

5 Risky missions

Dutch public opinion on peacekeeping in the Balkans

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Introduction: a new rationale

In the waning years of the Cold War public opinion in the Netherlands showed unmistakable signs of a changing perception of the armed forces. For decades the latter were considered 'necessary' by some 80 per cent of the public. Measured year by year, gradually this figure declined, down to 66 per cent in 1989: still a considerable majority, but the downward trend was telling.

Confidence in the armed forces also dropped, from 43 per cent in 1981 to 32 per cent in 1990. Though not very high to begin with, again the trend was suggestive. Less money for the military also appealed more and more to the public, especially when budget cutting entailed a choice between different policy-goals. In 1989 almost 60 per cent (1982: below 40 per cent) favoured a relatively deep cut in the defence budget.

Ten years later, the public's priority still lies very much with 'health care', 'education', 'fighting crime', rather than with 'peacekeeping'. The preference for financially curtailing the armed forces, though, is less outspoken. In 1999 34 per cent of public opinion opts for a bigger share of defence money in overall budget cutting, which represents a drop of more than 20 per cent compared to 1989. Moreover, in the meantime, the necessity of the armed forces has recovered to a stable-looking 70-plus per cent backing. On top of that, confidence has risen again to 72 per cent! While at the end of the 1980s a vacuum, if not a crisis of legitimacy, seemed at hand, it looks as if by now new meaning has been ascribed to the military. No doubt this has a lot to do with peacekeeping and the like. In June 1999, crisis management and peacekeeping were judged to be the most important tasks of present-day armed forces by 44 per cent of the Dutch population. Humanitarian assistance was 'chosen' by 16 per cent and the classical task of national and allied defence was seen as the most important one by 30 per cent.

Though not visible immediately at this level, in fact support for a changed rationale for the military came about rather quickly and smoothly. The way in which the public accepted the abolition of the draft system

of recruitment is a very good indicator of the direction and the speed of this process. Typically, when asked to choose pro or contra conscription, in late 1989 a majority of Dutch public opinion favoured maintaining it: 50 per cent versus 36 per cent. Within three years, however, a complete turnabout had taken place: 18 per cent versus 70 per cent! This near consensus, at the end of 1992, antedated the government's decision to abolish conscription, which became official in the spring of 1993. Though not the only reason for doing away with conscription, the consideration that it would be wrong to send draftees on out-of-area missions had weighed heavily. During the Gulf War, for instance, 72 per cent of public opinion in the Netherlands took that view, while 65 per cent said professional soldiers should be obliged to go, even if they did not like it.¹ So an all-volunteer force made fit for new military missions can be said to be very much in accordance with Dutch popular preferences as these developed after the Cold War.

In the meantime, Dutch soldiers have participated in quite a number of missions, from Cambodia via Angola to Haiti, to name but a few. Definitely the most conspicuous of these has been, and still is, peacekeeping in the former Yugoslavia. Under the less than successful aegis of UNPROFOR lessons have been learned the hard way. The failure to protect the 'safe area' of Srebrenica and the dramatic consequences of the fall of this town still haunt Dutch military and society to this very day. In a way this makes it all the more remarkable, as the above figures suggest, that in principle there is no turning away from new missions. The big question is of course: how risky dare these missions become?

In this chapter we will analyse how Dutch public opinion evaluated the potential and actual risks of military deployment on the territory of former Yugoslavia from 1992 onwards. In the next few paragraphs we focus on the period before, during and immediately after the deployment of UNPROFOR. We will scrutinise the public 'tolerance for casualties' and its relationship to the support for this particular mission, together with some other variables, which are likely to pertain to mission support. We will also test how tolerance and support interact with the perception of mission success. This entails a testing of correlations between three key variables. The following section is more descriptive and interpretative. The public evaluation of risks, especially during IFOR, will be juxtaposed with mission justifications. In fact this harks back to what was hinted at in the Introduction: the development of new post-Cold War notions about the necessity and rationale of armed force(s). In a short conclusion we present some recent data on Dutch public opinion about casualties in the context of the Kosovo crisis of 1999, in order to update the chapter with respect to risky missions in the Balkans.

UNPROFOR: the first test

In this section we will analyse and interpret the results of two sets of survey questions: first, those directly pertaining to casualties among Dutch soldiers, and second, those referring to general support for participation by Dutch soldiers in UN peacekeeping in Bosnia. Surveys have been held in the period from August 1992 to December 1995, covering the deployment of UNPROFOR and including the beginning of IFOR. All surveys were held among representative samples of the adult Dutch population.

In general, differences among surveys caused by differences in question wording present serious obstacles to reliable comparisons. In this particular case, however, in one way or another, all questions come down to something like: would you find casualties among Dutch soldiers acceptable, yes or no? Looked at in this way, comparisons are both possible and justified. Table 5.1 gives the data from nine surveys (for the precise question wordings, see the notes to this table).

All questions, except those from July 1995, refer to the possibility of casualties among Dutch soldiers. This means that the results must be interpreted as the *professed*, not the actual, public tolerance for casualties. Even though, during the period in question, five Dutch soldiers died while in Bosnia (through accidents, mines and 'in combat'), and many of them were wounded, we hesitate to interpret answers as a reflection of these fatalities – again, also given the way in which questions were phrased. It is fortunate of course that in this particular case (just as in other comparable missions) professed tolerance for casualties cannot be tested against real acceptance. In a way, this is what the whole issue is about. As was also pointed out earlier, public opinion research also teaches us to be careful in interpreting answers to hypothetical scenarios. With these provisos in mind, we think that scrutinising data from the available surveys can still be telling.

As shown in Table 5.1, over time the number of people accepting possible military casualties as a consequence of peacekeeping in Bosnia fluctuated between two extremes: from 80 per cent to 30 per cent. Accordingly, the number of people finding casualties 'unacceptable' ranged from 14 per cent to 64 per cent. Apparently, at the beginning of UNPROFOR people were more willing to accept possible casualties than at the end of the mission (and the beginning of IFOR). A dip in tolerance showed itself in the summer of 1995. Thereafter acceptance of possible casualties rose again, but it did not reach the 80 per cent level of the summer of 1992.

It is noteworthy that the one and only question referring directly to the actual death of a Dutch soldier in July 1995 resulted in the lowest number of people (30 per cent) accepting (more) casualties. By itself the latter result seems to support the casualty hypothesis at its simplest: one casualty causes an immediate drop in tolerance. In the context of other results this is a

Table 5.1 Evolution of the acceptability of casualties (risks) among Dutch soldiers in the UNPROFOR mission in former Yugoslavia (in %)

Date	Acceptable	Unacceptable	No opinion/ Don't know	N; survey-method	Source
Aug. 92	76	17	7	not available	AVRO/NIPO ^a
Dec. 92	66	20	14	1093; face-to-face	SMK/NIPO ^b
April 93	80	14	6	not available	AVRO/NIPO ^c
Dec. 93	57	29	14	1135; face-to-face	SMK/NIPO ^d
Dec. 94	48	39	13	1005; face-to-face	SMK/NIPO ^e
June 95	34	47	19	709; face-to-face	SMK/NIPO ^f
July 95	30	64	6	505; telephone	RTL/INTOMART ^g
Aug. 95	52	30	18	829; face-to-face	SMK/SVV/NIPO ^h
Sept. 95	55	23	22	1035; telephone	SMK/Telepanel Marktonderzoek ⁱ
Dec. 95 ¹	54	33	13	933; face-to-face	SMK/NIPO ^j
Mean	56	32	13		

1 Concerns for IFOR mission, the continuation of UNPROFOR under NATO command.

Text of the questions:

a 06/08/1992, AVRO/NIPO

'Inevitably losses will be suffered in the case of a military intervention in former Yugoslavia. Under the circumstances, do you find it acceptable or unacceptable that Dutch soldiers could be killed as well?'

b 21/12/1992, SMK/NIPO

Introduction: 'In Yugoslavia a civil war has been going on for some time. Do you think a peace-force of the UN will succeed in keeping the fighting parties separated? If this does not work out (that is keeping the fighting parties separated), do you think the UN should intervene by using military force? Should the Netherlands participate in such an intervention also when it is almost certain that our own soldiers would be killed or wounded?'

c 04/1993, AVRO/NIPO

'It is inevitable losses will be suffered in the case of a military intervention in the situation in former Yugoslavia. Under the circumstances, do you find it acceptable or unacceptable that Dutch soldiers could be killed as well?'

d 20/12/1993, SMK/NIPO

Introduced by the question: 'What do you think of the risks Dutch soldiers are running in former Yugoslavia? Do you think they are very big, rather big, neither big nor small, rather small or very small?' 'Do you find these risks acceptable or unacceptable?'

e 03/12/1994, SMK/NIPO

'Do you find the risks Dutch soldiers are running at the moment in former Yugoslavia acceptable or not acceptable?'

f 24/06/1995, SMK/NIPO

'Do you find the risks Dutch soldiers are running at the moment in former Yugoslavia acceptable or not acceptable?'

g 12/07/1995, RTL/INTOMART

'Last weekend a Dutch soldier died in Bosnia. Do you think the UN attempts in Bosnia to protect the civilian population justify the risk of more Dutch soldiers being killed?' 'Do you find the risks Dutch soldiers are running at this moment in Bosnia acceptable or not acceptable?'

h 22/08/95 SMK/SVV/NIPO

'According to you is it justified to use military force, if there is a chance that many soldiers will be killed or wounded?'

i 03/09/1995, SMK/Telepanel Marktonderzoek

'In the night from Tuesday August 29 to August 30 NATO planes have begun to attack targets of the Bosnian Serbs. In addition to these air attacks the Bosnian Serbian positions were fired upon by ground-forces from the so-called rapid reaction force. About 100 marines are involved in the shootings by the rapid reaction force, that consists mainly of French and British soldiers. These shootings are done by means of ground weapons. What is your opinion on the deployment of Dutch soldiers in this action by the rapid reaction force? Do you find it acceptable that Dutch forces are deployed in hostilities in which the risk of casualties on the Dutch side is huge (for instance in a ground attack)?'

j 19/12/1995, SMK/NIPO

'To what extent do you agree or disagree if the NATO forces use force to enforce the implementation of the peace-agreement? Do you find the use of force acceptable or unacceptable if there is a good chance that Dutch soldiers will be killed or wounded?'

Table 5.2 Acceptability of casualties

Question: 'If Dutch soldiers get involved in combat situations in Bosnia, what number of casualties do you think is acceptable?'

Number of casualties	%
Less than 10	2
10	2
20	2
30	2
40	1
50	0
60	2
70	—
80	—
90	0
100	—
110 to 149	0
More than 150	—
None	2
Don't know	4

n = 742.

Source: IKON/SVV, September 1993.

premature conclusion however. In the period before the death of this particular soldier, during the fall of Srebrenica, the number of people professing to accept risks and possible casualties was already declining. In fact, as far as the data can tell us, tolerance for casualties had already been declining since the end of 1993. This suggests that the acceptance of casualties is not just a consequence of actual fatalities. Moreover, one to two months after 'Srebrenica', the number of people accepting casualties had increased again. So, in as far as there was a shock effect, it did not last. As we will see below, this must be interpreted in the context of general mission support.

One particular question about casualties is not shown in Table 5.1 because of very different wording. In a September 1993 survey, the Dutch public was asked about the actual *number* of military casualties it would find acceptable during peacekeeping in Bosnia. Table 5.2 gives the results.

Almost half of the sample (42 per cent) said they would not accept one single casualty. Respondents saying casualties were acceptable (31 per cent) can be found mainly in the category 'less than 10' (22 per cent). A relatively high percentage reacted with 'don't know' (26 per cent).

In retrospect, knowing the course of events in Bosnia, we might comment that at the time the public apparently somewhat underestimated its own tolerance for casualties. Generally speaking, however, one may wonder

whether this kind of hypothetical 'body count', really makes sense as a question. For one thing, respondents have to choose absolute numbers of casualties, while their relative meaning is unknown. Depending on manpower strength, ten casualties could mean that 1 per cent of all troops would be killed, but it could also mean 5 or 10 per cent. For another thing, asking about acceptable numbers of casualties can 'deter' people. Nobody *wants* any dead soldiers. Even though this is a problematic question, we don't want to push it aside and overlook its results. They do underscore the fact of sensitivity towards casualties, in general as well in the case of Bosnia. Also, this question strongly reminds us how much difference wordings in questions can make.

Yet, looking at the data in Table 5.1, without forgetting about those from Table 5.2, we arrive at a number of related conclusions. One, for the whole period under review a majority of the population professed a zero-plus-tolerance for casualties: on average 56 per cent said it would find casualties 'acceptable', while an average of 32 per cent answered 'unacceptable'. Two, the trend towards declining acceptance, which reached its lowest point in July 1995, did not prove to be irreversible. Third, fluctuations in acceptance of casualties cannot be explained exclusively by fatal incidents themselves – though probably the perception of 'numbers' does make a difference. It seems reasonable to expect that general mission support must be taken into consideration. The latter expectation will be tested below.

Determinants of mission support

Table 5.3 shows the responses of the Dutch public to various questions on support for military participation in peacekeeping missions in Bosnia. The wording of the questions in August 1992 and April 1993 was identical. The questions put forward in December 1993 and 1994, as well as in June 1995 and August 1995 were identical also. The questions in the survey of December 1995 referred to the then freshly starting operation IFOR.²

Between 1992 and 1995 an average of 66 per cent of the Dutch population supported military participation in Bosnia. The average opposing it was 17 per cent. According to the polls the highest level of support (almost 90 per cent!) could be found in the summer of 1992. From December 1993 until June 1995 support for Dutch military participation dropped from 68 per cent to 41 per cent. The very time support was lowest (July 1995) opposition had not grown proportionally. Relatively many people had become undecided.

At the fateful moment after the fall of Srebrenica (and the death of one Dutch soldier) the public was asked directly whether or not Dutch soldiers should stay (see Appendix). Apparently a majority (57 per cent) felt that they should withdraw. Undoubtedly events in this period caused a drop in support, but most likely they did not trigger the decline. The decline

Table 5.3 Support for Dutch military participation in the UNPROFOR mission in former Yugoslavia (in %)

Date	Favour	Oppose	No opinion/ Don't know	N; survey-method	Source
Aug. 92	87	8	5	not available	AVRO/NIPO ^a
April 93	88	8	4	not available	AVRO/NIPO ^a
Dec. 93	68	14	19	1135; face-to-face	SMK/NIPO ^b
Dec. 94	53	26	21	1005; face-to-face	SMK/NIPO ^b
June 95	41	26	34	709; face-to-face	SMK/NIPO ^c
July 95	33	57	10	505; telephone	RTL/INTOMART ^d
Aug. 95	62	18	20	829; face-to-face	SMK/SVV/NIPO ^b
Sept. 95	52	30	19	1035; telephone	SMK/Telepanel Marktonderzoek ^e
Dec. 95	69	12	20	933; face-to-face	SMK/NIPO ^f
Dec. 95	71	12	17	505; telephone	NOS ^g
Mean	66	17	18		

Text of the questions:

a 06/08/1992 and 04/1993, AVRO/NIPO

'Do you think that in the case of a military intervention (in Yugoslavia) Dutch soldiers should be deployed as well?'

b 20/12/1993, 03/12/1994, 22/08/95 SMK/SVV/NIPO

'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the participation of the Dutch armed forces in the UN mission in former Yugoslavia?' (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree)

c 24/06/1995, SMK/NIPO

'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the participation of the Dutch armed forces in the UN mission in former Yugoslavia?' (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree)

d 12/07/1995, RTL/INTOMART

'Tension is building up in Bosnia. This afternoon the NATO has executed air-attacks on the Serbs around Srebrenica. The Serbs have invaded Srebrenica this afternoon. The Dutch UN soldiers have retreated to the UN headquarters in Srebrenica. Do you think the Dutch soldiers should stay in Bosnia to keep the fighting parties separated or do you think they should not stay?'

e 03/09/1995, Telepanel Marktonderzoek

'To what extent do you agree with the following statement: the Netherlands should continue contributing troops to the UN peace-force in the former Yugoslavia, if the UN ask the Netherlands for it.' (agree, more agree than disagree, neither agree nor disagree, more disagree than agree, disagree)

f 19/12/1995, SMK/NIPO

'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the participation of the Dutch armed forces in the NATO forces that will be stationed in former Yugoslavia?' (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly)

g 12/1995, NOS (Kijk en Luisteronderzoek)

'The Netherlands should contribute to the NATO peace-force that should see to it that the peace-agreement in Bosnia will be fulfilled.' (Agree, partly agree/disagree, disagree, don't know/no answer)

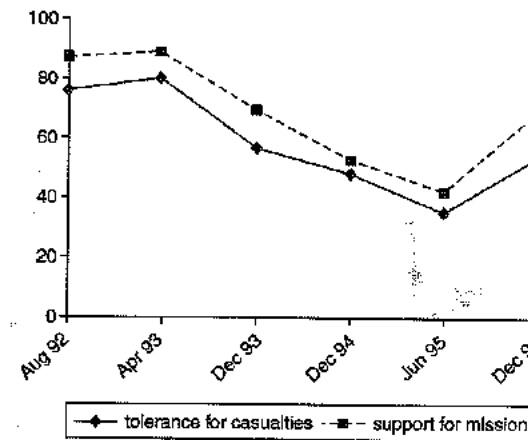


Figure 5.1 Trends in mission support and tolerance of casualties in the Netherlands.

in support seems to have started already quite some time before the summer of 1995, just like the decline in the acceptance of casualties. From August 1995 onwards a majority of the public again were in favour of participating in Bosnia.

The relationship between tolerance for casualties and mission support seems clear: as Figure 5.1 shows, the trend in the latter paralleled the trend in the former.

A correlation between tolerance for casualties and general mission support does not necessarily imply that less acceptance for casualties causes a decline in support. In a way, this is a debate about what comes first. Our educated guess is that the reverse is more plausible: because support for the mission declined, tolerance for casualties declined as well. Support for the mission also depends on factors like the goal, the effectiveness and the length of the mission; on the credibility of political leadership and the degree to which people are involved with the situation. This in turn has its impact on people's tolerance for casualties. Of course one can imagine that when there are large numbers of casualties, the effectiveness of the mission will become more unlikely in people's perception. This means there is an interaction between all these factors. Which factor will be decisive for another will vary from one mission to another.

In the next section we will explore some determinants of the support for Dutch participation in the mission in former Yugoslavia. For this we use the survey data of December 1995, just before the NATO troops (IFOR) were stationed in Yugoslavia. This choice is mainly made for practical reasons, namely the variables that are present in this survey. In general, the variables in the different surveys cannot be compared. In the survey of December 1995 we have a variety of variables at hand that

could be expected to have an influence on mission support. At some points we will refer to other surveys, as in the case of sex, age, education and political affiliation. The following variables will be used in the analysis:

Dependent:

- *Participation in peacekeeping mission:* 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the participation of the Dutch armed forces in the NATO forces that will be stationed in former Yugoslavia?' (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree).

Independent:

- *Casualties:* 'Do you find the use of force acceptable or unacceptable if there is a good chance that Dutch soldiers will be killed or wounded?' (coded 1 = unacceptable, 2 = acceptable);
- *Use of force:* 'To what extent do you agree or disagree if the NATO troops impose the implementation of the peace-agreement by force?' (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree);
- *Likelihood of success:* 'Do you consider it likely or unlikely these troops will succeed in ensuring the fulfilment of the peace agreement?' (very unlikely, unlikely, neither unlikely nor likely, likely, very likely);
- *Importance of armed forces:* 'How important do you find the armed forces for the Netherlands?' (very unimportant, rather unimportant, not important/not unimportant, rather unimportant, very unimportant);
- *Task of armed forces:* 'Which of the following tasks do you consider the most important for the Dutch armed forces?' (defence of national and allied territory (35 per cent), world-wide crisis management (23 per cent) or humanitarian assistance (34 per cent));
- *Age:* (coded 1 = 18-24 years, 2 = 25-34, 3 = 35-44, 4 = 45-54, 5 = 55-64, 6 = 65 years and older);
- *Sex:* (coded 1 = male, 2 = female);
- *Education* (1 = primary education, 2 = primary vocational training, 3 = lower general secondary education, 4 = secondary vocational training, 5 = higher general secondary education + pre-university education, 6 = higher vocational training, 7 = university);
- *Political affiliation:* we distinguish the Christian democratic party (CDA), the social democratic party (PvdA), the right-wing liberal party (VVD), the left-wing liberal party (D66), the leftist green party (GroenLinks); a rightist side consisting of the small religious parties; other parties and non-voters.

We will use linear regression analysis to explore the relationships between these variables.³ Table 5.4 shows the results.

First, we look at the direct effect of the variables. It appears that women were less supportive of Dutch military participation in IFOR than men.

Table 5.4 Determinants of peacekeeping missions. Uncontrolled and controlled regression-effects on support for Dutch military participation in IFOR, December 1995

	Uncontrolled		Controlled	
	b	β	b	β
Constant				
Sex		-0.13*	1.65*	-0.2
Age		-0.09*		-0.10*
Education		0.12*		0.07*
<i>Political affiliation:</i>				
CDA	0.23		0.13	
PVDA	0.16		0.14	
VVD	0.39*		0.25*	
D66	0.27		0.19	
GroenLinks	0.14		0.09	
Religious	-0.04		-0.11	
Other parties/ non-voters	0.05		-0.006	
<i>Most important task of armed forces:</i>				
Defence		-0.46*		-0.37*
Crisis management		-0.47*		-0.15
Humanitarian assistance		-0.64*		-0.33
<i>Importance of armed forces</i>		0.21*		0.19*
<i>Casualties</i>		0.27*		0.10*
<i>Likelihood of success</i>		0.45*		0.37*
<i>Use of force</i>		0.30*		0.13*
<i>R² (adjusted)</i>			33%	

* = significant at 0.05 level.

People in the older age groups were less supportive of Dutch military participation than younger people. As regards education, it appears that the higher educated were more in support of Dutch military participation. The effects of age and education are generally found. Those in older age groups and people with a lower education are usually less supportive of Dutch military participation in military missions (see Table A.1 in Appendix).

Women are usually less in favour of military participation in missions (Table A.2), but this does not necessarily imply that they are more against it. Rather, they are over-represented in the response category 'don't know'. With regard to tolerance for casualties, there is a big difference between men and women (Table A.2). Men are much more inclined than women to accept possible casualties among Dutch soldiers.

People who would vote for the right-wing liberal party (VVD) were more in support of Dutch military participation than people who would vote for the leftist green party (*GroenLinks*). This has not always been the case. Before December 1995 the reverse was true: *GroenLinks* voters were more in support of Dutch military participation than VVD voters (see Table A.4 in Appendix). What has brought about this change? Maybe these responses mirror the standpoint of the different political parties. Maybe the fact that IFOR would be under NATO command, with a mandate other than the mission under UN command UNPROFOR, caused this change. In Table A.5 in the Appendix we see that tolerance for casualties among *GroenLinks* voters also was above average except in December 1995. Again support for the mission and tolerance for casualties seem to go hand in hand.

People who consider 'crisis management' to be the most important task of the armed forces agree more with Dutch military participation in IFOR than people considering 'defence' or 'humanitarian aid' to be the most important task. Also the more importance given to the armed forces, the more agreement with Dutch participation in IFOR. Again, the direction of the relationship is not clear. Perhaps people who consider the armed forces to be important anyway are, therefore, more in support of the mission. Or, because of the mission, the armed forces become more important in the perception of people. The same can be said about the question as to which task people consider the most important.

The positive effect of tolerance for casualties means that people who accepted possible casualties were more supportive of military participation. As the agreement with the imposition by force of the implementation of the peace agreement grew stronger, support was generally higher. Finally, a higher perceived likeliness of success goes together with higher support for Dutch military participation. These variables do not, as stated before, necessarily *cause* higher or lower support, but the correlation is present.

After controlling for other variables, the effects of age, education, importance of the armed forces, tolerance for casualties, agreement with the use of force and the perceived chance of success remain. Also, VVD voters remain more in favour than *GroenLinks* voters and people who consider defence the most important task remain more opposed than people who consider crisis management the most important task.

The strongest influence is that of the perceived chance of success, followed by the importance of the armed forces, then the extent to which one agrees with the use of force, and, finally, the acceptance of casualties. Effects of the independent variables are controlled for the other independents. This means for instance that the effect of age cannot be explained by smaller tolerance for casualties among older age groups.

If tolerance for casualties were the only independent variable, the percentage of variance explained would be 7 per cent. After adding the other independent variables the explained variance increases to 33 per cent. Tolerance for casualties was accompanied on the individual level by

support for Dutch military participation in Bosnia, but other variables also influence support. And these effects do not disappear because of lower or higher tolerance for casualties.

Mission support and mission success

It is not too far-fetched to expect that the *success* of a mission affects both variables: tolerance for casualties and mission support. To be more precise, the implication is that on the *individual level* perceived mission success will affect support for mission participation and tolerance for possible casualties. This sounds quite logical: public support will be lower to the same degree that mission accomplishment seems more difficult in advance. In line with that, the acceptance of casualties will decline when the prospects for success are perceived as dim. In the survey of December 1995 the following question was phrased: 'Do you think it probable or improbable that NATO troops will succeed in implementing the peace agreement?' This question indicates a perception of the chance of success ascribed to IFOR, UNPROFOR's follow-up mission. Table 5.5 clearly suggests that the correlation between tolerance for casualties and mission support depends to a degree on perceived mission success.

When we look at the group of respondents who think the likelihood of success is low, more than half of the people who do not accept casualties are against Dutch participation. Among those who accept casualties, slightly more than a quarter are against participation. Among the neutral group, more than 80 per cent of those who do not accept casualties are in favour of mission participation. When we look at those who think success is probable, mission support is almost 100 per cent, regardless of tolerance for casualties. In the latter case there is no significant correlation between mission support and tolerance for casualties.

To conclude this part of the analysis: the expressed tolerance for (possible) casualties correlates with people's support for Dutch military participation in Bosnia. On the individual level the results support the idea that sensitivity to casualties becomes less important as the aim of the mission looks

Table 5.5 Relationship between tolerance for casualties and support for Dutch military participation in the mission in Bosnia, controlled for the expected success of the mission, December 1995 (% of those in support)

	Casualties unacceptable	Casualties acceptable	Correlation
Chance improbable (27%)	41	73	0.32*
Chance neutral (30%)	83	94	0.17*
Chance probable (43%)	97	95	-0.045

* = significant at 0.01 level.

easier to achieve and it is probable that troops will fulfil their task. So both tolerance and support are dependent on the perceived success of the mission. Of course all variables are interdependent: if tolerance for casualties decreases, the perceived chance of success is likely to decline as well. And with a decline in perceived mission success, tolerance for casualties will also decline. Support will probably evolve accordingly.

IFOR: a quiet mission

Following the chronology of events in former Yugoslavia, with the last question we move to the next phase. In terms of acronyms for the forces: UNPROFOR made way for IFOR. Throughout 1996 the latter mission has been closely followed through a number of surveys. In this paragraph we will analyse part of the data from these surveys, especially with respect to risks, its micro-dimensions and its macro-context. As said above, this part of the chapter is more descriptive and interpretative, in comparison to the empirical test of the second section.

Right from the start, participating in IFOR received ample public backing. But why again were we there? 'What is the main justification for the participation of Dutch troops [in IFOR]?' 'Dutch interest' said 2 per cent; 'European security': 24 per cent; 'NATO obligations': 13 per cent; 'human rights in Bosnia': 50 per cent. ('No justification' and 'don't know': 11 per cent.) It is a telling answer pattern, revealing as much about the justification that apparently does not count ('Dutch interest') as about the one that clearly prevails ('human rights'). Taken together, the other two justifications, 'European security' and 'NATO obligations', count for almost 40 per cent of the answers. This is not a percentage to be overlooked. Besides, these categories are related implicitly to national interests. Still, the impression that idealistic motives for participating in IFOR dominate seems to be warranted. This fits in with the general priorities ascribed to present-day armed forces, as hinted at in the Introduction. Put another way: in the eyes of the public it is *not* primarily for reasons of classical national defence that troops are being deployed in Bosnia.

Bringing to justice those suspected of having grossly violated human rights, to the point of 'ethnic cleansing' and genocide, has been part of the Dayton agreement. The active pursuit of suspects, however, was not within the IFOR mandate. As Table 5.6 suggests, public opinion in the Netherlands was rather divided about this constraint.

In April 1996 most people (49 per cent versus 41 per cent) said they could understand why IFOR did not chase Karadzic and company. In July percentages were reversed: 50 per cent versus 41 per cent could *not* understand this policy. Eventually, in November opinions were perfectly split: 44 per cent on both sides. Evidently, the public was strongly ambivalent about something that from a human rights standpoint should be done, but that for other reasons was given low priority. Decision makers feared

Table 5.6 Trace war criminals (in %)

Question: 'It is not part of the mandate of the troops in Bosnia to actively trace persons who are suspected of war crimes. What do you think of this restriction?'

	April 1996 N = 756 (face-to-face)	July 1996 N = 835 (face-to-face)	November 1996 N = 761 (face-to-face)
Understandable	49	41	44
Not understandable	41	50	44
Don't know	10	9	12

the effects of arrests on the fragile peace process in Bosnia, but also, in line with earlier moments during the conflict, were afraid that their own constituencies would not tolerate casualties. As for the latter argument, they may have been overcautious (as they were before). In November when IFOR had almost completed its mission, when asked whether the 'active pursuit of suspected war criminals should be part of the SFOR mandate, even if the lives of NATO soldiers were at risk', 30 per cent of Dutch public opinion said 'definitely yes', 33 per cent 'probably yes', 15 per cent 'probably no', 9 per cent 'definitely no', while 13 per cent 'did not know'. Of course, this leaves the question open as to whether it would be wise to do so in view of the peace process. Decision makers have been wrestling with both arguments, as well as political effects and home-front morale. Our prediction is that public opinion would applaud the arresting of Bosnian-Serbian top dogs, even if a number of NATO soldiers were (fatally) harmed, because the event as such would be considered a success in terms of human rights.

Risks

Given the way IFOR evolved, practically from start to finish, it comes as no surprise that a majority of the Dutch people considered the risks soldiers were running as 'acceptable'. In April 1996, however, the moment when we came up with this question, the majority was a bit larger than in November of that year. The numbers considering risks 'acceptable' dropped from 66 per cent in April to 56 per cent in November. The minority considering risks as 'not acceptable' grew proportionally: from 25 per cent to 34 per cent. IFOR did suffer some casualties, especially because of incidents with mines and car accidents. A number of Dutch soldiers were wounded, but none of them fatally. It is possible that incidents and accidents such as these did have some impact and can help explain why more people judged risks as not acceptable. It is also possible that ongoing publicity about peacekeeping in general and about the blue helmets of UNPROFOR in particular, generated some extra sensitivity

Table 5.7 Biggest risk for soldiers in Bosnia (in %)

Question: 'What do you think causes the biggest risk for soldiers in Bosnia?'

	April 1996 N = 756 (face-to-face)	November 1996 N = 761 (face-to-face)
Mines	41	32
Stress	21	29
Combat accidents	15	18
Accidents	12	10
Don't know	10	11

about risks. In this context it is interesting to see how different kinds of risk were assessed by the public, and how this question also did show some change between April and November 1996.

As can be seen in Table 5.7, at both moments the ascribed sequence of risks stayed the same: mines, combat, psychological stress, accidents. 'Mines' however dropped from 41 per cent to 32 per cent as biggest risk, while 'stress' rose from 21 per cent to 29 per cent. The latter finding especially gives some (extra) plausibility to the speculation that debates about post-mission effects of peacekeeping (again: UNPROFOR in particular), may have had some impact. There is also some additional, indirect evidence: in April 48 per cent of public opinion thought Dutch soldiers were 'hardened enough' to cope with 'extreme circumstances', while 35 per cent did not consider them hardened enough. In November these percentages were respectively 43 per cent and 42 per cent. (In both polls 'don't knows' were around 16 per cent.)

Even though the degree (if not the direction) of change is rather similar in these three thematically related questions (acceptable or not, kinds of risk, hardened enough or not) we should beware of overestimating its meaning. Though significant, the difference is relatively small and its explanation can only be speculative. One way or the other, risks connected to IFOR did stay limited, and as far as the Dutch soldiers are concerned, there were hardly any accidents receiving high-profile publicity. Taking this into consideration, the least one can say is that the public does not lack risk awareness. Moreover, it appears to have a stock of knowledge at hand which makes sense and which, however weighed, reflects 'realities' of this particular mission as well as of peacekeeping in general.

Opinions about IFOR have confirmed what might be called the public's dedication towards 'new' military missions. While interpreting answer patterns to a number of specific questions we have repeatedly emphasised that public opinion can be looked upon as informed and consistent, making sense of the realities of peacekeeping in Bosnia during 1996 one way or the other. In a way of course this has been a 'quiet mission' which, unlike

UNPROFOR, did not suffer major setbacks and which could fulfil most of its mandate without being frustrated, let alone humiliated, by the conflicting parties. From the outside it might look as if the mere presence of IFOR was quite enough to deter any obstruction. Evidently, this smooth implementation of the military side of the peace agreement hardly tested the public's sustainability to the utmost. Whether the latter would have been tough enough to stand major setbacks, including casualties among NATO troops, remains an open question. Our research, however, suggests again that it would be wrong to underestimate public opinion and to assume that it would necessarily be susceptible to easy and immediate panic. For that to happen its aggregate motivational pattern looks too well knit.

Kosovo: no conclusion

In December 1998 a question was asked that had been formulated in almost the same way six years earlier. Back then it was about Bosnia and the UN, now about Kosovo and NATO: 'Suppose a military intervention by NATO in Kosovo will be decided upon. Should the Netherlands participate in such an intervention, even when it is almost certain that its own soldiers would be killed or wounded?' In 1992, 66 per cent of Dutch public opinion had said yes, 20 per cent no, while 14 per cent did not know. In November 1998, 58 per cent answered yes, 26 per cent no, and 16 per cent did not know. This comes as no surprise after the empirical findings we have seen so far. Still, the similarity in the answer pattern is striking. When the intervention started even more people said they would accept casualties. 'Should the Netherlands go on participating in actions against Yugoslavia, also when casualties occur among its own soldiers?' 'Yes': 67 per cent, 'no': 16 per cent, 'don't know': 17 per cent (NIPO, June 1999) (see Table 5.8). This pattern remained throughout the Kosovo conflict.

General mission support was evident and the reason why this is so fits in with another pattern we pointed out. Military intervention for the sake of Kosovo was looked upon by public opinion as a human rights

Table 5.8 The impact of casualties (in %)

Question: 'Should the Netherlands go on participating in actions against Yugoslavia, also when casualties occur among its own soldiers?'

	April 1999 N=980	June 1999 N=897
Yes	68	67
No	14	16
No opinion	18	17

issue (71 per cent), far more than as a matter of European security (12 per cent), let alone NATO prestige (8 per cent) (NIPO, April 1999).

All in all, the consistency of Dutch public opinion is very evident indeed, from the reasons given for military missions to the risks considered to be acceptable. In reality, to what degree and for how long casualties would actually be accepted cannot be predicted with any kind of certainty. On the one hand, our analysis suggests very strongly that the stereotype of public zero-tolerance is misguided. That is an important conclusion, especially with an eye to decision-making. On the other hand, there also seems hardly a *carte blanche* for casualties, no matter how important the stakes are in terms of human rights. If, for example, risky ground missions had materialised in Kosovo, the perception of their success at short notice would undoubtedly have been a critical factor in sustaining public support, and in the latter's acceptance of casualties.

Discussion

Decision makers have been criticised, especially in the case of former Yugoslavia, for underestimating the sustainability of public opinion. Politicians' perceptions of the latter's 'lack of stomach' seemed to serve as an alibi for non-intervention policies, to such a degree as to create a self-fulfilling prophecy. Earlier analyses of Dutch public opinion with regard to Bosnia as well as in general⁴ suggested that this criticism was justified: as a rule the public did and does *not* react in some kind of volatile and feeble way towards new military missions. Rather, the public's mandate seems to provide room to political and military elites for a (pro-)active posture, risks included. As elsewhere in the domain of international security and military defence, the public can in principle be looked upon as 'rational'. Aim, length and effectiveness of a mission apparently play an important role in the acceptance of casualties. Likewise, credibility, courage and consensus in the political arena do have their impact. This chapter underscores the mission-related part of this argument by showing how support, success and tolerance for casualties interact. It strongly suggests, again,⁵ that there is neither an unconditional zero-tolerance for casualties, nor an irrevocable call for retreat, once the 'first body-bag comes home'.

Generally speaking, we think one should beware of extrapolating back and forth similar public opinion patterns, without taking into consideration the context of very different conflicts, societies and military organisations. Put otherwise, if this chapter adds to the evidence that there is a zero-plus tolerance for casualties among Western publics, we are really talking in the context of present-day military missions, i.e. peacekeeping and peace-enforcing. Likewise, we are talking about military establishments that have become, in the classic words of Morris Janowitz, 'constabulary forces': continuously prepared to act, committed to the minimum use of violence and seeking viable international relations rather

than victory.⁶ These are catchwords that elegantly fit post-Cold War conceptions about intervention and crisis management. More specifically, commitment to the minimum use of (meaningful) force fits civil-military relations, centring on professional militaries and suiting the mood of the public.

Clearly, the latter set of assertions does go beyond the empirical and analytical scope of this chapter. It calls for much more theory and empirical research.

Appendix

Table A.1 Correlations of age and education with mission support and tolerance of casualties

	December 1994	June 1995	August 1995	December 1995
	Support	Support	Support	Support
Age	-0.23*	-0.12*	-0.20*	-0.09*
Education	0.16*	-	0.15*	0.12*

* = significant at 0.05 level.

Table A.2 Mission support by sex (in %)

	Men	Women
<i>December 1993</i>		
Favour	75	61
Oppose	12	12
<i>December 1994</i>		
Favour	58	50
Oppose	28	23
<i>August 1995</i>		
Favour	70	55
Oppose	18	16
<i>December 1995</i>		
Favour	75	62
Oppose	10	13

Table A.3 Tolerance of casualties by sex (in %)

	Men	Women
<i>December 1992</i>		
Acceptable	77	56
Unacceptable	15	25
<i>December 1993</i>		
Acceptable	67	48
Unacceptable	24	33
<i>December 1994</i>		
Acceptable	56	41
Unacceptable	34	43
<i>August 1995</i>		
Acceptable	64	40
Unacceptable	24	33
<i>December 1995</i>		
Acceptable	69	42
Unacceptable	21	41

Table A.4 Support for UNPROFOR and the beginning of IFOR in former Yugoslavia by political affiliation (in %)

	CDA	PvdA	VVD	D66	GroenLinks	Religious	Other	Non-voters	Total
<i>Dec. 1993</i>									
Favour	75	67	68	82	75	67	71	58	68
Oppose	8	14	18	6	11	6	10	19	14
<i>Dec. 1994</i>									
Favour	54	55	56	67	60	52	40	44	53
Oppose	25	25	29	17	26	13	34	29	26
<i>June 1995</i>									
Favour	34	47	42	51	50	55	13	33	40
Oppose	24	17	31	22	21	34	40	28	26
<i>Aug. 1995</i>									
Favour	62	68	58	68	85	82	50	51	62
Oppose	17	15	23	13	10	15	50	17	18
<i>Dec. 1995</i>									
Favour	65	70	83	73	68	66	57	60	69
Oppose	11	10	7	12	11	7	23	15	12

Table A.5 Tolerance of casualties by political affiliation (in %)

	CDA	PvdA	VVD	D66	GroenLinks	Religious	Other	Non-voters	Total
<i>Dec. 1993</i>									
Acceptable	58	50	66	71	68	70	60	48	57
Unacceptable	24	34	30	21	22	22	33	33	29
<i>Dec. 1994</i>									
Acceptable	47	45	50	57	59	49	30	45	48
Unacceptable	38	43	39	33	35	38	53	38	39
<i>June 1995</i>									
Acceptable	27	40	40	28	48	48	17	28	34
Unacceptable	53	39	41	52	36	45	53	52	47
<i>Aug. 1995</i>									
Acceptable	53	54	58	57	54	67	63	39	52
Unacceptable	29	32	26	32	39	19	25	29	29
<i>Dec. 1995</i>									
Acceptable	51	57	66	58	47	51	57	45	54
Unacceptable	36	34	24	28	43	33	27	37	33

Notes

- The data mentioned here are derived from annual polls published in the bi-monthly *Maatschappij en Krijgsmacht* [Society and Armed Forces].
- In order to make the picture more complete the outcomes of a number of related survey questions are given below:

03/09/1995, Telepanel Marktonderzoek

'To what extent do you agree with the following statement: the Netherlands should withdraw all its forces from the former Yugoslavia and should not deliver new troops for missions of the United Nations in the former Yugoslavia?'

Agree	25%
More agree than disagree	16%
Neither agree, nor disagree	18%
More disagree than agree	20%
Disagree	21%

03/09/1995, Telepanel Marktonderzoek

'About 100 marines are involved in the operations by the rapid reaction force, that consists mainly of French and British soldiers. These operations are carried out by means of ground weapons. What is your opinion on the deployment of Dutch soldiers in this action by the rapid reaction force?'

Positive	44%
More positive than negative	26%
Neither positive, nor negative	20%
More negative than positive	5%
Negative	4%

19/12/1995, SMK/NIPO

'To what extent do you agree or disagree that the NATO forces should use force to enforce the fulfilment of the peace agreement?' (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly)

Strongly agree	12%
Agree	47%
Neither agree, nor disagree	16%
Disagree	14%
Strongly disagree	3%
No opinion	8%

'Do you consider it likely or unlikely that these troops will succeed in ensuring the fulfilment of the peace agreement?'

Very unlikely	4%
Unlikely	20%
Neither unlikely, nor likely	36%
Likely	35%
Very likely	5%

'How important do you find the armed forces for the Netherlands?'

Very important	23%
Rather important	43%
Neither important, nor unimportant	14%
Rather unimportant	12%
Very unimportant	6%

- 3 We did a test for linearity for the variables age, education, importance of the armed forces, casualties, use of force and chance to succeed to see if their relationship with the dependent variable could be interpreted as linear. This appeared to be the case. Furthermore, we tested for multicollinearity of the independent variables by using the COLLIN-procedure in SPSS. According to the collinearity-diagnostics we do not have to worry about multicollinearity.
- 4 Van der Meulen (1997b); Everts (1996b, 2000).
- 5 See also Burk (1995); Larson (1996); Mueller (1994).
- 6 Janowitz (1960).

Part II

Public opinion and policy making on the use of force