increasing role of the British PM identified in recent years is not due to structural changes, but rather due to the way in which individual PMs (Blair and Cameron, respectively) make use of the resources they have to gain more power. Kefford (2013, p. 142) also argues that increased power of the Australian Prime Minister came largely from governing styles of individual PMs. In other words, critics of the 'presidentialisation' idea argue that the power and status of the PM are not structurally growing, but rather depend on how individual PMs choose to govern.

In short, scholars in the more structural strand tend to pay attention to the role of PMs within the Core Executive, with some claiming that PMs are becoming increasingly like

the strong presidents of Presidential systems. This thesis questions this 'presidentialisation' thesis, by focusing the differences in involvement of different Dutch PMs in similar situations, similarly to critics of the 'presidentialisation' thesis in the British context (Diamond, 2021; Heffernan, 2013; Kefford, 2013).

Positioning of this thesis

To sum up, this thesis takes Core Executives studies as its theoretical starting point. Although it focuses specifically on the function of the Dutch PM, rather than taking a broader look at relations in the Core Executive, it also focuses on the individuals who have been in this position, shifting attention to their individual beliefs and practices as PM. In this way, this research takes inspiration from both of the broader approaches to Core Executive studies.

The thesis also contributes to filling an important gap in the Core Executive literature. This literature remains largely limited to a few contexts, with the bulk of the literature dealing with the situation in the UK (e.g. Heffernan, 2003; Burch & Holliday, 2004; Dowding, 2013; Diamond, 2021). While some more recent research has focused on Core Executives in countries with different systems of government, such as Denmark (Boswell et al., 2021; Rhodes & Salomonsen, 2021), and the Netherlands (Van Dorp & Rhodes, 2022), the Core Executive literature on other contexts remains limited. This gap in the literature is important for this research, considering the UK has a majoritarian system, with one party dominating the legislature at a time, as well as (relatively) strong PMs. Government in countries like the Netherlands works in a very different way, with governments often consisting of multi-party coalitions, leading to a need to find consensus among parties with very different ideological underpinnings and interests, as well as weaker PMs (e.g. Boswell et al., 2021, p. 1263). As such, by taking the theoretical debates on the place of the PM in the Core Executive to the Dutch context, this thesis aims to increase the range of Core Executive studies.

A particular element, central to Poguntke and Webb's (2005, p. 350) 'presidentialisation' argument, is the role of European integration in strengthening government leaders. They argue this is because an increasing amount of policy is decided on the EU level, through intergovernmental negotiation with heavy involvement of Prime Ministers. The next section of this review unpacks this argument,

looking at research on how European can lead to centralisation in national Core Executives.

European Integration and the Core Executive – Strengthening the PM?

Having discussed the theorization on Core Executives, this review moves on to the context of EU policy. As mentioned previously, a central tenet of the 'presidentialisation' thesis is that EU integration strengthens the position of the PM in the national Core Executive (Poguntke and Webb, 2005, p. 350). This is because only they represent their countries in the European Council, meaning they need at least some coordinating competence to properly represent their governments' interests in this body (e.g. Fiers and Krouwel, 2005, pp. 133-134). This section discusses recent studies on the European Council as an institution, as well as the effects of European integration on the PM's role within the Core Executive in various EU countries. It finds that research on the effects of the EU on national Core Executives tends to paint in very broad strokes, stressing the need for more detailed research on the roles of individual heads of government/state when it comes to EU affairs.

The European Council – History and Development

EU countries' heads of state and government have held regular European Council summits since 1974, although it only became an official EU institution in the 2009 Lisbon Treaty (De Schoutheete, 2017, pp. 56-60). The reason for these regular meetings is the recognition that consistent coordination of policy in all areas of EU activity at times requires agreement of the highest authorities in Member State governments. Initially, therefore, the European Council primarily occupied itself with setting broad strategic guidelines, and with decision-making on the most politically sensitive matters (De Schoutheete, 2017, pp. 66-67).

However, especially since the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht, EU scholars have argued that the role of the European Council has been expanded. The Maastricht Treaty drastically expanded the scope of European integration, including to areas like economic and

monetary policy, as well as foreign policy – policy areas considered close to the core of state sovereignty (Fabbrini, 2013, p. 1004; Wessels, 2012). According to scholars of the so-called 'new intergovernmentalist' school of EU studies (e.g. Fabbrini, 2013; Puetter, 2012, 2016; Szép, 2020), this 'encroachment' on core national sovereignty was offset by an increasing role for the European Council. They argue that the European Council has become a key institution in everyday policymaking as well (Fabbrini and Puetter, 2016, p. 482).

Although critics of 'new intergovernmentalism' argue that coordination in the European Council on a wide range of policy areas did take place before Maastricht (e.g. Schimmelfennig, 2015, p. 726), various scholars have demonstrated an increased involvement of the European Council in the details of policies, rather than the broad strategic directions of the EU. For instance, Carammia et al. (2016) find that the European Council's agenda has increasingly featured 'everyday policymaking' (such as monitoring implementation of laws) in recent decades, while Devuyst (2012) argues that the 2009 Lisbon Treaty made the European Council the main decision-making body in the EU's foreign policy, and Szép (2020) shows that the European Council was involved in every step of decision making in the case of EU sanctions on Russia in 2014. As such, looking at developments on the EU level, scholars have demonstrated that the European Council has moved from summits on strategic priorities of the EU to a central body in everyday EU policymaking and execution. The following section examines the consequences of this development for the roles of PMs in national Core Executives.

European Integration and the Core Executive – Centralisation?

The last decades have seen a range of empirical research into how European Integration affects Core Executives in EU Member States, discussing both general patterns and specific Member State contexts. This section briefly goes into this research, particularly emphasizing the debate on whether (and to what extent) European integration has led to centralisation within national governments.

Generally speaking, scholarship on this issue has found that European Integration has led to increasing power for PMs (Goetz, 2008, pp. 266-267; Goetz & Meyer-Sahling, 2008, p. 14). For example, King (1994, pp. 161-162), as well as Mittag and Wessels

(2003, p. 423) argued that European summits increase influence for PMs, because they increase their visibility and status towards the population.

While scholarship generally points to increasing roles for Prime Ministers, some studies have also found variation between the contexts of different Member States. For instance, Borrás and Guy Peters (2011, p. 539) find that this centralisation can occur through formal constitutional changes or more informally, based on the political context. Consideration of these differences per country has led to discussions on how European Integration has changed the power dynamics in the Core Executives of specific EU countries, such as Sweden and Finland (Johansson and Raunio, 2010), the UK and Ireland (James, 2010), and Italy (Stolfi, 2011). These studies tend to find that European Council summitry has led to increased centralisation in systems which are traditionally decentralised in their policymaking on EU affairs (e.g. Borrás & Guy Peters, 2011, p. 538).

When it comes to the mechanisms through which EU integration strengthens heads of state or government, James (2010, p. 832) provides a highly comprehensive theoretical account of how the EU level affects Core Executives domestically. He argues that increased EU cooperation gives additional resources to heads of government domestically, primarily in the phase of 'strategic adaptation' or 'uploading of national policy preferences' to the EU level. Their seat in the European Council, James argues, gives PMs the ability to network and build alliances among counterparts in other states, making them better-suited than other ministers to represent their countries' interests (James, 2010, p. 821). Furthermore, given the growing importance of the European Council in everyday policymaking, heads of government also have an increasing influence over policy outcomes on the EU level. Considering the EU influences a wide range of policy matters, this means the central role of the PM in EU affairs gives them a greater capacity to interfere with more policy areas domestically (James, 2010, p. 821). In other words, the increasingly central role of the European Council strengthens the PM's role in policy coordination domestically, especially when it comes to defining the domestic interests to be advocated at the EU level.

In short, studies over the last decades have found *that* PMs have been empowered by European Integration in general, and the increasing influence of the European Council in particular. As the European Council became increasingly active in EU governance,

so too did PMs become more central to EU policymaking in Member States, in particular in those countries where the PM was not a very significant player in EU policymaking before. This leads us to the first (and most basic) hypothesis for the research in this thesis:

H1: *Both Balkenende and Rutte were involved in the formulation of the Dutch position on EU matters within the Core Executive, not only when it comes to the broad strategic direction of European integration, but also in relation to more specific matters.*

As we see in the next section of this review, the Netherlands has traditionally had a highly decentralised government, meaning the tendency towards centralisation of EU policymaking within the Core Executive is likely to be seen in the Netherlands as well.

The Dutch PM: Developing Roles

We now move on to the particular case of the Dutch PM and the Core Executive surrounding him.[4] Here, we find that the literature on this position has been relatively limited – particularly compared to the PM of countries like the UK, which has been the source of quite some theorisation (Te Velde et al., 2005, p. 9). However, we can also see that Fiers and Krouwel's (2005) application of the 'presidentialisation' thesis to the Netherlands falls within a broader tradition of studies on the growing role of the PM. In particular, this thesis discusses two factors – the increasing need for policy coordination and increased media attention to the person of the PM – which are widely discussed in the literature on the Dutch PM and also play a role in the PM's role in EU policy making.

First of all, a brief discussion of the history of the position of Dutch PM. The tradition of a Dutch 'Prime Minister' is a relatively new one, compared to other countries. Historically, the role of chairman of the council of ministers was rotated among ministers until the early 1900s, with the official designation of a permanent chair of cabinet as 'Prime Minister' occurring only in the late 1930s. In the Dutch constitution, there was no mention of the office until 1983 (De Vries et al., 2012, p. 161).

The Dutch PM has always been a figure with few formal powers. He draws up the agenda for meetings of the council of ministers and committees, and casts the deciding vote in case of a tie. But he cannot fire ministers, or 'reshuffle' cabinets. Furthermore, he has a rather small staff, consisting of around 10 senior (civil servant) advisors. This modest position is primarily due to two facts of Dutch politics. Firstly, the PM always heads a coalition government consisting of multiple parties, meaning he has to 'keep together' often fragile coalitions. Secondly, Dutch ministers have a strong position as heads of their departments, meaning that there are strong institutional constraints against Prime Ministerial encroachment on the 'turf' of other ministries (Andeweg et al., 2020, pp. 133-134). In other words, at first glance, the role of the Dutch PM is little more than a 'first among equals' in the council of ministers.

[4] Thus far (as of October 2022), all Dutch PMs have been male.

Constitutional Scholarship on the Dutch PM

This section discusses the studies that look at the Dutch PM from a constitutional or legal standpoint. These researchers are primarily concerned with the formal legal capabilities and responsibilities of the PM. However, it also examines the factual capabilities of the PM, including some arguments on how the role of the PM has developed over the years. This ensures it serves as a good starting point for discussion of the PM's role in EU policy making.

Constitutional scholarship on the Dutch PM has been driven primarily by the discussion on the change in the formal position of the PM. Since the 1960s, there have been various moments when the issue of a directly elected PM came up in Dutch political discussions (Te Velde et al., 2005, p. 12). This has led to discussions among constitutional scholars in reports and other formats. For example, in the early 2000s, when the Second Balkenende Cabinet (2003-2006) put the issue of strengthening the PM on the agenda, this led to some reports being written on the PM's position from a legal (Bovend'Eert et al., 2005; Broeksteeg & Verhey, 2005), international comparative (Broeksteeg et al., 2004), and historical perspective (Te Velde et al., 2005). Most of these reports are rather critical on a formal strengthening of the PM, particularly given the Dutch political traditions of multiparty coalitions and strong ministerial prerogatives (e.g. Broeksteeg & Verhey, 2005, p. 70).

However, constitutional scholarship on the Dutch PM has also paid attention to the discrepancy between the PMs formal legal position and his actual position in government. This has led to the conclusion that the *de facto* position of the PM has developed far beyond the formal competences of the office, which is drawn most elaborately in the dissertation of Peter Rehwinkel (1991). Constitutional scholars like Rehwinkel provide two main reasons for this *de facto* strengthening of the office of PM.

Firstly, there is the increasing need for policy coordination. In other words, with the increasing complexity of government work, there are fewer and fewer issues that can be handled by one ministry, which gives the PM as a coordinator of government policy a stronger position. This was noted, among others, by former Secretary-General (highest civil servant) of the Ministry of General Affairs Derk Ringnalda (WRR, 1988, p. 260). Rehwinkel (1991, pp. 115-121) argues that this need for coordination is the primary reason for the strengthening of the function of PM, as it makes the PM both a

central figure in almost all formal meetings of ministers, as well as giving him opportunities to coordinate policy by holding informal meetings with ministers and other actors. Similarly, Van den Berg (1990, p. 120) argues that the need for coordination also means that the PM has to be increasingly proactive in finding solutions for the most pressing issues that the different parties and ministers of government can agree on. In short, the need for coordination of government policy has ensured that the role of the PM *within* government has become stronger than his formal competences seem to suggest.

Secondly, there is the position of the Dutch PM in international affairs, where summits became increasingly important in international organisations, including the EU. As discussed in the previous section, the European Council has solidified its status as a major coordinative institution in the EU. Initially, from the start of European integration post-World War II until around 1970, the PM was virtually absent from the European arena, leaving European affairs to the Foreign Minister. At the time, the Netherlands was fiercely against EU summitry (Rehwinkel, 1991, p. 201).

However, this started to change in the 1970s. As summits became increasingly commonplace in what was then the European Economic Community, PM Joop den Uyl (1973-1977) was the first Dutch PM to be actively involved in European affairs, much to the suspicion of the Foreign Ministry (Brouwer, 2018, p. 211). In European summits, Dutch PMs found themselves among foreign counterparts, who usually had much more influence over policymaking than they had themselves. In 1990, this situation led to a dispute when PM Lubbers argued that he needed to play a larger part in European policy in the Netherlands, as '*the Prime Minister should not be handicapped in terms of information, contacts, presence, status, etc., compared to his colleagues abroad*' (quoted in Rehwinkel, 1991, p. 217). This led to a conflict with Foreign Minister Van den Broek, who believed a greater role for the PM could only be achieved through constitutional change. However, in 1991, this disagreement came to an end, largely due to the strengthening of the European Council in the Maastricht Treaty, making a larger role for the PM inevitable (Rehwinkel, 1991, p. 217-218). In other words, in order to properly represent Dutch interests among his colleagues in the European Council, the Dutch PM would inevitably gain more influence in coordinating EU policymaking, at the expense of the Foreign Minister.

The fact that the Dutch PM has gained an increasing role in EU policymaking through his role in the European Council, also strengthens his role in coordinating policy at home in general. The EU now covers a wide range of policy areas, including areas traditionally considered part of domestic policymaking, meaning that the PM has to be able to negotiate on a growing range of issues in the European Council (Eppink, 2005, p. 46; Verbeek & Van der Vleuten, 2008, p. 43). In this way, the PM's role in EU policymaking is directly connected to his role as coordinator of government policy in the Netherlands.

In short, the constitutional perspective on the Dutch PM focuses on the formal competences of the PM, and on how the de facto role of the PM differs from the legal one. When it comes to the latter question, the most frequently mentioned factor is the PM's increasing role as policy coordinator, including in EU policy.

Further research on the Dutch PM

Naturally, not all scholarship on the Dutch PM focuses on competences of the office. Other scholars have studied the roles of the Dutch PM from a variety of angles, and using different methods. However, what they tend to have in common is their focus on the actual role of (individual) PMs as well as how the role of the PM (or an individual PM) in policymaking is perceived in the media, and more generally in society.

A criticism of the more constitutional approach to the Dutch PM is given by Te Velde et al. (2005, pp. 15-16). They argue that scholars invoking the increased need for policy coordination make the strengthening of the PM look like a linear process, while discounting the role of the individuals who have held the office. They continue to argue for increased attention to comparisons between different PMs. As an example of this kind of research, Van den Berg (1990, pp. 107-110) created a typology of the different kinds of PMs the Netherlands had had, from ideologically-driven 'party men', to compromise-seeking 'coordinators', or 'agents' who were made PM out of nowhere by more influential forces in major parties. Te Velde et al. continue to discuss 'models' of the role of the PM, as played by different PMs. They conclude that '*those Prime Ministers have become most popular, who managed to combine administrative quality with a restrained and modest presentation*' (Te Velde et al., 2005, p. 44).

The second part of this quote points towards another factor in the increased role of the Dutch PM: the growing attention for PM in those media, as the main representative of the government as a whole (Te Velde et al., 2005, p. 45). This point was also made by Van den Berg (1990, p. 113) and Rehwinkel (1991, p. 126-127).

This increased role of the PM in the media has also been attributed to the idea of 'personalisation' of political coverage, the idea that media coverage on politics is becoming increasingly centred around politicians rather than political issues (e.g. De Vries et al., 2012, p. 162). As Fiers and Krouwel (2005, p. 145) argue, this phenomenon moves the focus of the media towards the PM, as he is the individual in government who tends to have the highest name recognition among the public, and he is the one who justifies the actions of the government to the press after the Council of Ministers meets on Friday.

Thus, the personalisation of media coverage in politics have arguably given the Dutch PM a strong media position, provided his performance as government leader is good and the general image he cultivates is convincing. Later research has found mixed evidence of the 'visibility' of the PM in the media. Boumans et al. (2013), for example, conclude that the Dutch media did not have a particularly large focus on the PM compared to other ministers from 1992-2007, except in times of elections. Meanwhile, Beijen et al. (2022) do find a significant visibility of the PM compared to other ministers in times of foreign policy crises.

Despite the mixed scholarly evidence on PMs' visibility in the media (which is, admittedly, based on a limited amount of studies), the PM's 'privileged access to mass media' can also be seen in the area of EU policy (De Vries et al., 2012, p. 162). Reflecting King's (1994, pp. 161-162) argument that EU summits increase the visibility and prestige of PMs at home, Fiers and Krouwel (2005, p. 133) argue that the media attention that is usually paid to European Council summits ensures that the PM has also become the 'face' of EU policy at home.

As such, the 'other' literature on the increasing influence of the Dutch PM frequently discusses the PMs' growing media prominence. When it comes to EU policy, we can also see that this increasingly requires the PM to take his coordinating role within government, and become the 'face' of EU policy towards the media during summits. This is also confirmed by a recent study by Van Dorp and Rhodes (2022, pp. 200-203),

who tried to explain the Dutch PM's increasing de facto role. Based on interviews with members of the Dutch Core Executive, they find four reasons for this. Firstly, there is the growing role of the PM in EU affairs, given his membership in the European Council. Secondly, there is the growing role of the PM in the media, both when it comes to EU policy and crises at home. Thirdly, there is the media attention for the PM in the event of a crisis (at home or abroad). And lastly, the polarisation of Dutch politics (with the largest parties gaining fewer seats in Parliament) forces the PM to bring together broader coalitions, making his coordinating role more important.

Surmising: the PM's roles

In short, the literature on the growing role of the Dutch PM so far has found several structural factors that have allowed the PM to take on a growing role within the Core Executive. This includes primarily:

1) The growing need for coordination of policy in government.
2) Increasing media focus on the PM as the country's most important politician.
3) The PMs increasing role in foreign policy (particularly EU policy), by virtue of being the country's representative during summits.

As we have also seen in this review, the former two reasons also apply to the PM's role in EU policy in particular. Here, too, we can see an increase in need for coordination (due to EU influence over a growing range of policy areas), as well as in attention for the PM as the 'face' of the Netherlands during EU summits.

This leads us to the second hypothesis on the individual PMs Balkenende and Rutte:

***H2**. Both Balkenende and Rutte had a dual role in Dutch EU policy-making.*

> ***H2.A**. Both PMs coordinated EU policy, bringing together the different viewpoints on a certain issue and resolving conflicts.*
>
> ***H2.B**. Both PMs acted as 'representatives' of Dutch EU policy towards the population, elaborating on the government's stance on EU affairs and explaining these choices.*

Concrete PM actions in the dual PM role: Introducing PM Leadership

Having discussed the development of the roles of the PM in Dutch EU policy in general terms, the question remains how exactly an individual PM could execute these different roles. In our upcoming discussion of how PMs Balkenende and Rutte filled in their roles in Dutch EU policy, it is relevant to discuss the range of options a Dutch PM has to get involved in policy processes. This section shows a range of options that the PM has when it comes to both roles of the PM discussed in the previous section. Although not an exhaustive list of options, it does provide a broad range of different levels of PM involvement in a certain policy issue. It builds op to the final hypothesis of this thesis, namely that PMs Balkenende and Rutte executed the PM's roles in significantly different ways.

Coordinating

Firstly to discuss the options of a PM to coordinate Dutch EU policy. As mentioned, the Dutch PM has relatively few formal powers to enforce his responsibility for government coordination, because he is bound to coalition government and has to work with ministers who have strong prerogatives in their own fields (Andeweg et al., 2020, p. 137). As such, a PM can simply play a supporting role, leaving room for other ministers to deal with problems in their own policy areas, without too many attempts to influence the policy process and outcomes from the PM's side. A PM known to often take an approach like this was PM Van Agt (CDA, 1977-1982), whose style of presiding over the Council of Ministers was focused more on smoothening the decision-making process, rather than on expressing his own preferences (Rehwinkel, 1991, p. 117).

Naturally, this is not always possible: as political problems become more prominent and/or complex, there will usually be an increased expectation of PM involvement. However, even in such cases, the PM can still stay in a more supportive role, for example by expressing his full confidence in the relevant minister(s) and 'following their lead' (Van den Berg, 1990, p. 115). A relationship like this can often be seen between the PM and the Minister of Finance. The latter has a larger task than other ministers in the Netherlands. Aside from heading the Finance Ministry, this minister is also responsible for the budgetary policy more broadly. As such, he/she has to take into

account the sustainability of the state budget, warding off pressure from other ministers to increase spending on 'their' policy area. The (implicit or explicit) backing of the PM, as chairman of the Council of Ministers, is often crucial for the success of Ministers of Finance in defending the budget against 'spending ministers' (Toirkens, 1990, pp. 134-139). This shows that the PM can also execute his coordinating function by clearly backing certain ministers.

However, PMs can also be more interventionist than this. Although they cannot force ministers into taking a specific course of action, other ministers are formally required to consult the PM on matters related to 'general government policy' (Rehwinkel, 1991, p. 116). Based on this requirement, some PMs have frequently organised informal meetings with other ministers as soon as a (potential) problem emerged, in order to share their views on them (Andeweg et al., 2020, pp. 134-135). An example of a PM with this kind of style would be PM Lubbers (CDA, 1982-1994), who was known to frequently hold 'bilateral' conversations with ministers, asking about the progress in their activities and 'thinking along' in the policymaking process from an early stage (Rehwinkel, 1991, pp. 118-120). Another means for the PM to get involved with the policymaking of another minister is by putting an issue on the agenda of the Council of Ministers, increasing the influence of the PM as chairman of this Council (Van den Berg, 1990, p. 115).

A further-reaching manner in which the PM can be involved in a certain policy area is when he takes initiative himself, or is asked to take the lead. This means that the issue has become *Chefsache*, an issue that is so important that it has to be dealt with by the highest possible leader. In Dutch, the term *Chefsache* is used exclusively in a political context, referring to a policy issue where the boundaries between different ministerial remits are so blurred – or that is considered so important – that other ministers can no longer deal with it, and the PM has to take responsibility himself (Korsten, 2021, p. 93). This is a rather strong form of PM involvement for the Dutch context because, as mentioned, other ministers have a strong position in their own ministries, and will generally want to defend their 'turf' against the PM if possible.

Representing

When it comes to the representative role of the PM in Dutch EU policy, a study by Swinkels et al. (2017) provides an interesting starting point when it comes to the actions a PM might take. They identify two broad styles of leadership important to a PM in the Dutch context. Firstly, they must take into account the *consensual* nature of Dutch politics. This means they have to involve all stakeholders and resolve conflicts, also in their communication. In terms of communication, this would lead to PMs using different techniques to downplay certain policy issues and making them less political, allowing the PM to keep different parties in government and other groups content (Swinkels et al., 2017, p. 166). This consensual style of communication could for example involve making an issue more technical (that is, less politically controversial), and emphasizing that different interests have to be 'kept together' in the making of Dutch EU policy.

On the other hand, Swinkels et al. (2017, p. 167) argue that, given the increased media attention to the PM, PMs are expected to be more outspoken, take firmer stances and show decisiveness. They call this a *confrontational* leadership style. In terms of communication, they argue that this can be seen most clearly in the PM pitching a certain vision, which might be opposed to the vision of a political opponent (Swinkels et al., 2017, p. 170). In terms of EU policy, this would imply a very outspoken vision on how the PM sees the future of EU integration and the role of the Netherlands within it. Naturally, a PM can combine a more consensual style of communication and a more confrontational one, but nevertheless, this distinction provides a good starting point for *how* different PMs can execute their role as 'face' of Dutch EU policy in different ways.

As such, we can see that there is a range of different ways in which a PM can execute both of his major roles in Dutch EU policy. This reflects one of the main expectations of Core Executive theory, that the PM's influence in the Core Executive is not necessarily given, but depends on individual PMs' beliefs and actions. As such, we can expect different PMs to take different kinds of action to execute their coordinating and representing roles, even in similar circumstances. Therefore, the final hypothesis of this thesis is as follows:

H3. *There is a significant difference in the way in which PMs Balkenende and Rutte executed their dual role as coordinator and 'face' of Dutch EU policy in the cases under examination.*

Conclusion and hypotheses

This thesis, builds on existing literature on the Dutch PM by 'zooming in' on a specific policy area: EU policy. Based on the research on the strengthening of the European Council, which argues that it has strengthened PMs in countries with a traditionally decentralised Core Executive (like the Netherlands), this thesis expects that PMs Balkenende and Rutte were both strongly involved in the making of Dutch EU policy. This leads to our first hypothesis, **H1**: *Both Balkenende and Rutte were involved in the formulation of the Dutch position on EU matters within the Core Executive, not only when it comes to the broad strategic direction of European integration, but also in relation to more specific matters.*

Secondly, literature on the development of the function of Dutch PM reveals two important roles of PMs in Dutch EU policy. These are the role of the PM as a coordinator of policy within the Core Executive, and his role as the 'face' of the government's EU policy in the media in particular. These are two roles any Dutch PM can be expected to play according to this literature, leading to our second hypothesis on Balkenende and Rutte, **H2**: *Both Balkenende and Rutte have had a dual role in Dutch EU policy-making.*

> ***H2.A***. *Both PMs coordinated EU policy, bringing together the different viewpoints on a certain issue and resolving conflicts.*
>
> ***H2.B***. *Both PMs acted as 'representatives' of Dutch EU policy towards the population, elaborating on the government's stance on EU affairs and explaining these choices.*

Lastly, and most importantly, the literature also shows that there are different kinds of actions a Dutch PM can take to execute his roles in Dutch EU policy. This brings us to the main research question of this thesis, namely *how* both PMs have carried out their roles in EU policy. The hypothesis this thesis uses here is the following, **H3**:*There is a*

significant difference in the way in which PMs Balkenende and Rutte executed their dual role as coordinator and 'face' of Dutch EU policy in the cases under examination.

Research Design/Data Collection

Multiple Case Study: Design and Case Selection

In answering the question how the two most recent Dutch PMs – Jan Peter Balkenende and Mark Rutte – have carried out the different roles of the PM in Dutch EU policy, this thesis makes use of multiple case studies. Case studies are the most widely used qualitative research method in Public Administration scholarship, usually answering questions of 'how' and 'why' on certain events and individuals (Mele et al., 2020, p. 814). In Core Executive studies, given their focus on the beliefs and actions of individual players in government in certain situations, case studies are especially prevalent (Bevir et al., 2003, p. 197; Elgie, 2011, p. 74; Rhodes, 1991, pp. 551-552). Considering this study focuses on *how* two Dutch PMs have fulfilled the dual role of coordinator and representative of Dutch EU policy, this study also requires a detailed analysis of the way the PMs played these roles in specific cases.

Naturally, this study requires multiple case studies in order to compare the performances of Balkenende and Rutte in situations related to EU policy. According to Yin (2018, p. 91) and Rhodes (1991, pp. 551-552), multiple case studies tend to lead to more robust and generalizable claims about the phenomenon under study. Furthermore, this thesis takes two case studies per PM. Considering the influence of a PM '*waxes and wanes during their tenures*' (Van Dorp & Rhodes, 2022, p. 203), this leads to a more general picture of how both PMs played their roles in EU policy than just one case per PM. This leads to a grand total of four case studies, which together allow this thesis to paint a picture of both PMs' roles in Dutch EU policy, as well as compare them.

In comparing PMs Balkenende and Rutte, it is important that the cases selected share as many features as possible. As such, this research follows a Most Similar case study design as closely as possible (Toshkov, 2016, p. 263), with the (obvious) caveat that it is unrealistic to find cases that differ only in who the person of the PM is. Any Core Executive consists of a wide range of actors, and faces a wide range of internal and external contextual variables in making decisions (Rhodes, 2007, p. 1255). Therefore, one cannot expect to find totally similar cases for two PMs who came from different

parties, led government in different times, and in different coalitions. However, the cases have been selected for their resemblance on a number of key aspects:

- Policy area the case is related to within EU policy (e.g. financial policy).
- Urgency of the policy problem (is it a crisis, or something more in the background).
- Source of the policy problem (e.g. a Dutch domestic or international problem).

A search of the major policy events that occurred during the tenures of Balkenende and Rutte, as well as discussion with the supervisor of this thesis, led to a narrow range of similar problems faced by both PMs. In the end, the following two sets of two cases were selected:

Financial Crises

1. The global financial crisis of 2007-2008, which saw its most urgent phase in the EU in October 2008 (Ministerie van Financiën, 2018), and occurred in the late stages of Balkenende's tenure as PM.
2. The Eurozone crisis, which unfolded for a large part between 2010 and 2013, or the first few years of Rutte's PM-ship, and saw large-scale EU action to counter sovereign debt crises in countries like Greece (Ray, N.D.).

These two cases are comparable in that they represent major international financial crises that also triggered strong EU responses.

EU-related referenda

3. The 2005 referendum on the European Constitution, in which a sizeable majority of Dutch voters rejected the European Constitution negotiated in prior years. This referendum took place in the third year of Balkenende's tenure (Lubbers, 2008, p. 62).
4. The 2016 referendum on the EU's Association Agreement with Ukraine. Here, a sizeable majority of voters rejected this Association Agreement, which the EU had negotiated with Ukraine over the prior years (The Guardian, 2016). This took place in the sixth year of Rutte's tenure as PM.

These two cases represent instances when EU policy was called into question by opposition within the Netherlands, forcing the government (including the PM) to respond.

One important point has to be made about internal consistency within the case studies. It can be assumed that a PM will act differently in different stages of a crisis, especially crises lasting multiple years. One important contextual variable that influences PM action is the composition of the governing coalition, both in terms of parties and in terms of personalities. As mentioned, coalitions in the Netherlands consist of multiple parties, and thus different coalitions under the same PM can have different ideological underpinnings, depending on the coalition partner(s). In order to prevent divergent findings on Prime Ministerial behaviour within case studies due to changes in government, each case covers only those aspects of a policy problem that occurred during the tenure of a single governing coalition. This is primarily relevant in the case of the Euro Crisis: although the crisis itself would go on for several years longer, this case study focuses on the Crisis as it occurred during the tenure of the Rutte-I coalition (2010-2012).

Naturally, this research design has its limitations. While effort had to be made to find cases from Balkenende and Rutte's tenures which are as similar as possible, this research design cannot isolate the factor of their PM leadership styles. For example, all cases are characterized by different compositions of government – both in terms of individuals and in terms of parties – and there is a significant time difference between the cases (in particular when it comes to both EU-related referenda). Furthermore, by including just two individual EU policy issues per PM, the research is inevitably restricted to 'snapshots' of Prime Ministerial roles. Nevertheless, due to the similarities within the sets of cases, these cases collectively do allow for some comparison between the roles that PMs Balkenende and Rutte played in different aspects of EU policy. As such, this multiple case study design allows us to answer this thesis' main question of how Balkenende and Rutte played their different roles in Dutch EU policy.

Operationalization of the 'roles of the PM'

The literature on the Dutch PM has identified a dual role when it comes to EU policy. One of these roles relates to coordination within government, while the other relates to visibility towards the outside world. These two 'roles' are central to the argument of this thesis, meaning they require additional operationalisation on top of their definitions from the literature.

In terms of coordination, the argument the PM will have to coordinate between more ministers and ministries domestically in formulating EU policy due to his position in the European Council (Eppink, 2005, p. 46; Verbeek & Van der Vleuten, 2008, p. 43). The Dutch PM's formal competences in terms of EU policy remain highly limited (Van Dorp & Rhodes, 2022), begging the question how we can establish when and how the PM has coordinated Dutch EU policy. The discussion in the section 'Concrete PM actions in the dual PM role' (literature review) has revealed a spectrum of actions a Dutch PM could take in coordination. Generally speaking, the two ends of this spectrum are coordinating by leaving other ministers to make policies within their remit and simply settling disputes between them, and taking the lead in the response to a certain policy problem, making it *Chefsache*. Naturally, there are many different options for a PM to take action, but this spectrum gives us an idea of the different extents to which a Dutch PM can be involved in the process of answering to a given policy problem.

In terms of public appearance, the role of the PM in EU policy is primarily to act as the 'representative' of Dutch EU policy as a whole, both towards Parliament and also in the media . As we have seen in the literature, the argument goes that the PM's position in the European Council makes him the 'face' of the country during EU summits, which also makes him a more visible figure on EU policy at home (King, 1994, pp. 161-162). While it is an interesting question how much the PM has been visible in Parliament and in the media, compared to other ministers, the focus of this thesis is on the question *how* both PMs use their visibility on EU affairs. Here, this thesis uses the distinction by Swinkels et al. (2017, p. 169). On the one hand, they claim media performances of Dutch PMs can be 'confrontational', that is, making ideologically-driven claims, or providing long-term visions on EU policy. On the other hand, they can be more 'consensual', that is, focused on finding common ground and finding pragmatic

solutions to problems at hand. While the communication style of any PM is likely to consist of a combination of these two, discussing how the styles of PMs Balkenende and Rutte differed in terms of these two categories does aid us in drawing a comparison between the two PMs.

Data Collection

Within Core Executive studies, the data collection method is usually one of 'bricolage', or using different sources of data to triangulate the findings from different (types of) sources (Elgie, 2011, p. 74; Rhodes, 2007, p. 1256). One way of doing this is through document research, using documents from a variety of sources. An example of this is an article by Boswell et al. (2021, p. 1263), which used contemporary media commentaries and government documents to study decision-making on the COVID-1i pandemic within the Core Executive in several countries. This thesis follows a similar methodology to elucidate the roles the PMs played in the different cases.

Each of the case studies in this thesis makes use of two broad types of documents in its research. Firstly, this includes what we refer to here as 'Parliamentary Documents'. This refers both elaboration of government policy towards Parliament using documents, such as letters or reports, as well as to statements the PM and other ministers have made in Parliament. These have been retrieved from the government website 'Officiële Bekendmakingen' (Overheid.nl, N.D.), where all Parliamentary documents are archived. Secondly, this thesis uses media analyses in the form of newspaper articles as a data source.[5] The newspapers from which the data is drawn are *NRC* (both newspapers branded under this name, *NRC Handelsblad* and *NRC.Next*), *De Volkskrant*, and *Trouw*. What these newspapers have in common is that they have nationwide readership, and are known as 'quality newspapers', meaning that they have a higher share of (political) information compared to entertainment, as well as a generally higher-educated readership than other national newspapers (Bakker & Scholten, 2005, p. 7). As this thesis's interest lies with political coverage of newspapers, only these three are included – despite their readership not being representative of the Dutch population. These

[5] The parliamentary documents and newspaper articles that have been used in the case studies are listed in Appendix 1 – sorted by source type and chronologically.

newspaper articles have been drawn from the academic LexisNexis database.[6] Together, this combination of data sets allows this thesis to piece together a view on both PMs' roles in Dutch EU policy.

When it comes to the role of Prime Minister Balkenende during the 2008 Financial Crisis, furthermore, an important source is the Parliamentary Inquiry into the events (also known as the inquiry of the 'De Wit-Committee'). A Parliamentary Inquiry is the most far-reaching means for the Dutch Parliament to gather information. During an Inquiry, people involved in decision-making on a certain (controversial) subject can be forced to show up and be heard under oath by Members of Parliament ('Commissie-De Wit', 2012). Naturally, the transcripts of hearings from this Parliamentary Inquiry directly show the insights of key actors in this case, making them a valuable source of data for this thesis.

Method of Analysis

As a method to analyse the data from the case studies, this thesis makes use of coding. Coding is one of the most frequently used methods to analyse qualitative data, such as documents and interview data (Saldaña, 2016, p. 3). It is a flexible means of uncovering patterns from the data, synthesizing pieces of evidence into broader categories, which can then give insights on a more theoretical level (Saldaña, 2016, p. 10). This method of analysis allows the researcher to be open to specific patterns and categories of behaviour which emerge from the data in the case studies. After all, this study has little to no assumptions about how exactly Balkenende and Rutte fulfilled the Dutch PM's roles in EU affairs, meaning that patterns in how they take up these roles will largely emerge from the data itself. Coding as a method of analysis allows for this kind of categorization based on the data itself, rather than previously established theoretical assumptions.

The coding of the data for the case studies takes places in two different cycles. Following the recommendations by Saldaña (2016, pp. 68-69), the first stage of coding already takes place during the selection of the different sources of data which are used

[6] For the precise search terms used in each case study, see Appendix 4.

in the eventual case studies. In order to do this, this thesis makes use of ‘process coding’, which emphasizes the actions that the PM takes in a certain situation (Saldaña, 2016, p. 111). Later on, upon closer examination of the data, the specific actions identified in the first phase are grouped together in categories in what is known as ‘pattern coding’ (Saldaña, 2016, p. 236). All coding is done manually, by taking relevant excerpts from the total dataset and assigning codes to these. These patterns can then be compared with one another across the case studies under examination in this thesis.

Case Study 1: The 2005 Referendum on the European Constitutional Treaty

The following chapters examine in detail how PMs Balkenende and Rutte have executed their roles as coordinators and representatives of Dutch EU policy in the four cases selected for this thesis. They do this by presenting the patterns of behaviour both PMs showed with regard to these roles. As such, the case studies are detailed examinations of how the PMs responded in the particular cases. The discussion on how these different Prime Ministerial actions compare between cases (and, of course, between the two PMs) takes place in the 'Analysis' chapter. Furthermore, more detailed information on the (international and Dutch) political and societal context in which the policy problems of each case study arose can be found in Appendix 2.

The first case covered is also the first one in chronological terms: the 2005 referendum in which the Dutch population rejected the proposed European Constitutional Treaty. This chapter discusses PM Balkenende's actions related to this referendum, both in the campaign before the actual referendum date, as well as in the aftermath of the referendum result.

The Referendum Campaign

This section covers the campaign period of the referendum between January 25, 2005 (when the referendum was formally announced), and the day of the referendum, June 1. It distinguishes two noteworthy patterns that tell us about the role of Balkenende and his government in this campaign. The first of these is a reluctance on the part of the cabinet to actively campaign for a 'yes' vote. The second aspect is that the campaign showed open disagreements within government on the aims and methods of the government campaign.

Reluctance to campaign

In the first few months after the announcement of the referendum, the topic seemed to be mostly ignored by members of government. In April, for example, Minister of Foreign Affairs Bot (CDA) openly questioned the need to start a campaign more than

'*three or four weeks*' before the referendum (NRC, April 18, 2005). Minister Zalm (Finance, VVD) said he would not participate in campaigns for the Constitution, as he '*does not like distributing flyers*' (NRC, June 4, 2005). In other words, the appetite for campaigning seemed to be quite small among government ministers.

This reluctance to campaign could also be seen with PM Balkenende. In an open letter (NRC, April 28, 2005), he primarily tried to mobilize other proponents than government itself: '*Trade union leaders are in favour. Employers are in favour. The CDA, PvdA, VVD, GroenLinks and D66 are in favour. […] I call on all proponents to explain to their constituency why this constitution is a good constitution*'. All in all, Balkenende himself did not defend the Constitution he signed in October 2004 on many occasions during the campaign (Volkskrant, June 2, 2005).

Perhaps the most striking sign that campaigning for the referendum was not a priority for the government is the fact that the only member of government to actively campaign for a 'yes'-vote was State Secretary for EU Affairs Nicolaï (VVD) (Volkskrant, June 20, 2006). Nicolaï travelled across the country, discussing the Constitution at small townhall meetings (NRC, May 30, 2005). According to De Volkskrant (June 2, 2005), Balkenende largely leaving the campaign to Nicolaï demonstrated that that the referendum was not a priority for him.

Another potential reason, aside from lack of priority, for this limited government campaign, was anxiety about how a strong government campaign for a 'yes' vote would be perceived by the opposition. As State Secretary Nicolaï stated during a debate in Parliament, the government wanted to prevent any impression of 'propaganda' in the campaign (Handelingen, February 24, 2005). Later analysis also argued that this was also why the government wanted to leave the campaign largely to political parties and societal organizations (NRC, June 4, 2005).

In short, through lack of priority given to the referendum or for fear of being seen as spreading 'propaganda' – or a combination of both –, government ministers did not seize a very active role in the campaign for the referendum.

Disagreements during the campaign

This analysis now moves on to the coordination of the government campaign. It finds that, throughout the campaign, there were several open disagreements on how the government's campaign should be run, both among government ministers and on the civil servant level.

To start with disagreements on the ministerial level. Firstly, on several occasions, ministers openly disagreed on the tone to be used in the campaign. For instance, after Justice Minister Donner (CDA) used the threat of war in Europe as an argument for the Constitution, Foreign Minister Bot (CDA) refuted him in a newspaper interview by stating there would be no war in case of a 'no' vote, and his own style of campaigning would be 'more positive' (NRC, April 20, 2005). Nonetheless, even after ministers agreed that they would conduct a 'positive' campaign in favour of the Constitution (NRC, May 19, 2005), not all ministers heeded this call. For example, Minister of Economic Affairs Brinkhorst (D66) argued that '*We are now organizing a referendum on a topic the population knows nothing about*' (NRC, May 19, 2005). This led to friction, in particular with State Secretary Nicolaï, who regularly spoke to the media of his enthusiasm about the debate the referendum had sparked on EU affairs (NRC, May 19, 2005; Volkskrant, June 20, 2006). In other words, there were clear and open disagreements within the Cabinet on how the referendum campaign was to be conducted.

Disagreements on the campaign could also be seen on the level of civil servants. The responsibility for the government campaign was divided between the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These two ministries had disagreements on when and how to inform citizens on the Constitution. For example, the Ministry of the Interior was supposed to make a summary of the Constitution, which would then be distributed by citizens through the municipalities. However, Foreign Affairs believed this summary would be finished too late. Therefore, Foreign Affairs started printing its own summary, announcing that this booklet would be distributed to citizens by their municipalities. As it turned out, Foreign Affairs had left municipalities out of the loop on this booklet (NRC, June 4, 2005; 'Evaluation of the Organization', September 26, 2005, p. 22). Although anecdotal, this story shows that coordination was also lacking

between the two ministries responsible for executing the government campaign on an administrative level.

As such, the government campaign for the referendum featured open disagreements in government on both political and civil servant level. Exactly what action Balkenende took to resolve these differences cannot be established based on the Parliamentary Documents and newspaper articles analysed for this thesis, but the open disagreements led to some media criticism of Balkenende for not taking the lead sufficiently (NRC, May 19, 2005; Volkskrant, June 2, 2005).

In short, what this section shows is that is that the Balkenende-II government, including Balkenende himself, did not take a leading role in the campaign, in trying to convince voters to accept the European Constitution. Rather, the campaign from the government's side featured open disagreements between ministers, and was largely carried out by State Secretary Nicolaï, rather than more senior ministers like Balkenende himself.

EU Policy after the Referendum

On June 1, the European Constitution was rejected by the Dutch public with a large margin of 61,5% of the vote (Kiesraad, N.D.). This section looks at the responses to this clear referendum result from the Balkenende-II government, and Balkenende himself. After the referendum, the Balkenende-II government would continue for another year, until D66 resigned from the coalition on May 30, 2006. In this year-long period, there are two noteworthy aspects of the government's response to the referendum, which will be discussed here. Firstly, Balkenende and his government were very quick to identify new priorities in EU policy, based on their analysis of why the 'no' vote occurred. Secondly, Balkenende emphasized a need for 'reflection' on Dutch EU policy, involving both government and citizens.

(New) policy priorities

The day after the referendum, a debate on its results took place in Parliament. During his statement, Balkenende started off by clearly making the point that the result was to

be respected: '*If there is such a clear verdict from the Dutch population, then it is proper for the government to say that this outcome is respected, and that this path should not be further pursued*' (Handelingen, June 2, 2005, p. 86-5156). In other words, he clearly spoke out against the ratification of the European Constitution.

Furthermore, in the same statement, Balkenende also started to analyse why the Dutch public had voted against the Constitution. He identified three main reasons: '*There is resistance against the loss of sovereignty. Furthermore, there is the feeling that European integration is going too fast, without influence of citizens. […] Aside from this, there is clearly discontent with the way Europe deals with its finances, and with the disproportionate contribution the Netherlands pays*' (Handelingen, June 2, 2005, p. 86-5158).

This section discusses the actions Balkenende and his government took on those priorities in the following year, focusing on the issue of financial contributions. At the time of the referendum, the Netherlands was the largest net contributor to the EU budget, paying 3 billion euros more than it received on an annual basis. This had been an issue of criticism on Dutch EU policy for some years, but the Balkenende government clearly saw the referendum as an opportunity to get it on the agenda (NRC, June 3, 2005). Almost immediately after the referendum results came in, Balkenende and Finance Minister Zalm (VVD) drew attention to this issue, with the latter simply drawing the conclusion that '*we pay too much*' (NRC, June 2, 2005). Coincidentally, negotiations for the multiannual budget of the EU between 2007 and 2013 were on the agenda at the next European Council summit (in mid-June). Balkenende and Zalm intended to use the referendum results as an argument to secure a rebate for the Netherlands (NRC, June 18, 2005; Handelingen, June 21, 2005, p. 93-5595). In the end, it took until the European Council summit of 15-16 December 2005 to get to an agreement. This agreement included a special rebate for the Netherlands amounting to around 1 billion euros per year. Balkenende claimed that this successful negotiation result was primarily the result of bilateral relations with UK PM Tony Blair (Handelingen, December 20, 2005, pp. 36-2510 – 26-2512). What this shows is that Balkenende took personal action on this particular issue, putting a special rebate for the Netherlands on the agenda of the European Council, and using his access to his counterparts (in this case PM Blair) to secure it.

Balkenende's lobbying to get the 1 billion euro rebate in late 2015 was considered at the time as part of a broader pattern, in which the government became increasingly vocal about Dutch interests in Brussels (e.g. NRC, June 1, 2006). This can also be seen in that the official position of Balkenende, and the Dutch government, towards EU colleagues was that the Constitution was 'dead'. This position left the Dutch alone in the EU, as not even the French government went so far as to claim the Constitution was 'dead' in its entirety (NRC, February 1, 2006; Trouw, May 30, 2006). Furthermore, by the Spring of 2006, it became notable that other Dutch ministers started saying 'no' more often in negotiations with other EU countries. For example, in March 2006, Foreign Minister Bot (CDA) voiced strong opposition to EU membership perspective for Balkan countries (Trouw, March 29, 2006). In short, in the period after the 2005 referendum, Dutch government representatives (including Balkenende) were seen as 'putting their foot down' more regularly in EU affairs (e.g. Handelingen, June 2, 2005, p. 86-5158; NRC, June 1, 2006).

As such, after the referendum, Balkenende and the government very quickly identified several priorities in EU policy, based on the referendum result, which were clearly communicated to both Parliament and the general population. Balkenende himself attained concrete results particularly on the subject of the EU budget. Generally speaking, the Dutch government were considered to sing a more sceptical tune in negotiations with EU colleagues in the year following the referendum.

'Reflection' on Dutch EU policy

Aside from identifying policy areas in Dutch EU policy that would see changes after the referendum, Balkenende and the rest of the government also emphasized that 'reflection' was needed on Dutch EU policy. This period of reflection on EU policy led to several initiatives. However, it remained unclear within the timeframe of the case study what would be done with these initiatives.

During the debate after the referendum, Balkenende also discussed the communication on EU policy. He stressed the need to engage in a discussion with citizens on the future perspective of the Dutch position in the EU. Primary objective of this discussion, according to Balkenende, would be to find out the '*exact expectations, wishes, and concerns of the Dutch people about Europe*' (Handelingen, October 12, 2005, p. 11-

654). In other words, the idea was for the government to stimulate a debate among citizens, in order to find out what they thought about the directions Dutch EU policy should move to after the referendum.

However, Balkenende himself was not very involved with the 'national debate' after this point. He left this mostly to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The way in which the government wanted to involve citizens in its EU policy changed quite a bit during the following year. Firstly, after criticism from Parliament that a national 'debate' organized by the government would not be impartial, Nicolaï cancelled the national debate ('Brief van de Staatssecretaris van Buitenlandse Zaken', October 2, 2005). In the Spring of 2006, Foreign Minister Bot announced that it would be replaced with an online survey of people's views on the direction the EU should take (NRC, March 9, 2006). This survey resulted in a report detailing the opinions of respondents on various EU-related topics ('Eindrapport nederlandineuropa.nl', May 19, 2006), which was followed by a joint announcement from Minister Bot and State Secretary Nicolaï that the 'reflection period' would be extended indefinitely ('Brief van de Minister en Staatssecretaris van Buitenlandse Zaken', May 19, 2006). In other words, the conclusions drawn by the government from this 'debate' were left unclear.

One interesting specific point in light of the reflection on Dutch EU policy after the referendum was made by leader of the Parliamentary VVD fraction Jozias van Aartsen. He argued that, considering the increased politicization of EU affairs because of the referendum, the PM should gain more formal power in EU policy, for example by moving the formal coordinating power in EU policy from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the PM's Ministry of General Affairs. Balkenende, however, rejected this proposition outright, stating that: '*It is about timeliness and effectiveness of political coordination. That can only be achieved if Foreign Affairs and General Affairs work closely together and are focused on optimizing the system. This is also the case in the current system*' (Handelingen, November 8, 2005, p. 18-1108). In doing so, Balkenende supported the prerogatives of the Foreign Ministry in EU affairs, refusing a suggestion for EU policy to become more of a 'Chefsache' centred around the PM's ministry.

In short, Balkenende announced a period of reflection on the general direction of Dutch EU policy after the referendum. However, this 'National Europe Discussion', which was later turned into more of a survey, was mostly driven by the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs. Furthermore, Balkenende did not consider that his own role in EU affairs had to be changed as a result of the referendum.

Conclusion

When it comes to the campaign period, the most striking finding was that neither Balkenende, nor the rest of the Cabinet, were very active in setting up a campaign for the people to vote in favour of the Constitution. The only exception to this was State Secretary for European Affairs Nicolaï. As such, it cannot be said that Balkenende publicly showed his support for the Constitution in a very active way. Furthermore, the government campaign was executed quite chaotically, featuring open disagreements between both ministers and ministries on how the campaign was to be pursued.

Soon after the referendum, Balkenende was quick to identify the causes of the large-scale rejection of the Constitution in the referendum, claiming that Dutch voters had judged the EU as being too powerful and too expensive for the Netherlands. Balkenende himself achieved the most concrete results on the latter, negotiating a special rebate in the European Council. Furthermore, during a 'reflection period' on Dutch EU policy, Balkenende refused to make EU policy more of a 'Chefsache' centred around the PM's ministry, rather arguing that EU Policy should be dealt with jointly by the Foreign Minister and the PM.

Case study 2: The 2016 Referendum on the Association Agreement with Ukraine

This chapter follows the actions of PM Rutte and his second cabinet around the 2016 referendum on the EU's Association Agreement with Ukraine. Similarly to the previous case study, this chapter discusses both the campaign before the referendum itself, and its aftermath.

The Campaign

This section concerns the actions and statements of Rutte and his government between mid-October 2015 (when the referendum was announced), and the date the referendum was held on April 6, 2016. The image revealed by the data is that Rutte's government refrained from too active involvement in the campaign for the referendum. Rather, it seems as if Rutte in particular to focus on the less political and more technical aspects of the Agreement, such as trade.

Limited campaign

Soon after the announcement of the referendum, the government made it clear that there would be no active 'yes' campaign from their side. As Foreign Minister Koenders (PvdA) announced: "*There will be campaigns from society and from different areas. There are funds for that as well. The cabinet will not claim that money. We will not be touring around the country in busses*" (Handelingen, November 19, 2015, p. 27-8-50). Rutte confirmed this, stating "*I will not be handing out flyers on terraces, that does not accomplish anything*" (Volkskrant, November 26, 2015).

Another sign of the reluctance from Rutte and other ministers to campaign is the fact that the campaign from the government's side was largely left to a taskforce of civil servants in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This taskforce was led by Hans Docter, who at the same time served as Dutch ambassador to Ghana. Its main task was to maintain

contact with political parties, as well as societal organizations which advocated for a 'yes' vote (Volkskrant, January 9, 2016). As such, it relied mostly on other organizations to actually pursue the 'yes' campaign. This was seen most clearly in February, when a list of celebrities who could be asked to speak out in a 'yes' campaign was leaked to the press (Trouw, February 19, 2016). By March, Docter himself noted that the government relied on others to campaign in favour of the Agreement, saying: '*hopefully other proponents will enter the debate with more passion*' (Volkskrant, March 18, 2016).

The government campaign did end up being a very limited one. Rutte, for instance, only discussed the Association Agreement during a limited amount of press moments (Volkskrant, April 7, 2016). This also seems to have been informed at least to an extent by his views on the Advisory Referendum Law in general, of which he made no secret during the campaign by admitting: '*I do not like referendums*' (NRC, January 21, 2016).

As such, Rutte and other ministers outright refused to start a government campaign before the referendum in 2016, with Rutte especially not making a secret of his dislike of (campaigning for) referendums in general. The campaign from the government's side was mostly limited to a taskforce of civil servants attempting to coordinate the efforts of societal organizations and political parties in favour of the Association Agreement.

Downplaying the Referendum

Insofar as Rutte and other ministers came out in favour of the Association Agreement, they seem to have attempted to downplay both the significance of the Agreement and of the referendum. That is, they seemed to attempt to make the treaty smaller and less significant, while also questioning whether a Dutch 'no' could really stop its implementation.

Firstly, when discussing the Association Agreement, Rutte focused on just a few arguments in favour of the treaty. Firstly, he claimed it was primarily a free trade agreement and it would lead to more exports from the Netherlands to Ukraine (Trouw, February 5, 2016), as well as '*more jobs here*' (Volkskrant, January 11, 2016). Secondly, he claimed political cooperation with the EU could decrease corruption in Ukraine (Trouw, February 5, 2016). And lastly, he denied that the Agreement was a

stepping stone to EU membership for Ukraine, as opponents argued. For example, he pointed out that the EU also has Association Agreements with Central American and Middle Eastern countries, also not candidates for EU membership (NRC, January 21, 2016). As such, his statements did not give a view of how the Dutch government sees more (geo-)political aspects of the treaty, such as its potential consequences for relations between the EU and both Russia and Ukraine.

Secondly, ministers questioned whether a Dutch rejection could even stop the Association Agreement from being implemented. As the treaty had already been signed by the Dutch government, certain parts of the agreement were already provisionally applied at the time of the referendum, Minister for International Trade Lilianne Ploumen (PvdA) announced (Trouw, February 5, 2016). Furthermore, as both Koenders and Rutte admitted, non-ratification by the Netherlands would lead to a situation that was 'uncharted territory', as the EU has full competence to implement the trade parts of the agreement with or without Dutch ratification (NRC, April 2, 2016). As such, by questioning whether a Dutch rejection could even stop (parts of) the agreement from being implemented, Rutte and other ministers also seemed to try and make the referendum seen less significant.

These attempts to make the referendum seem to be about rather apolitical, more technical matters (such as trade) also tie into more general views on the EU expressed by Rutte at that time. In the first half of 2016, the Netherlands held the rotating chairmanship of the EU, meaning Rutte also had a larger profile in EU affairs than usual. He claimed that he would fulfil this position with a '*pragmatic approach: solving problems, making decisions, pick up the pace. Let other people philosophize on whether it is useful we exist*' (Volkskrant, November 26, 2015). He would primarily act as an 'honest broker' in discussions on issues like migration and the (then potential) exit of the UK from the EU (NRC, January 2, 2016; Volkskrant, March 16, 2016). As such, much like with the Association Agreement with Ukraine, Rutte generally shied away from providing visions on broader questions of EU integration, such as the extent to which it should be broadened and deepened.

Thus, both Rutte and other ministers seemed to downplay the significance of the Association Agreement, as well as the referendum on it, in several ways. This downplaying of the Association Agreement with Ukraine can also be seen as part of

Rutte's reluctance to reflect on broader questions of EU integration more broadly. In other words, during the campaign period, Rutte's communication on the Agreement and EU affairs more broadly can be seen as more consensual in the framework by Swinkels et al. (2017), as it (explicitly) did not involve attempts to connect the Agreement to any broader visions of the EU.

After the Referendum

Similar to the 2005 referendum on the European Constitution, the referendum on the Ukraine Association Agreement resulted in a resounding 'no': in the end, 61,5% of voters spoke out against, with turnout (just) over the 30%-threshold. This put Rutte's government in a difficult position: between a domestic opposition that wanted the Agreement scrapped, and an EU of which all other members had already ratified the agreement (NRC, April 8, 2016). This section goes into how the government navigated this complicated situation, primarily noting the large extent to which this balancing was made 'Chefsache', i.e. dealt with mainly by Rutte himself.

Rutte's Balancing Act

Rutte made the first attempts at this balancing in a debate in Parliament on the outcome of the referendum. Here, he argued that simply not ratifying the Agreement would mean that the rest of the EU countries would simply go through with it without the Netherlands. Therefore, he pleaded with Members of Parliament that they not reject the treaty outright, but rather give Rutte and the government the opportunity to negotiate some solution in the EU which would address the grievances of the Agreement's Dutch opponents (Handelingen, April 13, 2016, pp. 76-7-27 – 76-7-29). Later on, he would identify several such grievances, including concerns that the Agreement would lead to Ukrainian EU membership, and would entail military cooperation between the EU to Ukraine ('Vragen van het lid …', June 14, 2016, p. 95-2-2). His stated purpose was to create a 'judicially binding agreement' on an EU level that would address these grievances (Handelingen, July 5, 2016, p. 104-33-40). However, he did not express confidence that he would find an agreement acceptable to both Brussels and The Hague.

On several occasions, he claimed that he considered failure more likely than success, which would mean the Dutch government would not ratify the Agreement after all (Handelingen, July 5, 2016, p. 104-33-29; Handelingen, September 14, 2016, p. 111-10-23). This difficulty in reaching an agreement was exacerbated by the fact that the EU was preoccupied with another referendum - in which the UK would vote to leave the EU – on June 23, lessening the appetite from EU leaders to discuss the results of the Dutch referendum (NRC, April 14, 2016; Trouw, June 30, 2016). As such, Rutte did not immediately reject the Agreement based on the referendum, but rather started looking for room to negotiate another agreement with the EU that would do justice to some points of criticism.

However, this balancing act proved increasingly difficult for Rutte as the year progressed. In September, the Second Chamber of Parliament passed a motion forcing the government to come with its definitive answer to the referendum result before November 1 ('Motie-Pechtold c.s.', September 22, 2016). Considering the Agreement had to pass through both Chambers of Parliament, and the Rutte-II government did not have a majority in the Senate, Rutte had to find support from the opposition in October. However, leaders of opposition parties refused to give him further room to negotiate, saying that Dutch ratification should simply be withdrawn (Volkskrant, October 22, 2016). It was at this point on that Rutte started using more geopolitical arguments in favour of the Agreement. In late October, he claimed that non-ratification of the agreement would destabilize the Eastern European region, and show the EU's weakness towards Russia. Using this argument, Rutte managed to gain the tacit support of D66 and the Senate fraction of the CDA, which went against the line of its party in the Second Chamber (Trouw, October 29, 2016; NRC, October 31, 2016). In a letter to Parliament on October 31, Rutte and Koenders gave themselves until the next European Council summit in December to find the 'judicially binding agreement' that would balance Dutch and broader European interests ('Brief van de Ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken …', October 31, 2016). In the meantime, Rutte would defend the idea that non-ratification of the Association Agreement threatened the security of the EU in the face of a militarist Russia in several parliamentary debates (Handelingen, November 8, 2016, p. 19-37-1; Handelingen, December 14, 2016, p. 35-8-1). During the European Council summit of December 15, 2016, Rutte and his EU colleagues approved a legally binding declaration attached to the Association Agreement, which

stipulated that it was not a stepping stone for Ukrainian EU membership, among other things (Trouw, December 17, 2016). In the end, the Association Agreement (with declaration) was approved by both Chambers of Parliament, with the Senate agreeing to the ratification on May 30, 2017 (Handelingen, May 30, 2017, p. 29-6-1). Rutte's balancing act between the EU and the opposition in the Dutch parliament had succeeded.

Taking the lead

What is noteworthy about Rutte's approach is that – at least in public – the response to the referendum result was clearly made 'Chefsache'. Both in terms of expressing the government's position, as well as in terms of bargaining at home (and, obviously, in the European Council), Rutte seemed to be in charge of Dutch EU policy concerning this subject.

The first noteworthy point here is that no other ministers were present at all during the two debates in Parliament that dealt specifically with the aftermath of the Ukraine referendum (Handelingen, April 13, 2016; Handelingen, November 8, 2016). In other prominent debates, too, it was Rutte who defended the viewpoints of the cabinet on the referendum results (e.g. Handelingen, September 22, 2016, p. 3-3-24). The only instances where Koenders spoke to Parliament about the Agreement were in parliamentary subcommittees (Handelingen, May 18, 2016; Handelingen, June 9, 2016), and during the debate on the ratification of the agreement in February 2017. However, during the last debate, Koenders spoke only very briefly, reiterating some points on the geopolitical context of the Agreement that had already been made by Rutte (Handelingen, February 21, 2017, p. 55-39-20). As such, towards Parliament, Rutte clearly made the Association Agreement into a matter for the PM.

This image of Rutte clearly taking the lead is also confirmed by newspaper articles. Insofar as other ministers than Rutte are mentioned in articles, it is mostly Koenders, who is described as working alongside Rutte in convincing the domestic opposition (Volkskrant, October 29; NRC, October 31). In the process of bargaining with the domestic opposition, Rutte's leading role can also be seen. When Rutte was left empty-

handed after a meeting with party leaders from the Second Chamber of Parliament (Volkskrant, October 22, 2016), he approached members of the Senate, especially from the CDA, as these senators were considered to be more pro-European than their fellow party members in the Second Chamber. It was only after Rutte gained tacit support from these senators that he continued negotiations on the EU level (Trouw, November 1, 2016; Volkskrant, December 16, 2016). A final observation that points at Rutte taking a leading role in the process of (re)negotiating on the Association Agreement relates to the civil servant level. According to a reconstruction by De Volkskrant (December 29, 2016), Rutte's advisor ('Raadsadviseur') on EU affairs Michael Stibbe played an important role in negotiations with both EU institutions and other EU member states, for instance negotiating the exact phrasing of the judicially binding agreement that would be approved by the European Council in December. Although no other sources mention Stibbe's role, this does point to a significant involvement of Rutte's Ministry of General Affairs in this process on a civil servant level as well, despite the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is usually in charge of EU matters.

As such, both when it comes to negotiations and debates in the Dutch political context, as well as negotiations with other EU countries, Rutte clearly took charge of the political process in the aftermath of the referendum result, with Foreign Minister Koenders much more in the background. The Association Agreement with Ukraine was thus clearly made 'Chefsache' after the referendum.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the role PM Rutte played in the matter of the referendum on the Association Agreement of the EU with Ukraine can be seen in two phases: before and after the referendum itself.

In the campaign before the referendum, Rutte's approach was mostly characterized by an unwillingness to actively campaign for a vote in favour of the Agreement, and a downplaying of the significance of both the Agreement itself and the referendum on it. Similar to how he claimed to dislike broad visions on the EU, he also discussed the Agreement mostly as a trade agreement, rather than a broader political association between the EU and Ukraine.

However, after the referendum, Rutte attempted to strike a balance between the domestic opposition to the Agreement on one hand, and the (perceived) importance of the Agreement on the EU level on the other. Rather than rejecting the Agreement outright after the 'no' vote, Rutte attempted to negotiate an additional declaration that would alleviate some grievances of the Dutch opposition, but still allow for the ratification of the Agreement as a whole. In this balancing act, Rutte very clearly took the lead, dealing both with the negotiations on the EU level, and with the debates and negotiations with the domestic opposition, himself.

Case Study 3: The 2008 Economic Crisis

This case study covers the Dutch EU policy developed by the Balkenende-IV government in the years 2008 and 2009, particularly looking at the governance of the global financial crisis that rocked Europe in these years. Focusing on the roles PM Balkenende played during this case, this study focuses on three elements. Firstly, the division of labour between Balkenende, Finance Minister Bos, and other ministers is discussed. Secondly, Balkenende's role in countering the financial crisis is discussed. Lastly, this study focuses on a particular aspect of Balkenende's actions during this time: his contacts with other world leaders, both within and outside the EU.

The General Division of Labour

When it comes to the division of labour between different ministers at the time of the financial crisis when it comes to EU affairs, it can generally be said that the decision-making lay with Balkenende and Finance Minister Bos (PvdA), with Bos (and the Ministry of Finance) clearly playing a leading role. The leading role for the Finance Ministry is a logical one given that the governance of the Dutch financial system lies within the remit of this Ministry. Furthermore, the involvement of the PM is not entirely surprising given that the PM is generally expected to take up a visible role in crisis situations like this one (Van Dorp and Rhodes, 2022, pp. 200-203).

In its final report about the measures the Dutch government took to support its financial sector (such as the nationalization of the suffering ABN AMRO bank, at large cost), the Parliamentary Inquiry on the Financial Crisis led by MP De Wit concluded that '*all decisions concerning the crisis measures were taken by the Minister of Finance in close consultation with the Prime Minister*' (De Wit et al., 2012, p. 452). In the words of Balkenende: '*The Minister of Finance and I have worked together extraordinarily intensively. Naturally, he has the first responsibility, given that it was about the financial sector*' ('Verslagen Openbare Verhoren', 2012, p. 1539). Asked about the role that other ministers, besides Balkenende and himself, played during the crisis, Bos answered: '*A highly limited one*' ('Verslagen Openbare Verhoren', 2012, p. 1358). He later on elaborated that he and Balkenende had decided only to involve their fellow

ministers on a '*"need to know"-basis*', due to the delicacy of the matters at hand ('Verslagen …', 2012, p. 1360). In other words, decisions during the financial crisis were taken by Bos and Balkenende together, only involving other ministers if strictly necessary.

That the primary decision-making in the crisis lay with Minister Bos and his Finance Ministry was also noted in newspapers at the time. This is especially the case in the fall of 2008, when large-scale operations were set up to stabilize Dutch banks through capital investment by the government. Both in terms of domestic policies and towards the EU, Bos was portrayed as taking the lead, whereas Balkenende spoke about the crisis on a few public occasions (NRC, October 1, 2008; Trouw, October 6, 2008; NRC, October 22, 2008). However, during debates on the financial crisis during this time, both Balkenende and Bos informed Parliament on the situation, with the former going into general government policy, and the latter focusing on specific financial instruments used (Handelingen, September 30, 2008, p. 7-421; Handelingen, December 10, 2008, p. 35-3059). As such, Balkenende and Bos were the main ministers responsible for tackling this crisis, with other ministers involved to a very limited extent.

Balkenende made an interesting comment about his own perception of the PM's role during this crisis. He claimed that he did '*what can be desired from a Prime Minister, namely being present on those moments where that is necessary, negotiating where necessary, and maintaining international contacts*' ('Verslagen …', 2012, p. 1572). This statement suggests that he considered his role in this crisis quite limited: rather than coordinating the government's response to this crisis and taking the lead, it points more towards a PM who does not want to encroach on the remit of the Finance Minister, and tries to play more of a supportive role. However, the addition that he considered it part of his job to maintain contacts abroad is an interesting one in the context of Dutch EU policy during this time, which will therefore be discussed later in this chapter.

The following sections of this case study examine how Balkenende played his prominent but (according to his only statement) limited role in countering the financial crisis, with a more specific focus on the EU policy towards it.

The Crisis Phase: Late 2008

After the collapse of the Lehman Brothers bank on September 15, 2008, the trouble on the financial markets also reached the top of the agenda in the Netherlands. Within a month, crisis measures were set up in order to rescue Dutch banks from this turmoil (De Wit et al., 2012, p. 480). This section focuses on how the Dutch government set its priorities for the European level in this turbulent phase, and how Balkenende contributed to this.

At the beginning of this crisis, the Ministry of Finance considered European coordination to be of the utmost importance. However, it also noted that European institutions were not immediately ready to effectively respond (De Wit et al., 2012, p. 454). As such, when it turned out that the Belgian bank Fortis, which had taken over Dutch ABN AMRO the year before, was on the verge of bankruptcy, a solution was negotiated between the Netherlands and Belgium, in which the Dutch parts of Fortis were removed from the Belgian firm (De Wit et al., 2012, p. 158). What is notable in the case of Fortis is that the Dutch government primarily tried to secure this bank in domestic hands, through bilateral contacts with another EU country. Balkenende facilitated these negotiations as PM, by directly trying to come to an agreement with his Belgian counterpart Yves Leterme ('Verslagen …', 2012, p. 1526; ibid., p. 1569).

However, with the more acute problem of Fortis out of the way, the Dutch government soon set out to advocate a more co-ordinated EU solution to the financial crisis. The initiative for this was taken by the Ministry of Finance, or more specifically by Bernard ter Haar, the Director Financial Markets at the Ministry (De Wit et al., 2012, p. 454). On September 25, Ter Haar sent an outline of a plan to Bos, which stipulated that EU governments would set aside funds for recapitalization of banks (that is, to financially support banks in their country if necessary), totally amounting to 3% of the EU's GDP ('Verslagen …', 2012, p. 271). Furthermore, in early October, as European governments started raising the amount of savings per citizen that was guaranteed in case of the collapse of a bank, Ter Haar also advocated to Bos that this amount should be fixed across the EU ('Verslagen …', 2012, p. 382). Subsequently, the Ministry of Finance also lobbied for these proposals in the runup to the Ecofin – the meeting of EU Ministers of Finance – of October 7. This was done primarily by Bos himself ('Verslagen …', 2012, p. 1351), as well as by Maarten Verwey, the Director

International Financial Relations at the Ministry ('Verslagen …', 2012, p. 134; ibid., p. 387). In the end, the Ecofin meeting of October 7 adopted a 7-point plan, which also included both points advocated by the Dutch Finance Ministry (Handelingen, October 14, 2008, p. 41). In short, the Finance Ministry strongly advocated for a swift EU approach to the financial crisis in the fall of 2008.

When it comes to the finding of an EU solution to the crisis, PM Balkenende stated: '*I made the voice of [the Ministry of] Finance my own*' ('Verslagen …', 2012, p. 1542). He did this in several ways. First of all, on October 3, he pleaded for Ter Haar's plan on recapitalization during a visit to French president Sarkozy, who held the rotating EU chairmanship at the time (Trouw, October 3, 2008). After having gained Sarkozy's support, he also advocated for the plan of the Ecofin council to be approved by the European Council of October 15 and 16, although there was little opposition within the European Council ('Brief van de Minister …', October 17, 2008; NRC, November 1, 2008). He also defended the European solutions domestically, for example during debates in Parliament (Handelingen, November 6, 2008; Handelingen, December 10, 2008). During a debate in December, as the main risk of collapse of the financial system had subsided, he claimed: '*It is my strong conviction that the jointly coordinated response in the Ecofin context, and the coordination between Heads of Government have led to us being able to keep the financial system in place*.' (Handelingen, December 10, 2008, p. 35-3063).

As such, the role of PM Balkenende during the first few months of the financial crisis revolved primarily around maintaining contacts with other European leaders. This can be seen in both bilateral contexts (with Belgium in the Fortis case), and in Dutch EU policy in general. What is noteworthy here is that Balkenende quickly adopted the initiatives for a European response to the crisis which came from the Ministry of Finance, advocating for the solutions proposed by this Ministry both among other EU leaders and domestically. In short, in this phase of the crisis, Balkenende's role consisted mostly of actively backing the Finance Ministry, both at home and abroad.

2009: 'Exit' Strategies from Crisis

After the initial shockwaves on the global financial markets had receded somewhat, the focus of EU policy shifted from trying to restore faith in the financial system to finding ways out of the economic crisis that ensued. During this phase, the main priorities of the Dutch government were improved oversight on banks, and ensuring stable future growth in Europe. The latter also meant that, in time, the government deficit rules from the EU Stability and Growth Pact (such as the maximum budget deficit of 3% of GDP) would be reinstated ('Staat van de Europese Unie …', September 15, 2009, pp. 9-12). This section deals with Dutch EU policy in this phase, as well as Balkenende's own role in it.

As might be expected, it was primarily Minister Bos and the Finance Ministry who developed and expressed the aforementioned Dutch priorities. For instance, in February, Bos wrote to Parliament that the Netherlands would advocate for a banking supervision system in which '*policymaking and regulation on a European level is combined with execution of daily supervision by national supervisors closer to the financial institution*' ('Brief van de Minister …', February 20, 2009, p. 3). Later, during a debate on the response to the crisis, he emphasized that a return to deficit rules from the Stability and Growth Pact would be essential to '*give a signal to Europe and the financial markets, […] that we – for our part – should make government finances healthy again as soon as the economy can withstand it*' (Handelingen, March 26, 2009, p. 69-5463). Later, he considered that it would be an 'exit route' out of the crisis if '*we all would bring our treasury in order again*' (Handelingen, September 30, 2009, p. 8-471), emphasizing the need to prepare for fiscal restraint again across Europe, after the (often expensive) interventions on financial markets. Balkenende would also plead for these two priorities in the December 2009 summit of the European Council, where he promised (as Bos had done before) that the Netherlands would attempt to put its budget in order by 2011, and where all EU leaders committed to the founding of common European supervision agencies for financial institutions (Handelingen, December 15, 2009, p. 37-3652).

However, aside from arguing for these two priorities together with Bos, Balkenende also developed a narrative of his own on how the crisis should be dealt with on an international level. In an open letter to newspaper NRC (May 19, 2009), he sketched

the broad strokes of a 'social' or 'moral' market economy, which he called the '*Rhine Delta model: a consultation model with an international, innovative, well-regulated capital market and a flexible, inviting, and activating labour market*'. More concretely, he proposed '*stricter rules, more supervision and stronger institutions in the financial sector*' (Handelingen, March 26, 2009, p. 69-5457). For example, in September 2009, Balkenende strongly criticized bonus cultures in banks, which according to him signify not just a financial crisis, but also a moral one (NRC, September 25, 2009). Although Bos also expressed himself in favour of measures like reducing bonuses of top bankers (Handelingen, September 30, 2009, p. 8-468), it was mostly Balkenende who led the Dutch call for a 'moral market economy' as a way out of the financial crisis.

For Balkenende, this moral component of the financial crisis was also of international significance, not only on a European, but also on a global level. He stated that '*we will only manage in a European, global context. […] For the Netherlands, it is important to have a seat at the table. […] The G20 summits have proven their worth for the regulation on, and supervision of, the financial sector*' (Handelingen, June 10, 2009, p. 93-7350). In other words, he claimed that the Netherlands should not only be in favour of change on an EU level, but also on a global level through the G20. Balkenende would also emphasize the importance of global changes in the financial markets through the G20 on several other occasions (Handelingen, September 17, 2009, p. 3-108; Handelingen, October 13, 2009, p. 4-83). This emphasis on the G20 was no coincidence. Because of the relatively large financial sector in the Netherlands, as well as Balkenende's contacts with world leaders such as French President Sarkozy and US President Bush, Balkenende managed to secure invitations for the Netherlands to several G20 summits between 2008 and 2010, despite the Netherlands formally not belonging to the G20 (NRC, February 23, 2009; Volkskrant, July 18, 2009). During both G20 summits in 2009 – in London in Spring and in Pittsburgh, US, in Fall – Balkenende would argue for a global market economy with stronger regulation of perverse stimuli like large bonuses for bankers ('Brief van de Minister President …', April 7, 2009, p. 2; 'Brief van de Minister President …', September 21, 2009, p. 3). Although EU leaders did meet before both G20 summits to discuss their positions (NRC, February 23, 2009; 'Brief van de Minister President …', September 21, 2009, p. 3), it is clear that Balkenende strongly emphasized the global level in his narrative on how to end the crisis.

As such, in terms of Dutch EU policy on how to 'exit' the financial crisis, Balkenende continued to support Bos and the Finance Ministry in several of the priorities set, such as a European supervision system for financial institutions and a return to low government deficits in the EU. However, he added to this his own narrative of ensuring a 'moral' market economy in a more global setting during the G20 summits. In his securing a seat at the table at the G20, we once again see the importance Balkenende placed on maintaining good relations with other world leaders during the crisis, both inside and outside of the EU. Thus, in this period, we also see the way Balkenende described his role as PM: working together with, and supporting, the Finance Minister where necessary, and maintaining international contacts.

Conclusion

In short, in this case study, we primarily see Balkenende taking a leading role in (EU) policy towards the Financial Crisis together with Finance Minister Bos. Especially in the first months after the collapse of Lehman Brothers, when crisis measures were taken to prevent an escalation of the crisis in the Dutch and European financial system, the lead was clearly with Bos and the Finance Ministry.

As Balkenende himself also admitted to the De Wit-Committee, he had a limited view of his own role in this crisis, consisting primarily of supporting Bos and maintaining international contacts, which he did for example by advocating for the Ter Haar plan in the European Council.

However, after the first phase of the crisis, we see Balkenende expanding his role. While still supporting Bos on specific measures to be taken to get out of the financial crisis, Balkenende also started to advocate for a broader international vision on the financial system, advocating for a 'moral market economy', and also linking EU policy to global forums like the G20. In doing so, he seemed to be sketching some broad strokes of what the future financial system should look like.

Case Study 4: The Euro Crisis under Rutte-I

This case study covers Dutch EU policy towards the Euro Crisis – and Rutte's role in it – for the duration of the Rutte-I government. That is, it covers the timeframe from the inauguration of its ministers on October 14, 2010, until the start of Rutte-II, on November 4, 2012. Although this does not cover the full course of events surrounding the debt crisis in countries like Greece (which would go on for several more years), this thesis has chosen to keep case studies limited to the tenure of 1 government, as previously explained. First, this case study discusses in general terms which ministers were mostly concerned with the Euro Crisis, finding that this was mostly PM Rutte himself and Finance Minister De Jager (CDA). Secondly, it goes deeper into Rutte's own actions and statements on the Euro Crisis, finding this was a careful balancing act of pushing 'red lines' of national interests, and considering what could realistically pass among EU leaders. Thirdly, it briefly delves into Rutte's broader view on the EU which, as he stated it during this time, was one of primarily pragmatic cooperation.

General Division of Labour

This section discusses the (public) involvement of different ministers in matters related to the Euro Crisis during Rutte-I, based primarily on Parliamentary documents, supplemented with newspaper articles from the time. It finds that PM Rutte and Finance Minister De Jager were clearly more involved than other ministers, Rutte not merely supporting De Jager and the Finance Ministry, but also having a clear profile himself.

In Rutte-I, the PM and the Finance Minister were clearly in charge of the Dutch policy towards the Euro Crisis. This can clearly be seen by the absence of other (potentially) relevant ministers. For example: Foreign Minister Uri Rosenthal did not discuss the Euro Crisis with Parliament in any fashion during these two years. During debates on European affairs, he primarily discussed the EU's foreign policy and EU enlargement (e.g. Handelingen, February 3, 2011, p. 48-4-39; ", June 22, 2011, p. 96-2-28). What is more, State Secretary for European Affairs Ben Knapen's comments on the Euro Crisis were limited to one relatively small topic. On several occasions in late 2011, he elaborated on European governance structures that could be set up to strictly enforce

EU rules for government budgets (e.g. NRC, September 27, 2011; Handelingen, November 1, 2011, p. 17-29-107; ", December 15, 2011, pp. 36-37). For the rest, the Euro Crisis was dealt with (at least in public) by Rutte and De Jager.

However, when comparing the roles of Rutte and De Jager, the newspaper articles and Parliamentary Documents examined for this thesis are less conclusive. Looking at Parliamentary documents, Rutte spoke on behalf of the government during almost all plenary debates on the Euro Crisis (except for the "General Financial Considerations",[7] which are always dealt with by the Finance Minister), whereas De Jager was present at all meetings of sub-committees where the Euro Crisis was discussed. In total, there were 5 plenary debates where both Rutte and De Jager spoke on the Eurocrisis (Handelingen, October 25, 2011; ", November 1, 2011; ", December 7, 2011; ", January 24, 2012; ", July 5, 2012). What is noteworthy is that, during these debates, the general pattern between the two ministers was that Rutte gave the broad strokes of the EU policy the Dutch government proposed (or that had been agreed on by EU leaders), while De Jager discussed the specific financial mechanisms that would be used to tackle the crisis (e.g. Handelingen, December 7, 2011, p. 33-8-71; ", July 5, 2012, p. 105-34-63). Considering the PM is responsible for the general policy of the government and the Finance Minister for fiscal and monetary policy, this is a relatively straightforward division of labour between a Prime Minister and a Finance Minister. However, what this brief analysis does show is that Rutte did not only support the Finance Minister during this crisis, but also played an active part in debates on the Euro Crisis himself. The next sections of this case study deal with the way in which Rutte exercised this role.

Rutte-I's Dutch EU Policy in the Euro Crisis

As mentioned in the description of the political context of this case study (see appendix 2), the Rutte-I government had to balance a national Parliament where it did not have a majority for its EU policy with the need to find a solution to the financial crisis on the EU level. As shown in this section, this cabinet, and Rutte himself in particular, did this on a domestic level by both setting 'red lines' that could not be crossed in Brussels, as

[7] NL: "Algemene Financiële Beschouwingen".

well as tempering expectations for what could realistically be attained during negotiations in the EU.

Setting Red Lines

A common feature of Dutch EU policy at the time of Rutte-I is the setting of clear boundaries in resolving the Euro Crisis. Rutte in particular made it very clear what would be acceptable, and – more often – unacceptable, to them as an EU compromise.

This is something both Rutte and De Jager clearly did, on several different subjects. However, the red lines were the clearest when it came to the support of heavily indebted Eurozone countries like Greece. On Greece, Rutte stated: '*The Cabinet does not feel at all like supporting the Greeks. […] We will only agree with a potential next reimbursement on the existing program if the IMF agrees too. That is an essential precondition*' (Handelingen, May 26, 2011, p. 86-7-56). Minister De Jager also stated on several occasions that reforms and budgetary discipline were absolute conditions for further Dutch support to other EU countries (Handelingen, July 21, 2011, p. 4; Handelingen, November 1, 2011, p. 17-29-102). On the role of the IMF in supporting indebted EU countries, De Jager claimed: '*a few times, that led to quite a fierce debate, lasting until deep in the night. I have always put my foot down when it comes to this point*' (Handelingen, November 1, 2011, p. 17-29-102).

However, Rutte also explicitly set conditions for Dutch support on other EU topics related to the crisis as well. He also made strong statements on the EU budget, stating that any increase in the budget was absolutely unacceptable to the Netherlands, and the Netherlands should get more of a rebate: '*I want to keep the billion [-euro rebate the Netherlands gained in 2005 – SV], and I would like more than a billion*' (NRC, January 25, 2011; ", December 7, 2011). Later, when discussing a European-level mechanism for helping out struggling banks, Rutte also introduced some explicit conditions: '*I only want to take the next step if I am certain that we have resolved all problems from the first step. That means, first, that there will be European monitoring. Then, Southern Europe has to clean up the mess banks over there are in. Only if all that has happened can we take the next step […]*' (Handelingen, June 27, 2012, p. 105-5-62).

These conditions for Dutch support to other EU countries can also be seen in more formal policy proposals. In September 2011, Rutte, De Jager, Knapen, and Minister of Economic Affairs Verhagen (CDA) signed a letter detailing the government's view on the future of the Eurozone ('Brief van de Ministers …', September 7, 2011). In it, they claimed that Dutch support in the Euro crisis should depend on stricter enforcement of budget rules, preferably with an independent European Commissioner, who would be able to use an 'intervention ladder'. In the last phase of this ladder, Member States would have to have their concept budgets approved by the Commissioner before sending it to their own parliaments, or should otherwise '*opt to make use of the possibility to leave the Eurozone*' ('Brief van de Ministers …', September 7, 2011, p. 7). In other words, the Dutch government advocated for a strict enforcement of rules for EU member states' budgets, with clear consequences in case of too large deficits.

In short, the Rutte-I cabinet as a whole, and Rutte and De Jager in particular, clearly formulated 'red lines' and conditions in its EU policy on this matter. Newspaper articles at the time also noticed the harsh negotiating styles of Rutte and De Jager with their EU counterparts. Several articles made the analysis that this behaviour was related to cater to the more Eurosceptic parts of the Dutch population, including Geert Wilders' PVV which supported their coalition (e.g. Volkskrant, June 18, 2011; Trouw, July 12, 2011; NRC, February 14, 2012; ", March 24, 2012). No matter the true causes, it is clear that the strongly-worded national interest was a key element of Rutte-I's EU policy towards the Euro crisis.

Limiting Expectations

However, Dutch EU policy in this case did not solely consist of making demands from other EU countries. At times, Rutte in particular made it clear to the domestic audience that taking a certain stance would be unrealistic or inappropriate for the government on an EU level.

This limiting of expectations occurred primarily in response to initiatives from Parliament related to the Euro Crisis. For example, in late 2010, Parliamentary leader of the VVD Stef Blok came with the initiative to strip highly indebted EU countries of their voting rights in EU bodies. Rutte responded by saying that it would be 'playing with fire' to propose such a solution in the European Council, and it could harm the

Netherlands' bargaining position (NRC, December 16, 2010; Volkskrant, December 16, 2010). Rutte responded in a very similar way at later proposals from Parliament, by claiming that bringing in 'new' demands towards his European colleagues would harm his chances of successfully convincing them of 'older', more important, points (Handelingen, October 22, 2011, p. 13-2-47; October 25, 2011, p. 14-14-63). As such, Rutte (and De Jager to a more limited extent) also made it clear when certain demands from the Dutch side would be too much to ask from other EU countries, in their view.

Another way in which Rutte occasionally tried to limit the expectations of his policy towards the Euro crisis is by refusing to publicly discuss a certain topic at inappropriate moments, in his view. This was primarily during the last preparations before a European Council Summit. For example, on several occasions, he declined to state exactly the precise size of loans for indebted EU countries, and the exact conditions, because he thought it would harm the Dutch bargaining position (Handelingen, June 22, 2011, p. 96-2-22; ", October 22, 2011, p. 13-2-47; ", October 11, 2012, p. 12-8-55).

In short, aside from establishing strongly-worded national interests, the Rutte-I government (and Rutte himself in particular), also took into account when it would be better not to put one's foot down in the EU. However, this limiting of expectations was also clearly done with Rutte's own bargaining position in mind on other priorities. As such, Rutte's narrative on Dutch EU policy at this time also consisted of a combination of strongly expressed views of national interests (the conditions for EU policy solutions), combined with a certain sense of which of these interests might be most attainable in what way.

Rutte's EU View during Euro Crisis

During the Euro Crisis (and his first cabinet), Rutte occasionally also expressed a broader view on the EU and the Euro. He did this primarily by pointing at the economic advantages of the Union and the single currency, also demonstrating why he considered it important to resolve the crisis.

In discussing his broader view on the EU in the context of the crisis, Rutte mainly claimed he held a pragmatic view on European integration, in essence based on economic reasoning. For instance, he claimed to sympathise with a '*europragmatic [as*

opposed to 'Europhile' or 'Eurosceptic' – SV] approach, in which we explain people why it is of such immense importance for our prosperity that we are members of the EU, that we have adopted the euro' (Handelingen, October 22, 2011, p. 13-2-33). Later, he claimed the EU was of great importance because '*we earn our money there*' (Handelingen, November 1, 2011, p. 17-29-114). Rutte repeated this view, that the EU might also be based on shared values, but mostly manifests itself as an institution increasing economic prosperity in Europe, throughout the time period of this case study (e.g. Handelingen, May 23, 2012, p. 86-6-50; ", June 27, 2012, p. 101-5-58).

Rutte also connected this broader view on EU cooperation to the ongoing Euro crisis, primarily in order to counter the idea that the problems regarding the euro would erode Dutch public support for the EU. When asked about this issue in Parliament, Rutte claimed: '*people understand that it is in their interest. […] There are things that are not going well. The debt crisis in Southern Europe is not going well. There are problems with the euro we need to resolve. We do that by taking prudent measures. […] We take this measures based on the absolute conviction that the Union has a lot of significance in people's daily lives*' (Handelingen, May 23, 2012, p. 86-6-51).

In other words, Rutte clearly expressed a pragmatic view on the EU during this case study, one in which the EU is first and foremost a bringer of economic prosperity to its member states and citizens. He also used this pragmatic view of EU cooperation to justify measures supporting indebted EU countries and saving the euro.

Conclusion

As we have seen in this case study, Rutte took a range of different actions to formulate Dutch EU policy on the Euro Crisis during his first cabinet. First of all, based on appearances in Parliament and the media, he and Finance Minister De Jager were clearly the primary actors in Dutch EU policy in this matter. Furthermore, Rutte was actively engaged in this matter both in Parliament and in the media, frequently discussing the general situation in the economic crisis, with De Jager focusing on specific financial policy instruments.

Secondly, something done by both Rutte and De Jager (to a more limited extent) was finding a balance between the EU and Dutch level. Rutte in particular did this by taking

a strongly-worded national interest as his point of departure, but simultaneously limiting domestic expectations of what can be attained in negotiations in the EU. This realistic communication on Dutch EU policy was paired with a broader view on the EU that Rutte communicated, namely that he saw it primarily as a bringer of economic prosperity, and as a political union only in the second place.

Analysis

After the in-depth discussions on how PMs Balkenende and Rutte acted during the four case studies of this thesis, it is now time to bring together the findings of the case studies. This chapter first discusses how the actions of both PMs fit into the dual role the literature has ascribed to the Dutch PM in EU policy: that of both the coordinator of this policy, as well as its representative to the media and society in general. Subsequently, it discusses the most important differences between the two PMs in their execution of these two roles. In this way, it addresses the hypotheses of this thesis and sheds a light on its research question, namely what the differences were in how both PMs executed their roles in Dutch EU policy.

Before discussing the specific actions of both PMs, a broader view of all case studies in this thesis clearly shows that both Dutch PMs took active part in formulating Dutch EU policy. Although both Balkenende and Rutte expressed some reluctance at times, for instance when it came to participating in campaigns for both EU-related referendums, both PMs also were among the main actors in all four case studies. The case studies analysed here have clearly shown a wide range of instances where the PM formulated and defended Dutch EU policy, not only in terms of very broad priorities, but also in terms of more specific policy proposals, such as Rutte's involvement in finding a solution that would allow the Netherlands to ratify the Association Agreement with Ukraine. As such, these case studies **confirm** our basic **hypothesis H1**: *Both Balkenende and Rutte were involved in the formulation of the Dutch position on EU matters within the Core Executive, not only when it comes to the broad strategic direction of European integration, but also in relation to more specific matters.* This allows us to go into *how* both PMs were involved in Dutch EU policy.

The PM's Dual Role: Balkenende

The two case studies concerning PM Balkenende, the EU Constitutional Referendum of 2005 and the Financial Crisis of 2008-2009, indicate several important points about Balkenende's involvement in Dutch EU policy. Firstly, in terms of coordination, Balkenende took a more supporting role as PM, rather than one of active intervention in the policy process. Secondly, in terms of acting as the 'face' of EU policy, Balkenende's style was characterized by sketching very broad visions on why European integration is important to the Netherlands, and how it should develop in the future.

Coordinating

Balkenende's conception of the PM's role as a supportive one can be seen in both case studies. He made this view explicit in his own statements to the De Wit-Committee on the Financial Crisis. Here, he defined the role of the PM as '*being present on those moments where that is necessary, negotiating where necessary, and maintaining international contacts*' ('Verslagen …', 2012, p. 1572). Parliamentary documents and newspaper articles from the time of the banking crisis show that Balkenende primarily advocated for solutions proposed by the Ministry of Finance, such as its European-level recapitalisation plan for banks (Trouw, October 3, 2008; Handelingen, December 10, 2008). Here, we can clearly see that Balkenende fulfilled his role as PM in this crisis by explicitly backing the Finance Ministry and Finance Minister Bos, in this time of crisis.

This same view of the supportive PM's role is also reflected in Balkenende's actions surrounding the EU Constitution Referendum of 2005. Most tellingly, Balkenende refused proposals to give his own Ministry of General Affairs more competences in the coordination of Dutch EU policy at the expense of the Foreign Ministry. According to him, this coordination can only be done by the Foreign Ministry and the PM's Ministry of General Affairs acting in tandem (Handelingen, November 8, 2005, p. 18-1108). Furthermore, the modest role of the PM in this case can be seen in the fact that the most active campaigner for the referendum in government was State Secretary Nicolaï (Volkskrant, June 20, 2006), as well as the fact the data shows no active involvement of Balkenende in the 'national discussion' on Dutch EU policy that followed the

referendum, with this 'discussion' largely being handled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ('Brief van de Minister en Staatssecretaris van Buitenlandse Zaken', May 19, 2006).

While this thesis does not claim that Balkenende did not take a leading role in these cases, he clearly preferred not to interfere in the competences of other ministers and ministries. In both cases, he stressed that other ministers and ministries (mostly Finance and Foreign Affairs) also have key roles to play in setting priorities for Dutch EU policy. His actions and his descriptions of his role as PM mostly point towards a supportive role, backing other ministers and ministries in solving policy problems within their remit (Finance in case of the crisis, Foreign Affairs after the referendum), for example by pleading for these ministries' policy solutions with his fellow members of the European Council. This may not surprising given that the Dutch PM has few formal competences to interfere with the affairs of other ministers, but does not quite reflect the idea of the 'presidentialised' PM in Dutch EU policy (Fiers & Krouwel, 2005).

Representing

In terms of acting as the 'face' of Dutch EU policy, Balkenende's focus on broad visions on what Dutch EU policy should achieve can also be seen in both case studies on this PM. During a debate in Parliament after the 2005 Constitutional Referendum, Balkenende emphasized that Dutch EU policy needed to make some changes to address Dutch voters' concerns with the EU in general. He introduced some broad ideas on how to do this, such as reducing the Dutch contribution to the EU's budget and addressing the '*sense of loss of sovereignty, [the EU – SV] is going too far; the pace of the integration process, it is going too rapidly*' (Handelingen, June 15, 2005, p. 8). Furthermore, he announced that the government would start a 'debate' to find out the '*expectations, wishes and concerns*' of people about the EU (Handelingen, October 12, 2005, p. 11-654). In short, here we have seen Balkenende responding to the referendum results with a few very broad ideas on what had gone 'wrong' with the EU.

Balkenende's tendency to discuss EU policy in terms of very broad views can also be seen in the case of the financial crisis of 2008. As the most acute part of the crisis in the banking sector had subsided in 2009, he started to sketch an image of what European

economies should look like going forward. This can be seen most clearly in the 'Social Market Economy', he pleaded for in an open letter in May 2009 (NRC, May 19, 2009). This idea, featuring open, yet also regulated, capital markets, could also be seen in his policies, such as his advocacy for the reduction of bonuses for senior bankers on an EU level ('Brief van de Minister President …', September 21, 2009, p. 3), but also on a global level at several G20 summits ('Brief van de Minister President …', April 7, 2009, p. 2). As shown in the analysis of the case study, Balkenende frequently referred to this broader vision in EU and international policy towards the economic crisis.

In short, acting as the 'face' of EU policy to the public, Balkenende tended to make use of broad ideas on what his government would be striving for on this level. In both cases, he expressed one or more longer-term visions. In terms of consensual and confrontational communication by the PM (Swinkels et al., 2017), Balkenende's style was rather mixed. On one hand, in sketching broad visions on Dutch EU policy, he took a confrontational stance towards people with different views (e.g. those with a stronger belief in the free market during the financial crisis). On the other hand, his visions still tended to emphasize that different perspectives should be brought together (e.g. different views on the EU after the 2005 referendum), meaning they also had elements of trying to reach an EU and a global market that would work for everyone in the Netherlands, thus also taking more elements of a consensual style.

The PM's Dual Role: Rutte

When it comes to the two case studies analysed under PM Rutte, the Euro Crisis as far as it took place under his first Cabinet (2010-2012) and the 2016 referendum on the EU's Association Agreement with Ukraine, we can also see several interesting patterns. When it comes to coordinating Dutch EU policy, Rutte was very strongly involved in both cases, taking a leading role over other ministers particularly in the case of the Ukraine referendum. Furthermore, his communication as the 'face' of Dutch EU policy revolved primarily around finding 'pragmatic' solutions to problems on both national and EU levels.

Coordinating

In both cases, we can see to some extent that Rutte made Dutch EU policy 'Chefsache', ensuring that he himself took a leading position in resolving the problems at hand. This can be seen most clearly in the case of the Ukraine referendum. While looking for a response to arguments of its Dutch opponents without having to scrap the Association Agreement entirely, it was almost exclusively Rutte who defended the course of action of the government in Parliament. It was also Rutte who negotiated the legally binding agreement that allowed the Netherlands to ratify the agreement, both in the European Council (where this would naturally be expected), but also among parties and Members of Parliament domestically. In comparison, Foreign Minister Koenders played a highly limited role.

In the case of the Euro Crisis, we have seen most clearly that the coordination of Dutch EU policy was in the hands of Rutte, together with Finance Minister De Jager. During this time, Rutte was present during (almost) all Parliamentary debates on this topic. Rutte tended to discuss the general situation and the broader priorities of Dutch EU policy, while De Jager tended to go more into specific financial measures to be taken (e.g. Handelingen, December 7, 2011, p. 33-8-71; ", July 5, 2012, p. 105-34-63). This at least suggests that Rutte considered the Euro Crisis a major priority for him as PM, as well as something the PM should at least actively communicate about.

As such, Rutte took a highly active role in both the case of the Ukraine referendum and the Euro Crisis. In the former case, he dealt with the aftermath of the referendum largely by himself, making it a clear 'Chefsache'. The latter case shows Rutte supporting and working together with Finance Minister De Jager, but also being very active in formulating and communicating on policy priorities himself. In other words, Rutte showed quite strong involvement in both cases, which reflects the idea of the increasingly 'presidentialised' Dutch PM (Fiers & Krouwel, 2005), at least to a larger extent than Balkenende, who had a more modest conception of his role.

Representing

In discussing the Dutch EU policy response in both case studies, Rutte's communication was frequently centred around finding a response acceptable to both

(the other countries of) the EU and Dutch domestic politics. Rutte often clearly explained both the Dutch and broader EU interests in his communication to Parliament and the wider public. This ties in with Rutte's self-professed 'pragmatic' view on the EU.

That Rutte wanted to strike a 'balance' between the Netherlands and the EU as a whole is explicit in both case studies. In the case of the Euro Crisis, Rutte spelled out clear conditions for Dutch support to indebted EU countries (Handelingen, May 26, 2011, p. 86-7-56; " June 27, 2012, p. 105-5-62), but also made it clear when he considered certain topics of Dutch interest inexpedient to bring up at a certain moment (Volkskrant, December 16, 2010; Handelingen, October 11, 2012, p. 12-8-55). In the case of the referendum on the Ukraine Association Agreement, he primarily emphasized that a compromise should be found that would address some of Dutch voters' grievances, but also allow the Agreement to come into force (Handelingen, July 5, 2016, p. 104-33-40). As it seemed that there would be no domestic political support for the Agreement, Rutte started to appeal to the broader European interest of stability on the continent, and a response to the aggressive Russian regime (Trouw, October 29, 2016; Handelingen, December 14, 2016, p. 35-8-1), which consequently gained him the needed support in the Dutch Senate.

This emphasis on finding 'common ground' between Dutch interests and those of the rest of the EU also speaks to Rutte's expressed broader view on the EU. In the Euro Crisis, he emphasised that EU cooperation, including the preservation of the Euro, was also in the interest of the prosperity of the Dutch population (Handelingen, October 22, 2011, p. 13-2-33; ", May 23, 2012, p. 86-6-51). Furthermore, during the campaign for the Ukraine Referendum, Rutte also emphasized mutual gains for all sides of the Agreement, such as trade (Volkskrant, January 11, 2016; Trouw, February 5, 2016). Here, too, he professed belief in a 'pragmatic' approach to the EU, representing the PM as the person who is to find common ground between different actors on the Dutch and European levels (Volkskrant, November 26, 2015; Handelingen, July 5, 2016, p. 104-33-40).

In short, Rutte's communication on Dutch EU policy in these cases was centred on the clear expression of national interests in EU politics, both when it came to the Dutch stance and to interests of other actors in the EU. He would then usually emphasise the

need to find common ground between these interests, and reach a pragmatic compromise on the EU level. This also shows a combination of 'consensual' and 'confrontational' communication (Swinkels et al., 2017), where the expression of Dutch interest can be seen as 'confrontational' to other EU member states, while the expressed desire to find compromise reflects a more 'consensual' way of communicating on Dutch EU policy.

Comparing the two PMs

Having discussed the way both individual PMs fulfilled both roles of the PM in Dutch EU policy, as defined by the literature, it is interesting to compare the two, and thus to assess the hypotheses stipulated in the literature review, as well as shed a light on the main question of this thesis.

Firstly, both PMs took some coordinating role in coming to a Dutch government position on EU matters, and would also express this position in Parliament and the media. In other words, the two PMs did comply with the dual role discussed in the literature review. This means this thesis' hypothesis **H2 is confirmed**, as it stipulated that: *both Balkenende and Rutte have had a dual role in Dutch EU policy-making.*

> ***H2.A***. *Both PMs coordinated EU policy, bringing together the different viewpoints on a certain issue and resolving conflicts.*
>
> ***H2.B***. *Both PMs acted as 'representatives' of Dutch EU policy towards the population, elaborating on the government's stance on EU affairs and explaining these choices.*

Secondly, this research has also shown very clear differences between the way in which both PMs were involved in Dutch EU policy between the cases. Generally speaking, in terms of coordination, Balkenende interfered less with other ministers' activities in formulating Dutch EU policy for their policy remits, and primarily defended their policy choices. Meanwhile, for Rutte, the EU-related matters examined in these case studies clearly required more Prime Ministerial involvement. Furthermore, Balkenende and Rutte discussed Dutch EU policy to Parliament and the media in very different terms. While Balkenende focused on broader visions on the EU and the position of the

Netherlands within it, Rutte emphasized finding common ground between the interests of different parties to pragmatically resolve the issues of the day. This means that there were significant differences between both PMs, both in terms of how they managed Dutch EU policy, as well as the ideas about the EU they expressed towards the public.

Naturally, it is impossible to establish that these different approaches are caused exclusively by the different PMs. Each of the case studies in this thesis comes with a multitude of contextual variables and peculiarities, both in the political situation of the day and in the nature of the policy problems involved. However, the findings of this thesis are based on two sets of comparative cases studies featuring cases with a lot of similarities faced by both PMs. Even if the contexts of these cases are only roughly similar, the differences in the approaches Balkenende and Rutte took to them strongly suggests that they had quite different conceptions of the roles the Dutch PM should play in EU policy. This leads us to our third and final hypothesis **H3**, which stipulates that '*there is a significant difference in the way in which PMs Balkenende and Rutte executed their dual role as coordinator and 'face' of Dutch EU policy in the cases under examination.*' Based on the foregoing, this hypothesis is considered **'largely confirmed'**.

Conclusion

This thesis went into the different roles of the Dutch PM in Dutch EU policy, focusing in particular on the dual role of providing coordination between the different fields of policy that the EU covers, as well as the role of the PM as the 'face' of EU policy at home. It did so by taking two sets of two (roughly) comparable cases in EU policy faced by two Dutch PMs, Jan Peter Balkenende and Mark Rutte. The research question it sheds a light on is: "*How did the roles of the Prime Minister in Dutch EU policy differ under Prime Ministers Balkenende and Rutte?*"

The analysis of these four cases revealed that the two PMs showed some differences in their approach to Dutch EU policy. First of all, Balkenende encroached less on the policy areas of other ministers, such as the Foreign Minister or Minister of Finance, while EU policy was more of a 'Chefsache' for Rutte. Secondly, in terms of communication on EU policy, Balkenende communicated broader visions on where the EU and its member states should (not) be heading, while Rutte presented himself as a problem-solver, always looking to strike a delicate balance between the Dutch interest and the interests of other EU member states.

What this demonstrates, in terms of the research question of this thesis, is that both PMs showed a different approach to the role of the PM in Dutch EU policy, both in terms of process (*how* the PM is involved in making this policy), and in terms of substance (*what* are some of its guiding principles). According to the literature, in terms of coordination, the increasing relevance of European Council summits for the EU's policymaking have given the Dutch PM a larger role in Dutch EU policy over the years at the expense of other ministers, as he has to negotiate with his foreign counterparts on a wide range of issues (Eppink, 2005, p. 46; Verbeek & Van der Vleuten, 2008, p. 43). However, the cases under examination here have revealed a mixed picture, with Balkenende still seeing a much larger role for other ministers, to the point that he even claimed to have made the views of the Finance Ministry his own during negotiations during the 2008 banking crisis. Meanwhile, Rutte more often took EU matters into his own hands, showing more clearly the increased role of the PM in this area of policy. Furthermore, as the literature suggests, the Dutch PM also has a significant role to play as the 'face' of Dutch EU policy, for example towards Parliament and the media (e.g. De Vries et

al., 2012, p. 162; Fiers & Krouwel, 2005, p. 145). Here, too, some differences can be seen between how Balkenende and Rutte executed this Prime Ministerial role. Balkenende focused on the communication of broader visions on the EU and the role of the Netherlands within it, for example when it came to the future of the market economy in the EU after the 2008-2009 Financial Crisis. Meanwhile, Rutte represented Dutch EU policy more as pragmatically striking a balance between interests: from the Dutch interest within EU policy, such as stringent conditions for financial support to indebted countries during the Euro Crisis, to broader interests of the EU as a whole, such as the prosperity of all member states. As such, while both PMs were the 'face' of Dutch EU policy in some way, they communicated on the EU and the Dutch role within it in different ways.

These findings come with some implications for the literature on the Dutch PM, and for Core Executive studies more broadly. They provide very strong nuance to the ideas expressed by Fiers and Krouwel (2005), as well as others who have claimed that EU summits have led to increased centralisation of EU policy towards PMs in traditionally decentralised systems like that of the Netherlands (e.g. Borrás & Guy Peters, 2011, p. 538). While both Balkenende and Rutte had some degree of prominence in Dutch EU policy in these cases, the differences between them call into question to what extent this is really a structural development, rather than one that also strongly depends on who the PM is.

Furthermore, these findings have some relevance within the Core Executive studies as well. Firstly, it contributes to Core Executive studies on the Dutch context, which has not been as extensively studied in this tradition as other contexts, most prominently the UK (except for Van Dorp & Rhodes, 2022). Secondly, it contributes to Core Executive studies by focusing on the Core Executive in the context of a particular policy area, namely EU policy. But most importantly, our findings are also of theoretical relevance for Core Executive studies. In line with the studies of Diamond (2021), Heffernan (2013), and Kefford, (2013), they call into question the thesis of 'presidentialisation' in the Dutch context (as introduced by Fiers & Krouwel (2005)). After all, the conclusions that follow from these case studies suggest that the growing influence of the Dutch PM depends, at least in part, on the individual PM, rather than it being a process driven by external factors like the strengthening of the European Council. Although this study does not reject the idea that power in the Core Executive is asymmetrical (with the PM

generally having a stronger position than most other actors), this does suggest that the 'beliefs and practices' of different actors in the Core Executive, including different PMs, play an essential role in the study of the Core Executive, as claimed by some interpretist scholars like Van Dorp and Rhodes (2022, p. 204). In short: while this research on the roles of the Dutch PM in EU policy does find that the PM generally holds a highly significant role in the Core Executive, it finds that there are differences in how this role is executed between different individual PMs. As such, comparative studies of different individual PMs in a specific national context can be a very worthwhile endeavour for Core Executive scholars.

Naturally, this research also comes with limitations. As discussed in the methods section, this research (like many others in Core Executive studies) has had to cope with a wide range of contextual variables. Naturally, it is impossible to discuss all of the contextual variables that may have played a role in the different responses of Balkenende and Rutte in these case studies, let alone prove how the effects of one variable in isolation. This thesis does not claim that a change in PM necessarily causes changes in the roles the Dutch PM has in EU policy. That being said, this thesis based on a wide range of case studies (four), featuring two sets of two case studies in which different PMs were faced with a (roughly) similar policy problem. Although restricted by the wide range of contextual variables at play in this line of research, this research design does allow for at least some comparison between the two PMs.

With these nuances, the findings of this thesis also point the way for future research. In line with the argument by Te Velde et al. (2005, pp. 15-16), this thesis points to the importance of more study on individual Dutch PMs. Seen in this light, future research might build on the differences identified between Balkenende and Rutte in this thesis to formulate a typology of Dutch PMs when it comes to their roles in EU Policy, similar to Van den Berg's (1990, pp. 107-110) more general typology of Dutch PMs. Future studies on other Dutch PMs and their approaches to Dutch EU policy can provide us with a much more nuanced view on how the role of the Dutch PM in EU policy has developed over time. This would provide more well-deserved nuance to the rather deterministic view that the role of the PM in EU policy has been ever-increasing over time, as the 'presidentialisation' thesis suggests.

In terms of practical implications of this research, this thesis primarily points to the idea that different Dutch PMs can have different conceptions on how the PM should fulfil his role in the formulation of Dutch EU policy. In discussing the different approaches taken to EU policy by Balkenende and Rutte, this thesis refrains from any normative stance on what kind of Prime Ministerial role in EU policy is preferable, as this would almost inevitably involve political preferences rather than empirical fact. However, one thing that can be said is that the PM has become a significant player in the formulation of Dutch EU policy, as the literature on this subject already suggests. This strengthening of the role of the PM stands in contrast to the relatively weak formal position of the Dutch PM compared to other ministers, meaning that exactly what the PM can and should do in this area is not always clear. As such, political discussion on what the roles of the PM in Dutch EU policy should be, and where the boundaries between the prerogatives of the PM and other ministers should be in this policy area, can be of merit for the way Dutch EU policy is formulated.

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Appendix 1: Case Study Data

Case Study 1: The 2005 Constitution Referendum

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Appendix 2: Contexts Case Studies

This appendix consists of some background information that may be of help in understanding the case studies discussed in this thesis. For each case study, this appendix gives both the international context, the broader EU questions at that time, and the Dutch context, the state of play in Dutch politics and an introduction of key ministers aside from the PM. Note that sources cited in this appendix can be found in the regular 'references' section of this thesis.

Case Study 1: EU Constitution Referendum

The European Constitutional Treaty

The history of the 'Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe' (or European Constitutional Treaty) which was rejected by Dutch voters in 2005, starts in 2000. During a summit that year in Nice, France, EU heads of state and government decided that large-scale reforms were needed in the EU. At this point, there were 12 new member states, mostly in Central and Eastern Europe, which were close to joining the EU. With a near doubling of the amount of members (the EU had 15 members at the time), major changes in the governance of the EU were considered inevitable (Europa-nu.nl, N.D.).

After a European Council summit in Laeken (near Brussels) in late 2001, it was decided that a Convention on the Future of Europe would be founded. This convention, led by former French president Valéry Giscard-d'Estaing, involved representatives of national governments of both EU members and candidate member states, as well as MPs from national parliaments, aside from representatives of EU institutions like the European Parliament and the Commission. Especially the invitation of national MPs gave this Convention a unique structure compared to previous negotiations for EU treaty changes, which tend to be focused around heads of state and government (Laursen, 2008, p. 4). The convention started its work in February 2002, and Giscard-d'Estaing already presented the Draft Constitution to the European Council during a summit in June 2003 (Laursen, 2008, p. 10).

Although the inclusion of national MPs in the Convention had attempted to bring decision-making on the constitution closer to the EU's citizens, the new Constitution did have to be negotiated by heads of state and government in an Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) (Wessel, 2005, pp. 29-30). This IGC took several summits between October 2003 and June 2004, in order to iron out disagreements between member states on aspects of the Constitutional Treaty. Some of the main changes of the European Constitution compared to the existing Treaties included changes to the way decisions were made in the EU, introducing more policy areas where Member States would not have to make a decision unanimously, and a greater role for the European Parliament. For the rest, the Constitution primarily reaffirmed or solidified existing EU law, such as officially affirming the primacy of EU law over national law, and officially listing the policy areas where the EU had been conferred full or partial competence by the Member States (Wessel, 2005, pp. 38-40).

The Treaty was signed by the EU heads of state and government in Rome on October 29, 2004. After this, the process of ratification of the treaty would start in the Member States (Laursen, 2008, p. 15). The Netherlands was not the only country where this involved a consultative referendum: before the Dutch vote, the Constitution had been approved by Spanish voters (February 20, 2005), and rejected by the French (May 29, 2005). In the end, the French and Dutch 'no' votes put an end to the Constitutional Treaty in that form (Laursen, 2008, p. 16).

EU Enlargement

Another salient issue in EU affairs at the time of the Dutch referendum was EU enlargement. At the time of the negotiations of the Constitutional Treaty, 12 candidate member states were awaiting entry into the EU. In the end, 10 of these would join at the same time on May 1, 2004 (with the other two – Romania and Bulgaria – joining in 2007) (European Commission, 2019). Furthermore, several other countries had applied for EU membership at this point, perhaps the most controversial case of which being Turkey (Nugent, 2007, p. 499). This rapid expansion of the EU was – already at the time – associated with a growing gap between the EU and its citizens. In particular in Western European countries like the Netherlands, lack of faith in these new EU member states as reliable European partners led to a growing discontent with the EU as a whole,

as well (Thomassen, 2005, pp. 73-77). In other words, aside from a large reform of the inner workings of the EU in the form of the constitution, the time of the Dutch referendum on the European Constitution also saw large-scale geographic expansion of the EU.

The Balkenende-II Government

The June 2005 referendum on the European Constitutional Treaty took place during the Balkenende-II government, a center-right coalition consisting of Balkenende's CDA, the liberal VVD, and the centrist-progressive D66 party. It was formed after the 2003 elections, which saw the CDA (44 seats) narrowly becoming the largest party, followed by the center-left PvdA of leader Wouter Bos (42). The spectacular recovery of the PvdA (gaining 19 seats) after its catastrophic results in the 2002 elections did not lead to a CDA-PvdA coalition, however. This was blamed primarily on 'lack of chemistry' between Balkenende and Bos (Kockelmans, 2019).

After the failed negotiations with the PvdA, a center-right coalition was formed. The CDA and VVD, which had already governed together with the LPF in the Balkenende-I cabinet, were just short of a majority in both chambers of Parliament. Considering the LPF was considered too unreliable, it was replaced with D66 (6 seats in parliament) as junior coalition partner. This was the first time D66 participated in a center-right coalition, as the party generally had a preference for centrist coalitions involving both left and right (such as the 'purple' governments of the 1990s, with PvdA and VVD). The coalition would hold a comfortable majority in both chambers of Parliament, despite the fact that MP Geert Wilders (the later head of the far-right PVV party) left the VVD in 2004, over disagreements on EU accession negotiations with Turkey (parlement.com, N.D.a).

Within the Balkenende-II government, there are two key government officials who have played a key role in both the runup to the referendum on the Constitutional Treaty – aside from Balkenende himself.

Firstly, Foreign Minister Ben Bot, of the CDA party. Bot was a career diplomat, who had served as Permanent Representative of the Netherlands with the EU for 10 years. His EU experience was one of the reasons why he was asked to become Foreign Minister: the Netherlands would hold the rotating EU presidency in the second half of

2004. As minister, Bot was also a strong proponent of the European Constitution (Eijsvoogel, 2008).

Secondly, State Secretary for European Affairs Atzo Nicolaï, of the VVD party. Contrary to Bot, Nicolaï did not have much previous experience in European (or international) affairs before becoming State Secretary. Before becoming a member of parliament in 1998, he worked in the cultural sector. As an MP, his primary subjects of interest included law and order, as well as cultural policy (Trouw, 2006). Nevertheless, he was known to be 'all-round administrator', capable of easily familiarizing himself with new policy areas. In terms of EU policy, Nicolaï generally adhered to a 'realist' perspective, neither a fervent believer in ever-growing European integration, nor a Eurosceptic. In 2004, he led a government campaign to raise awareness for the EU with the slogan "Europe: Quite Important",[8] which critics argued demonstrated a lack of priority given to the EU in government. Despite this, Nicolaï also supported the European Constitutional Treaty (Kranenburg, 2020).

The Referendum

A noteworthy aspect of the Balkenende-II government was its focus on 'administrative innovation', a topic of importance to D66. Thom de Graaf, vice-PM for D66 and minister for Administrative Innovation, focused on passing constitutional changes to renew the electoral system, as well as to introduce directly elected mayors. After the latter initiative failed in the Senate in March 2005, De Graaf resigned. This forced CDA and VVD to renegotiate the coalition accord with D66, which was arranged in an agreement known as the 'Easter Accord' (signed on Easter 2005). This accord promised investigations into new forms of administrative innovation, including the electoral system, a directly elected Prime Minister, as well as the referendum (parlement.com, N.D.b).

Despite the fact that the Balkenende-II government seemed to have some appetite for administrative innovation, the referendum on the European Constitutional Treaty was not initiated by the government itself. Before the treaty was even drafted, in May 2003, MPs from the PvdA, D66, and GroenLinks tabled a draft law to subject the Constitution

[8] NL: 'Europa: Best Belangrijk'

to a consultative referendum. This was a unique initiative, as the Netherlands had not seen any referendum on the national level in its modern history. Initially, a majority in Parliament was against it, until the Council of State gave the opinion that a referendum could be held instead of the second reading in both chambers of parliament, normally required for constitutional change in the Netherlands.[9] On January 25, 2005, a comfortable majority in the Senate passed the referendum bill, giving the definitive green light for the referendum (Lucardie, 2005, p. 105). Although the government was reluctant about this referendum initiated by Parliament, it did start a campaign from this day. In general, it was agreed that the Ministry of the Interior would set up a campaign to encourage people to go vote, while the Foreign Ministry would inform people on the European Constitutional Treaty. However, government also decided to leave the active campaigning to political parties and societal organizations, to prevent allegations of misuse of power to sway the referendum one way or the other (Lucardie, 2005, p. 107).

It is from this point – January 25, 2005 – that this case study on the role of Prime Minister Balkenende starts off. This case is divided in two different periods: the campaign before the date of the referendum (on June 1, 2005), and the government's EU policy in response to this referendum. The case study ends with the collapse of the Balkenende-II government on June 30, 2006, as D66 withdrew its support for government and this party's officials resigned from government.

[9] The Council of State ('Raad van State') is both the highest judicial body of the Netherlands and an important advisory organ for government.

Case Study 2: Ukraine Referendum

The Ukraine Crisis and the Association Agreement

The Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine was a follow-up to several agreements and partnerships signed by the EU with Ukraine since the latter's independence in 1991. Ukraine has seen political groups wanting integration with the West and with Russia, something that has also had a decisive influence on its politics in the first decades of modern independent Ukraine (Polyakova, 2019). The Association Agreement with the EU, which promised an extensive Free Trade Agreement, cooperation and financial aid in many policy sectors, and visa-free travel for Ukrainians to the EU, had been negotiated starting in 2007 (Kubicek, 2017, p. 144). However, when the Agreement was finished in 2013, pro-Russian Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich decided against signing it in a last-minute decision (Kubicek, 2017, p. 152).

Yanukovich's refusal to sign the Association Agreement sparked what has been dubbed the 'Revolution of Dignity', or 'Euromaidan' – after Maidan Square in Kyiv, where the largest protests took place. Pro-EU Ukrainians took to the streets and, after several months of protests and their brutal oppression by the police, Yanukovich was ousted in February 2014. The EU played a significant role in this revolution, not only in that Yanukovich's refusal of the Association Agreement served as the direct cause of the protests, but also in that EU functionaries and Members of European Parliament went to Kyiv to support the protestors (Davis Cross & Karolewski, 2017, pp. 4-5).

After a new government was installed in Ukraine, it did not take long for Russia to respond: in March 2014, Russian troops were supporting pro-Russian militants in Eastern Ukraine, and Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine (Polyakova, 2019). In light of this invasion, the EU adopted sanctions on Russia in support for the new Ukrainian government. In the end, the Association Agreement was signed by the EU, its Member States, and Ukraine in June 2014 (Davis Cross & Karolewski, 2017, pp. 5-6). After this, it was sent to the national parliaments of all countries involved for the ratification process, that is the process confirming the Agreement. It is at this point that we move to the Dutch domestic context.

The Rutte-II government

The second Rutte cabinet, which governed from 2012 until 2017, was a centrist cabinet consisting of Rutte's own VVD party and the social-democratic PvdA. This cabinet followed from the 2012 parliamentary elections, in which these two parties campaigned harshly against one another. Rutte, in a bid to gain favor with the electorate of the far-right PVV, moved the VVD into a more Eurosceptic direction, claiming for example that no more Dutch money would flow into another Greek bailout during the financial crisis. Meanwhile, the PvdA, under new leader Diederik Samsom, campaigned on a more left-leaning platform, for instance arguing against 'market forces' in healthcare (Meeus, 2012). These campaigns landed the VVD with 41 seats in parliament, and the PvdA with 38, meaning these parties had become the largest by far, and one forming a coalition without the other would be extremely difficult (Niemantsverdriet, 2012). Nevertheless, both parties managed to work out their differences and form a government within 52 days after the election, one of the fastest cabinet formations in Dutch history since World War II (Parlement.com, N.D.-d).

What is important to note is that the Rutte-II government, although it had a majority of 79 out of 150 seats in the Second Chamber of Parliament, did not have a majority in the First Chamber, the Dutch Senate. As such, in order to pass its policies, it relied on agreements with the 'constructive opposition' parties, such as D66 (Heringa, 2014, p. 52). Although some observers have argued that the very nature of the Rutte-II government (combining a big center-right and center-left party) made many of its policies naturally appealing to parties in the center of the political spectrum, many policies of this government were only passed after bargains with one or more opposition parties (Otjes and Louwerse, 2014, p. 48). This is a significant difference with the Balkenende-II government, which could count on a comfortable majority in both Chambers of parliament, and was thus not reliant on support from opposition parties.

An interesting change made in Rutte-II was that it was the first government in decades not to have a State Secretary for European Affairs. According to Heringa (2017), this can be ascribed to the growing role of the European Council, in which the PM is the sole representative of the Netherlands, and the Eurogroup, which increases the influence of the Finance Minister. The increasingly dominant position of both senior ministers in EU policy would remove the need for a lower-ranking member of cabinet

concerned with European cooperation.[10] Lacking a State Secretary for European Affairs, the primary minister to introduce, aside from Rutte himself, is Foreign Minister Bert Koenders (PvdA). He became Foreign Minister in 2014, after his fellow party member Frans Timmermans, who had fulfilled the post since 2012, became a European Commissioner. Koenders had a long career behind him, both on a national and international level. Although he had served as an MP in the late '90s and early '00s, and as Minister for Development Aid in the Balkenende-IV cabinet, his most recent job before becoming Foreign Minister was leading a UN mission in Mali. As might be gathered from these previous positions, his primary expertise was with subjects like development aid (especially to African countries) (Besselink, 2014; Parlement.com, N.D.-e). As such, he had less experience with EU affairs than, for example, Foreign Minister Bot, who had a long career as Permanent Representative in Brussels behind him before becoming Foreign Minister.

As such, compared to the Balkenende-II government that oversaw the 2005 referendum on the European Constitution, the Rutte-II government had a weaker position in parliament, lacked a State Secretary for European Affairs, and had a Foreign Minister with a somewhat less experience in EU affairs. Although these differences (like many others) may explain part of the differences in reactions of these governments to the EU-related referenda, they can also in part be seen as differences in Prime Ministerial leadership. For example, in no longer having a State Secretary for European Affairs, Heringa (2017) also sees a desire from Rutte to have the PM and the Minister of Finance take the lead in EU affairs.

The referendum

The 2016 referendum on the EU's Association Agreement with Ukraine was made possible by the 'Advisory Referendum Law'[11], which went into force on July 1, 2015. This law had been long in the making, with the first initiative for such a law being introduced in Parliament in 2005, right after the referendum on the European Constitution. In its final version, the Advisory Referendum Law stipulated that a non-

[10] State Secretaries for European Affairs were usually the only State Secretaries allowed to partake in meetings of the Council of Ministers on Friday, and could call themselves 'minister' abroad.
[11] NL: 'Wet Raadgevend Referendum'

binding referendum could be initiated on almost any law passed by both Chambers of Parliament. In order for such a referendum to take place, a referendum initiative would have to be signed by 10.000 people, followed by a definitive referendum proposal, which would require 300.000 signatures. Provided at least 30% of eligible voters would cast their ballot during the referendum, the bill would have to be reconsidered by both Chambers of Parliament (De Koster, 2014; Heringa, 2016, p. 7).

Despite the high threshold of 300.000 signatures, the ratification of the Association Agreement with Ukraine was the first EU-related bill that was passed after the introduction of the Advisory Referendum law. After it was approved by the First Chamber, online news site GeenStijl and the 'Citizens' Committee EU' managed to gather enough signatures for a referendum by the end of September. These organizations were soon joined by EU-critical political parties like Geert Wilders' PVV, as well as Eurosceptic thinktank 'Forum for Democracy', which would later become a political party (Van Dongen, 2016). Later on, the founders of the 'Citizens' Committee EU' admitted that their only goal was to strain relations between the Netherlands and the EU, hoping for either a collapse of the EU or a Dutch exit from the block (Heck, 2016). Regardless of the intentions of the organizations, on October 14, 2015, it was announced that the initiative had received the 300.000 required signatures, meaning a referendum would take place (Europa Nu, 2015). As such, October 14, 2015 serves as a starting point for this case study.

As such, unlike the referendum on the European Constitution, the referendum on the Association Agreement was initiated not by politicians, but rather by groups of citizens. Nevertheless, naturally, both referendums were initiated by forces outside of executive government, let alone the Core Executive, which is the focus of research in this thesis.

Case Study 3. The 2008 Financial Crisis

The Global Financial Crisis

In 2008-2009, the EU saw the worst economic crisis it had faced in the existence of the bloc, with the EU's total GNP falling by an annual rate of 6% in the last quarter of 2008. This crisis was caused by an increasing scale of losses by banks worldwide in 2007, due to a declining value in sub-prime mortgages (that is, mortgages to people with low credit ratings) in the USA (Quaglia et al., 2009, pp. 64-5). However, in this first phase of the crisis, Europe was affected to a relatively limited extent. This changed in September 2008, after the US government allowed the bank Lehman Brothers to go bankrupt, causing concern about the financial system and financial institutions worldwide (Howell, 2015, p. 132). In late 2009, this financial crisis also revealed more structural problems of debt and other fiscal woes in various EU countries, such as Greece, leading to the Eurocrisis of the following years (Howell, 2015, p. 132). However, as the lion's share of this Eurocrisis would take place after 2010 (and the replacement of PM Balkenende by PM Rutte), this case study focuses on the period of instability in financial institutions, taking the years 2008 and 2009 as its timeframe.

One of the main problems facing EU countries in their response to the crisis was the fact that many banks operated in several EU countries, while banking supervision was arranged almost exclusively on the national level. In other words, national supervisory authorities of banks did not have the full picture of banks operating in their country (Moloney, 2010, p. 1319). However, this changed during the crisis, as the EU and its member states pushed for more centralization of both regulation and supervision of the banking sector (European Commission, 2014; Moloney, 2010). In other words, the financial shock of 2008 lead to a pressure towards increased EU cooperation in this field.

When it comes to the Netherlands, the country had one of the strongest economic positions of all EU countries in 2008, with low unemployment rates and a budget surplus. However, the country's financial sector did suffer from some contagion, for with its large ABN AMRO bank having been taken over by Belgian Fortis Bank – a bank that would suffer heavily in the crisis – one year earlier (Howell, 2015, p. 143).

As such, the Dutch government was also far from immune from this global financial crisis – and its European repercussions.

The Balkenende-IV Government

The global financial crisis of 2007-2009 occurred during the fourth (and last) Balkenende cabinet. This coalition consisted of the CDA, the PvdA and the smaller Christian party ChristenUnie (CU) (Parlement.com, N.D. -f). It was founded after the November 2006 Parliamentary elections, which saw parties on the edges of the political spectrum (such as the far-left SP) gain at the expense of more centrist parties like the PvdA and VVD. In the end, the two largest parties, the CDA (41 seats) and the PvdA (33), did not have enough seats in the Second Chamber to form a majority coalition together, necessitating the addition of the smaller CU (6 seats) (Kalse & Valk, 2006). However, with the addition of the CU, the coalition could count on a comfortable majority in both Chambers of Parliament. The government started its work on February 22, after a relatively short formation of 89 days. However, what was noteworthy is that the coalition started off with a '100 days' campaign', gathering input from various parts of civil society, before presenting a policy program (Parlement.com, N.D. -f).

A source of instability within the Balkenende-IV government was the relationship between the CDA and PvdA, and in particular between their leaders Balkenende and Wouter Bos. For the PvdA, the outcome of the 2006 elections were quite disappointing: under Bos' charismatic leadership, the party had gained large electoral success in 2003, and enjoyed a comfortable lead in the polls during much of the runup to the 2006 one. It was only after a harsh campaign, in which Balkenende and his team accused Bos of lying to the electorate by regularly changing his views, that the PvdA ended up in second after the CDA once again (Kee, 2017). Once Bos had joined the government as Finance Minister and Vice-PM, relations with Balkenende were generally still quite difficult, with both sides seemingly unable to work out their differences at times (e.g. Slotboom, 2017; Van Weezel, 2012). In the end, it would also be a fundamental disagreement between Bos' PvdA and Balkenende's CDA (on the continuation of the Dutch military mission in Afghanistan) that would lead to the fall of the government in February 2010, having served 3 out of 4 years of its official tenure (De Koning et al.,

2010). In other words, the Balkenende-IV cabinet was one with considerable differences, both on a political and a personal level.

Case Study 4 – The Euro Crisis

The Euro Crisis

In 2009, the EU celebrated the 10th anniversary of the introduction of the Euro in some of its member states. At the time, it seemed like the Euro had been a success, a significant factor in how well the Euro countries had weathered the global financial crisis of 2007-2008. However, in December 2009, the new Greek government announced that the country's budget deficit was much higher than previously reported, leading to soaring interest rates on Greek government loans. Not long after, it became clear that Greece needed support from other EU countries, starting the Euro Crisis (Copelovitch et al., 2016, p. 814). Later, these higher interest rates would also hit other EU countries with relatively high sovereign debt, such as Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Cyprus (Copellovitch et al., 2016, p. 815).

This crisis led to several years of heated discussion within the EU between indebted nations and creditor nations about how the burden of getting sovereign debt to acceptable levels would be divided. While indebted countries argued for financial support from the less indebted Euro countries, these creditor countries pointed to the need for economic reform and austerity in the indebted countries (Frieden & Walter, 2017, p. 380). Furthermore, there was much controversy surrounding proposed reform of the EU or the Euro in order to end this crisis and prevent similar economic crises from occurring in the future. Of these, the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), a fund for loans to indebted governments, subject to approval of the ECB, the European Commission and the IMF, introduced in 2012, was the most significant reform actually implemented. This proposal also came with a lot of political controversy, for instance on whether or not the IMF (a worldwide lender of last resort for indebted countries) should be involved (Frieden & Walter, 2017, p. 382).

The Rutte-I government

This case study focuses on Dutch EU policy during the Euro crisis during the Rutte-I cabinet, from October 2010 through October 2012, when the Rutte-II government was installed. This coalition came into being after the June 2010 elections, which featured a dramatic fall of Balkenende's CDA (and the subsequent resignation of Balkenende as party leader) from 41 to 21 seats, and a rise of both Rutte's VVD (31 seats) and the Eurosceptic PVV party of Geert Wilders (24) (Staal & Oranje, 2010). Rutte-I was a minority cabinet of VVD and CDA, with parliamentary support from the PVV. This construction allowed the coalition to govern with PVV support on subjects the parties could agree on, while working with other parties on subjects of disagreement with Wilders' party (Parlement.com, N.D. -g).

One of the subjects where Rutte-I could not count on the support of the PVV was EU affairs, with the PVV taking a hard stance against European integration. In other words, when it came to dealing with the Euro crisis in these years, the Rutte-I government practically acted as a minority cabinet, which had to find majorities with different opposition parties in order to pass its EU policy (Van den Berg, 2011). This meant that this cabinet did not have much leeway in this policy area, and continually had to keep domestic political support in mind. As such, it was criticized both domestically and internationally for being too 'inward-looking', too focused on its domestic political interests, in its foreign policy in general – and its EU policy in particular (Colijn, 2012, p. 3; Eijsvogel & Kranenburg, 2012).

Finance minister in Rutte-I was Jan Kees de Jager. A business economist and founder of an IT-company, De Jager had been politically active mostly inside of his own CDA party, before becoming State Secretary (and later Minister) of Finance under Balkenende-IV. This gave him the image of being somewhat "a-political", more focused on substance (Van Harskamp & Kok, 2011). However, contemporary analyses in the media that he could navigate the political differences between the Eurosceptic forces in Dutch politics and economic problems on the EU level quite well as Finance Minister (Giebels & Meerhof, 2012; Van Brummelen, 2011). This navigation between domestic and European political forces – both by De Jager and by Rutte himself – is discussed further in the case study itself.

In other words, the first Rutte Cabinet had to deal with a complicated domestic political situation in dealing with the Euro crisis: while it formally governed with support of the Eurosceptic PVV, it could not count on the PVV's support in EU-related matters.

Appendix 3: Overview of Dutch Political Parties

This appendix gives a brief description of the Dutch political parties mentioned in this thesis. It draws this basic information on some of the most important Dutch parties from an English-language report from ProDemos, an independent institute aiming to inform citizens on the Dutch political and administrative system (ProDemos, 2013).

CDA ('Christen Democratisch Appèl')	Christian Democratic party formed in 1980 by a merger of several Christianity-inspired parties. This centrist to centre-right party's ideology is based on several principles: justice, the shared responsibility of the government and society, solidarity and stewardship (our shared responsibility to look after the natural and cultural environment) (ProDemos, 2013, p. 20).
ChristenUnie	Protestant party formed in 2000. Socially conservative, with a strong emphasis on Christian values in Dutch public life. More progressive stances on issues like migration and socio-economic differences (Andeweg et al., 2020, p. 74; ProDemos, 2013, p. 22).
D66 ('Democrats 66')	Social-liberal party founded in 1966. Traditionally advocated reforms of the Dutch government and electoral systems. Today a progressive centrist party, with a particular interest in education, and a pro-EU stance (Andeweg et al., 2020, p. 76; ProDemos, 2013, p. 22).
GroenLinks	Green party founded in 1994 through a merger of communist, pacifist, left-wing Catholic and progressive evangelical parties. Focuses mostly on environmental issues and reforms benefitting the less advantaged in society (ProDemos, 2013, p. 220).
LPF ('Lijst Pim Fortuyn')	Right-wing populist party, founded in 2002 by Pim Fortuyn. Took issue in particular with migration and integration in the Netherlands. Entered Parliament after the assassination of Fortuyn in 2002, but disappeared from Parliament again in 2006 (ProDemos, 2013, p. 22).
PvdA ('Partij van de Arbeid')	Social Democratic party created in 1946, with an ideology (obviously) centred on solidarity with the less advantaged in society, and gradually changing Dutch society to attain this goal (ProDemos, 2013, p. 20).
PVV ('Partij voor de Vrijheid')	Right-wing populist party founded in 2006 by Geert Wilders and the Foundation Group-Wilders (with Wilders himself as the only member). Perceives migration and Islam as a threat to Dutch society, and is against Dutch membership of the EU (ProDemos, 2013, p. 22).
SP ('Socialistische Partij')	Socialist party with Marxist-Leninist roots, founded in 1972. Critical of other left-wing parties' willingness to compromise on socio-economic issues (ProDemos, 2013, p. 22).

VVD ('Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie')	Liberal party formed in 1948, with an ideology centred on individual freedom and limiting government intervention in society (ProDemos, 2013, p. 21).

Appendix 4: Search Terms used

For all case studies, the same search terms were used in the database for Parliamentary documents (overheid.nl), as well as for newspaper articles (LexisNexis).

Case Study 1

“ "Grondwet" AND "referendum" AND ("EU" OR "Europese Unie") AND "Balkenende" “

Case Study 2

“ "Referendum" AND "Oekraïne" AND "Rutte" “

Case Study 3

“ ("Financiële Crisis" OR "bankencrisis" OR "kredietcrisis") AND "Balkenende" AND ("EU" OR "Europese Unie") “

Case Study 4

“ ("schuldencrisis" OR "eurocrisis") and "Rutte" and ("EU" OR "Europese Unie") “