

# ‘Voordat de bom valt’



How the written press shaped the transatlantic debate during  
the nuclear missile crisis in the Netherlands

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## **Abstract**

The academic consensus that the role of the press drastically changed after the Cold War has impacted analyses of the development of transatlantic relations during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The power of the press in shaping public transatlantic debates is often overlooked. This thesis puts the paradigm of the CNN-effect – news media’s ability to affect public debates – back in time by looking at press coverage of the nuclear missile crisis and the peace movements in the Netherlands in the 1980s.

At the core of this thesis stands the idea that framing, as an essential means by which news media can influence the public, is a process. How a frame receives its meaning is in constant movement between *frame building*, or their creation, and *frame setting*, or how the public receives them.

By first providing the frames five notable newspapers applied during the Dutch nuclear missile crisis of the 1980s, a foundation is built that establishes that news media took positions in this transatlantic debate. Oral histories by three journalists working in the period look into the *frame building* process, showing that the journalistic ideal of objectivity was also changing. After a look into *frame setting* during the election of 1982, this thesis then concludes that the written press indeed shaped the public debate about the placement of nuclear missiles in the Netherlands rather effectively. To say they had an active role in the process, though, is a step too far.

NATO · Dutch Peace Movements · Framing · Journalism · Objectivity · Agenda Setting

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## Introduction

Disgruntled farmers, *wappies* opposing the covid-pandemic, BLM-protestors fighting for race equality; the last couple of years, the streets of Amsterdam, The Hague, and other cities in the Netherlands have been the stage of massive protests.<sup>1</sup> These protests, though, still have not even come close to the size of the peace demonstrations of the 1980s. In 1983, a whopping 550.000 protestors flooded the streets of The Hague to protest against the placement of 48 nuclear cruise missiles at the military base in Woensdrecht, a number still unrivaled.

The crowds of the peace movements did not only exist out of hardcore protestors, though. Entire families took to the streets, church communities preached, and children painted bedsheets to join the demonstrations. Musicians joined in on the movement as well, like the famous Dutch band *Doe Maar* did in their song ‘*De Bom*’:

*Carrière maken voordat de bom valt.*

*Werken aan mijn toekomst voordat de bom valt.*

*Ik ren om mijn agenda voordat de bom valt.*

*Veilig in het ziekenfonds voordat de bom valt.*<sup>2</sup>

The entire Dutch society seemed to be obsessed with ‘the bombs’. 550.000 people against 48 rockets.

All of this happened because of a decision made in 1979 by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to modernize the European nuclear arsenal to adapt to the arms race with the Soviet Union. In what was called the Double-Track Decision, NATO members had agreed that if US negotiations about Soviet weapons near NATO’s borders failed, Western European nations had no other option than to modernize their own nuclear weapons arsenal to boost the region’s defense. A total of 572 nuclear cruise missiles would have to be stationed in Belgium, West Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, and the Netherlands so the Soviet Union would stay away. Even though the Netherlands had already received fifty nuclear bombs in the 1950s, the idea of 48 more weapons of mass destruction ignited fear and anger in the minds of many.

Transatlantic bonds carefully constructed after the Second World War were challenged in this period. NATO became an essential topic of debate that held the public in its grasp: was

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<sup>1</sup> ‘*Wappies*’ is a Dutch conglomerate term for anti-covid protestors.

<sup>2</sup> Transl.: ‘Making a career now, before the bomb falls. Working on my future, before the bomb falls. Running through my schedule, before the bomb falls. Health insurance keeps me safe, until the bomb falls.’; Doe Maar, “De Bom”, non-album track, Sky, 1982, a-side on vinyl single.

it safe to depend on other nations like that? And why should we spend money to help others when we could use it for ourselves? Norwegian historian Geir Lundestad explains: “It was inevitable that friction existed between the United States and Western Europe ... For Europeans who had been used to playing the leading roles on the international stage, it could be difficult now to pass the torch on to Washington.”<sup>3</sup>

The negative Dutch response to NATO’s Double Track Decision was massive. In 1981 religious peace movement *Interkerkelijk Vredesberaad* (IKV)<sup>4</sup> organized a protest against the placement of the nuclear missiles in Amsterdam, for which 400.000 Dutch people showed up to express their fears. When the Dutch government decided only to postpone the placement of the missiles, the IKV merged with other peace organizations like *Pax Christi* and *FNV* into the *Komitee Kruisraketten Nee* (KKN).<sup>5</sup> In 1983 the KKN organized the massive protest in The Hague. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of October, 550.000 marched to protest NATO’s Double-Track Decision. This was not the end, though. In 1985, KKN president Sienie Strikwerda presented prime minister Ruud Lubbers with a popular petition against the placement of the cruise missiles signed by nearly 3 million people, a quarter of the then adult Dutch population.

These events might have been immense and loud, but that does not mean that the other side of the discussion did not exist. Some thought the Netherlands needed nuclear weapons and, more importantly, to honor the NATO alliance. Pro- and anti-nuclear Dutchmen went head to head in discussions full of fury and emotions. Sociologist Bart Tromp, a public figure in the nuclear debate of the 1980s, described these discussions as nearly impossible: “Everyone seemed to be in a haze. I noticed it around me: people who until then had never thought about military questions were suddenly angry. Inconceivable. Marriages blew up, people jumped in front of trains in fear of the bomb.”<sup>6</sup>

For the more significant chunk of ten years, the debate about the placement of nuclear cruise missiles held an important position in the lives of the Dutch, and the discussion was kept alive by the press. As Dutch historian Remco van Diepen describes in his book *Hollanditis: Nederland en het Kernwapendebat, 1977-1987*,<sup>7</sup> the battle about placing the rockets ‘was not

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<sup>3</sup> Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 112.

<sup>4</sup> Transl.: *Interchurch Peace Council*.

<sup>5</sup> Transl.: *Comittee Cruise Missiles No.*

<sup>6</sup> E. Rensman, "Kernwapens waren een heilige zaak geworden'. De jaren tachtig van Mient Jan Faber," *Historisch Nieuwsblad*, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Transl.: *Hollanditis: The Netherlands and the nuclear weapon debate 1977-1988*.

only fought on the streets, but also on paper. Newspapers and magazines were filled with articles, opinion pieces, and columns about the subject for years'.<sup>8</sup>

The Dutch media landscape of the late 1970s and 1980s looked decidedly different than it does nowadays. Newspapers and TV broadcasts dominated the information flow, and as the internet did not exist yet, news had time to simmer before it was actually put out. Until the late 1980s, broadcasting in the Netherlands was monopolized by a single, state-funded – but not controlled – organization: the *Nederlandse Publieke Omroep*, or NPO.<sup>9</sup> While it contained multiple channels and broadcasting organizations, each with its own cultural background, neutral broadcaster NOS was the only party broadcasting a televised news bulletin until 1989, when RTL plugged in as the first commercial broadcaster in the Netherlands.<sup>10</sup> Other NPO-affiliated broadcasting organizations did have analytical journalistic programs, like VARA's *Achter het Nieuws* or AVRO's *Televizier Magazine*.<sup>11</sup>

Due to the *verzuiling*, a cultural phenomenon that segmented the Dutch society into clear and distinct pillars, there was a broad scope of newspapers during the period of the nuclear missile crisis in the Netherlands.<sup>12</sup> Even though the phenomenon disintegrated in the 1960s and 1970s, the identity of newspapers established during the *verzuiling* still remained. In other words, they still appealed to the same audiences. This is confirmed by Pleijter et al., arguing that 'many traces of [the media's segmentation] are still identifiable in today's media system'.<sup>13</sup> Unlike on tv, there was no neutral news medium like NOS that dominated the information flow; newspaper readership was heavily divided.

The most notable newspapers at the time were *de Volkskrant* (historically catholic, but leftist-progressive from the '60s), *Trouw* (protestant), *Parool* (socialist), *NRC* (liberal), *Algemeen Dagblad* (neutral), and *Telegraaf* (liberal/neutral). Even though its readership was not the biggest, *De Waarheid* is also noteworthy for its communist identity, which often meant pro-Soviet views. Next to a divide based on social groups, regions often had their own papers as well. *Leeuwarder Courant*, for example, was by far the biggest paper in the north, while, quite logically, the paper had little to no readership in the south.

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<sup>8</sup> Remco Van Diepen, *Hollanditis: Nederland en het kernwapendebat, 1977-1987* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Transl.: *Dutch Public Broadcaster*.

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Pleijter, Liesbeth Hermans, and Maurice Vergeer, "Journalists and Journalism in the Netherlands," in *The Global Journalist*, ed. David H. Weaver and Lars Willnat (New York: Routledge, 2012), 242.

<sup>11</sup> Transl.: *Behind the News* and *Tele-visor Magazine*.

<sup>12</sup> The *Verzuiling*, or pillarization, is a period in the Netherlands from the early 1900s until the 1970s in which society was arbitrarily divided into religious and political pillars (*zuilen*). This meant that if you were catholic you read a catholic newspaper, voted for catholic parties, and mostly met with catholic people. There were four *zuilen*: catholic, protestant, socialist, and liberal.

<sup>13</sup> Pleijter, Hermans, and Vergeer, "Journalists and Journalism in the Netherlands," 242.

An analysis of this transatlantic development in Dutch history provides an interesting angle into the existing discussion of the role of the press in public debates about transatlantic relations. Academic inquiry on the media's influence on the public debate is abundant. However, it primarily focused on the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A central concept to most of these studies is the so-called 'CNN effect', dubbed by Piers Robinson as 'the ability of real-time communications technology, via the news media, to provoke major responses from domestic audiences and political elites to both global and national events'.<sup>14</sup> According to Robinson, this effect encompasses '[b]oth TV news ... and newspapers'.<sup>15</sup> The CNN effect, though, is also often questioned.<sup>16</sup> Gilboa summarizes that 'scholarly and professional studies of the CNN effect present mixed, contradictory, and confusing results'.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, most scholars agree on the framework's effectiveness in describing the relation between the press, the public, and politics.

Most scholars agree on the increased power of the media after the end of the Cold War.<sup>18</sup> Only afterward the CNN effect could take place, and as such, media influence during the Cold War is downplayed. Van Belle and Potter explain: "[M]edia's role had gone largely unnoticed because the attention of academics and analysts had been diverted by the realist emphasis of a Cold War foreign policy environment."<sup>19</sup> As such, academic attention on the subject has been focused chiefly on crises in or after the 1990s. Recently, for example, Lyse Doucet used the framework of the CNN effect to look into U.S. policy making on the conflict in Syria.<sup>20</sup>

Because of this, research into news media influence before that is scarce. Most often, news media in the Cold War era is described within the limits of government propaganda. Greg McLaughlin argues that 'the nuclear debate in the media [can be understood] ... as a propaganda battle between the superpowers'.<sup>21</sup> Robinson agrees, writing that journalists in the 1990s were '[r]eleased from 'the prism of the Cold War''.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Piers Robinson, *The CNN Effect: The myth of news, foreign policy and intervention* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 2.

<sup>15</sup> Robinson, *The CNN Effect*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Robinson, *The CNN Effect*.; Philip Seib, *The Global Journalist: News and Conscience in a World of Conflict* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> Eytan Gilboa, "The CNN effect: The search for a communication theory of international relations.," *Political Communication* 22, no. 1 (2005).

<sup>18</sup> Henry A. Grunwald, "The Post-Cold War Press: A New World Needs a New Journalism," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993).

<sup>19</sup> Douglas A. Van Belle and David M. Potter, "Japanese foreign disaster assistance: the ad hoc period in international politics and the illusion of a CNN effect," *Media, War & Conflict* 4, no. 1 (2011).

<sup>20</sup> Lyse Doucet, "Syria & the CNN Effect: What Role Does the Media Play in Policy-Making?," *Daedalus* 147, no. 1 (2018).

<sup>21</sup> Greg McLaughlin, *The War Correspondent* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 134.

<sup>22</sup> Robinson, *The CNN Effect*.

I argue that this framework of the press being limited by government propaganda is too restricting for the significant influence the press already had during the Cold War years, especially when it came to the transatlantic discussions, in which a lot was still undecided. This thesis, then, aims to pull the core idea of the CNN-effect – the media’s power to influence the public – back in time by analyzing the press’s grasp on the public debate of the nuclear missile crisis in the Netherlands in the 1980s, and as such on policies that shaped transatlantic relations. This will put the development of transatlantic relations in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in a new light, showing the news media as a strong player on the playing field.

In the hope of unraveling yet another facet of the development of the transatlantic world we live in today, the following research question will be the focus of this thesis: How did the written press shape the public debate and, as a result, government policies, in the nuclear missile crisis in the Netherlands of the 1980s by means of framing?

The quest towards the answer will be tread through several subquestions, at the end of which I will have gotten insight into how the written press shaped this specific transatlantic crisis. The first chapter will look into the process of framing. According to professor of political communication at the University of Amsterdam Claes H. de Vreese, the process of framing is an ‘influential way that the media may shape public opinion’.<sup>23</sup> As such, analyzing how it was applied in the case study of the Dutch cruise missile crisis of the 1980s is one of the keys to how the written press shaped debates about transatlantic relations during the turbulent 1980s. This chapter aims to provide the big frames, as it were, by analyzing simple news reports about what was written about the subject of the NATO Double-Track Decision, the placement of the nuclear cruise missiles in the Netherlands, the protests against it, and the reaction of the Dutch government stored in digital newspaper archives. What did news stories tell about the issue, and how much was this image in line with what was actually happening? What was being focused on, and what was left out? Who were ‘the good guys’ in the stories, and who were ‘the villains’?

An analysis of framing in the news should not only pertain to the reader’s side. Stephen Jukes, Professor of journalism at Bournemouth University and former global head of news for Reuters, argues in his book *Journalism and Emotion* that an understanding of the practice of journalism ‘requires a detailed analysis of the experience and behavior of journalists as they perform their tasks’.<sup>24</sup> In the second chapter, then, the way in which the written press shaped

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<sup>23</sup> Claes H. De Vreese, "News framing: Theory and typology," *Information Design Journal* 13, no. 1 (2005): 51.

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Jukes, *Journalism and Emotion* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2020), 164.

this transatlantic debate will be analyzed through the eyes of the ones that held the pen: the journalists themselves. A theoretical and historical analysis of journalistic objectivity provides a base for exploring personal accounts of journalists active during the nuclear missile crisis. By going through the oral histories, the journalist's intentions will be brought to light, providing an answer to how the frames were constructed.

The third and final chapter of this thesis will provide the last piece to the puzzle by looking at the other side of the press: the public. According to De Vreese, it is not only essential to analyze the process of framing by how the frames are created but also by how they are received. Frames get their meaning by their “ability ... to affect how recipients think about an issue,” De Vreese explains.<sup>25</sup> The written press could not shape anything if society did not respond, so these reactions hold an integral part of the analyses within this thesis. By looking at the election of 1982, this chapter aims to connect the frames and intentions discovered in the earlier chapters to the idea of agenda setting by the media, providing the last piece to the puzzle to eventually answer how the written press shaped this crisis employing framing.

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<sup>25</sup> Sophie Lecheler and Claes H. De Vreese, *News Framing Effects* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019).

# **Chapter 1: Framing During the Missile Crisis**

The discussion about the placement of nuclear cruise missiles in the Netherlands had such a grasp on Dutch society during the 1980s that a neutral position was nearly impossible to uphold. Van Diepen emphasizes: “The nuclear weapons issue seemed to divide the entire Dutch society bitterly after 1980 ... The mutual differences were even represented in the language used by each side.”<sup>1</sup> By simply choosing the word *kruisraket* instead of *kruisvluchtwapen*, the technically correct term for the 48 pieces of weaponry agreed upon to be placed in Woensdrecht, adversaries of America’s nuclear plans in the Netherlands already expressed their fears and wants because it sounds more threatening.<sup>2</sup> Wording and language were crucial, as a small, seemingly insignificant change could make all the difference in interpreting the contentious subject.

Consequently, this also accounts for the news. The way the news is worded, the language used to convey the facts, and the order in which the news is presented can make all the difference in interpreting the storage of 48 nuclear cruise missiles in the Netherlands. Were ‘the bombs’ necessary for our safety, or were they as incredibly dangerous as some made them out to be?

A look into this process of framing is crucial in discovering how the written press shaped the public debate during the nuclear missile crisis in the Netherlands in the 1980s. This chapter will first look into this theoretical concept and then apply it to news coverage of the developments surrounding the possible placement of nuclear cruise missiles in the Netherlands in the 1980s. This will create a foundation on which further analysis of how the press shaped the public debate by means of framing can be made.

## **1.1 Framing**

Discussing the influence of media, and more specifically news coverage, on the general public cannot be done without covering the topic of framing. How one interprets the news is not only about taking in the facts themselves but also about how these are presented to them. Through the process of framing, a journalist decides how the story will be told and, with that, how reports will be interpreted. Framing the news, as it were, creates a framework in the mind in which the reality presented by the news is understood.

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<sup>1</sup> Van Diepen, *Nederland en het kernwapendebat*, 161.

<sup>2</sup> In English this would be the difference between *cruise missile* and *cruise rocket*. In Dutch the difference between these words is much more impactful; Van Diepen, *Nederland en het kernwapendebat*, 161.

As stated in the introduction, professor of political communication at the University of Amsterdam Claes H. de Vreese deems framing to be an ‘influential way that the media may shape public opinion’.<sup>3</sup> He defines frames as ‘an emphasis in salience of different aspects of a topic’.<sup>4</sup> In other words, a frame is a filter through which ‘dry’ news facts are passed, after which it becomes a story. And just like any story, certain parts are emphasized, some fall into the background, and some are left out for the sake of coherence or message. By framing, an inevitable process in writing, the news is linked to the reader, creating a narrative that is not necessarily false but that does adhere to the reality of the journalist or the medium. It makes a lifeline for the reader to know what to think. As O’Neill and Harcup describe quite concisely: “Media represent the world rather than reflect it.”<sup>5</sup>

According to De Vreese, framing should not so much be defined as being static but ‘as a process’.<sup>6</sup> Frames do not exist independently, but they are constructed while writing an article, and their meaning is created in the reader's mind. This process, then, can be split into two sections: *frame building*, ‘how frames emerge’, and *frame setting*, ‘the interplay between media frames and audience predispositions’.<sup>7</sup>

One could say, then, that *frame building* is the journalist’s side of the process of framing. De Vreese describes it as ‘the factors that influence the structural qualities of news frames’.<sup>8</sup> These factors, often ‘internal to journalism’, determine how the frame is constructed and what it looks like. Journalists consciously or unconsciously arrange the facts in a certain way to make their articles readable, enjoyable, and fitting to their readership. Elements like the journalist’s own background, the medium’s identity, and attractiveness play a significant part in this.<sup>9</sup>

In a later work, De Vreese and professor of political communication at the University of Vienna Sophie Lecheler add that journalists are not the only factor in the process of *frame building*. “External factors are influences from stakeholders like elites, interest groups, and social movements.”<sup>10</sup> This creates a difference between journalists’ frames and news frames, the latter being influenced by the writer but also by other elements outside of the media: “We can imagine the frame-building process as an ongoing battle or continuum of influences from inside the newsroom (the individual journalist, news values and conventions) or outside the

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<sup>3</sup> De Vreese, "News framing: Theory and typology," 51.

<sup>4</sup> De Vreese, "News framing: Theory and typology," 53.

<sup>5</sup> Deirdre O’Neill and Tony Harcup, "News Values and Selectivity," in *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, ed. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 163.

<sup>6</sup> De Vreese, "News framing: Theory and typology," 51.

<sup>7</sup> De Vreese, "News framing: Theory and typology," 51.

<sup>8</sup> De Vreese, "News framing: Theory and typology," 52.

<sup>9</sup> De Vreese, "News framing: Theory and typology," 52.

<sup>10</sup> Lecheler and De Vreese, *News Framing Effects*, 20.

newsroom (influences from stakeholders).”<sup>11</sup> A question remains, then, whether a journalist impacts the process marginally or if they take an active position in the creation of frames. This will be further elaborated upon in chapter 2.

If *frame building* is on the writer’s side, then *frame setting* as its counterpart can be described as the audience’s side of framing. De Vreese: “Frame-setting refers to the interaction between media frames and individuals’ prior knowledge and predispositions.”<sup>12</sup> Frames may be constructed while writing, but they find their meaning in the mind of the reader. The frame of reality created in the article interacts with the audience’s idea of reality, which results in a particular response. According to De Vreese, this could also be seen as ‘the consequences of framing’, which can be analyzed to explore ‘the extent to which and under what circumstances audiences reflect and mirror frames made available to them in, for example, the news’.<sup>13</sup>

De Vreese’s analysis of the process of framing will hold a central position in this thesis. While first establishing the frames of news coverage about the nuclear cruise missile crisis in the Netherlands in this chapter, the following two chapters will look into the processes of *frame building* and *frame setting* respectively.

## **1.2 Methodology: how to find a frame?**

An academic agreement on a certifiable method to find how a particular story is framed is still far from being established. De Vreese states that ‘there is little consensus as to how to identify frames in the news’.<sup>14</sup> Focusing on too little articles might be criticized as too incidental, but a larger sample group becomes impracticable and time-consuming while not necessarily essential for the research.

De Vreese condenses the techniques researchers use to unearth news frames into two idealized categories. The first category is ‘*inductive* in nature and refrains from analyzing news stories with a priori defined news frames in mind’.<sup>15</sup> Inductive researchers go into analysis with no prior news frame in mind. This means that the frame that might be found is authentic and a true discovery, but it is time-consuming, and one might not find anything. The second category is ‘*deductive* in nature and investigates frames defined and operationalized prior to the

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<sup>11</sup> Lecheler and De Vreese, *News Framing Effects*, 21.

<sup>12</sup> De Vreese, "News framing: Theory and typology," 52.

<sup>13</sup> De Vreese, "News framing: Theory and typology," 52.

<sup>14</sup> De Vreese, "News framing: Theory and typology," 53.

<sup>15</sup> De Vreese, "News framing: Theory and typology," 53; Italics provided in original text.

investigation'.<sup>16</sup> Deductive researchers go into analysis with a goal of what to look for. They have a specific idea of what a possible frame could be, and the research is based on that frame.

The definition of associate professor of journalism at Northwestern University Robert M. Entman, even though written 29 years ago, is still leading in identifying news frames in recent texts, like 2019's *News Framing Effects* by Claes H. de Vreese and Sophie Lecheler.<sup>17</sup> According to Entman, frames can be identified by 'the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments'.<sup>18</sup> By looking at a text with these characteristics in mind, frames can be determined, after which their effects can be analyzed. Cappella and Jamieson elaborated on Entman, adding that a frame should at least adhere to four principles to be considered one. As described by De Vreese:

First, a news frame must have identifiable conceptual and linguistic characteristics. Second, it should be commonly observed in journalistic practice. Third, it must be possible to distinguish the frame reliably from other frames. Fourth, a frame must have representational validity (i.e. be recognized by others) and not be merely a figment of a researcher's imagination.<sup>19</sup>

So, a frame should be proven identifiable, familiar, distinguishable, and representational. By compiling multiple articles on the same topic, one can uncover these frames for further analysis.

The last step, then, is to define these 'identifiable conceptual and linguistic characteristics' to be able to forage a frame out of a news item. A comprehensive and concise list of 11 indicators for news frames is provided by professor in journalism at the University of Texas at Austin, James W. Tankard:

1. Headlines and kickers (small headlines over the main headlines).
2. Subheads.
3. Photographs.
4. Photo captions.
5. Leads (the beginnings of news stories).
6. Selection of sources or affiliations.

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<sup>16</sup> De Vreese, "News framing: Theory and typology," 53; Italics provided in original text.

<sup>17</sup> Lecheler and De Vreese, *News Framing Effects*, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 52.

<sup>19</sup> De Vreese, "News framing: Theory and typology," 54.

7. Selection of quotes.
8. Pull quotes (quotes that are blown up in size for emphasis).
9. Logos (graphic identification of the particular series an article belongs to).
10. Statistics, charts, and graphs.
11. Concluding statements or paragraphs of articles.<sup>20</sup>

While not all indicators will be relevant in each case of framing, one can be quite sure of a frame when a couple of these characteristics point in a particular direction. These indicators, then, will be central in the following analysis of news articles during the Dutch cruise missile crisis of the 1980s.

This chapter will focus on the frames themselves. By doing a comparative, analysis of articles about four major developments within the Dutch nuclear missile crisis written in five newspapers with big readerships in the 1980s – *de Volkskrant*, *Trouw*, *Parool*, *NRC Handelsblad*, and *Algemeen Dagblad* – the frames will be condensed from the actual news, and in doing that, this chapter provides the development of these frames themselves.

This research, then, will place itself somewhere between the ideals of inductive and deductive framing analysis as defined above. While having no prior frames in mind that will be specifically looked for, which would imply inductive research, I will also not go in blindly. With each newspaper's background in mind, there is a basic understanding of the direction specific frames may go in beforehand. What those actual frames may be, remains unknown until they are revealed. As such, this analysis sits between both extremes.

The following three pivotal historical events spread throughout the missile crisis stand central in this analysis of news frames during the period: The NATO double-track decision of 1979 and the Dutch reaction afterward, the massive protest in The Hague in 1983 organized by the *KKN*, and the buildup towards and the aftermath of the popular petition organized by the *KKN* that nearly 4 million people signed. How much was changed, emphasized, omitted, and added to the stories to make them follow a particular point of view? How did the frames used in newspapers in articles about the possible placement of cruise missiles in the Netherlands develop over time?

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<sup>20</sup> James W. Tankard, "The Empirical Approach to the Study of Media Framing," in *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*, ed. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy Jr., and August E. Grant (New York: Routledge, 2001), 100.

### 1.3 Uncovering the Frames: NATO's Double Track Decision

On December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1979, the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization decided on a modernization of the European nuclear arsenal in exchange for a renewed American effort to negotiate for non-aggression with the Soviet Union. The Netherlands and Belgium, however, were less enthusiastic about placing these new American missiles on their territory and managed to delay the decision for an additional two years.<sup>21</sup> As we know now, this would be the start of a long period of civil unrest. In 1979, though, when NATO's Double-Track Decision was made, nobody could have foretold that it would unleash such a clash in Dutch society.

Looking at newspapers published on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1979, then, it is clear that the event held some significance, but the real craze was still to come. The *Algemeen Dagblad*, for example, deemed the news worthy for the front page. Still, the written text is fairly neutral. The headline 'NATO Says Yes to New Rocket' does not even mention the possible placement of cruise missiles in the Netherlands. Instead, it focuses only on NATO's modernization of the members' combined nuclear arsenal.<sup>22</sup>

Still, an early onset of the frames that will become more apparent later are already visible. *NRC Handelsblad* focused more on the national implication of NATO's rocket deal. On December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1979, they published a fairly neutral article, but unlike *Algemeen Dagblad*, *NRC* focused the report on the 'waiting room position' the Netherlands and Belgium were in by putting it in the headline.<sup>23</sup> While further critical notes or negative talk about the cruise missiles stay out, the topic is already being framed around the national implications of the international decision. The image accompanying the article, picturing security guards in Brussels putting out smoke bombs near NATO's headquarters, implicates the decision will result in unrest.<sup>24</sup> What we see here is an early version of a frame that will be prevalent throughout this entire national transatlantic debate: international politics not resulting in stability but causing unrest; the global playing field disrupting national peace. The Double-Track Decision disrupted Dutch politics significantly, according to this frame.

Leftist and Christian-based newspapers like *Trouw* and *de Volkskrant* – whose readerships would later on be central in the peace movements against the cruise missiles – instantly frame the issue more harshly than the liberal *NRC Handelsblad* and neutral *Algemeen*

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<sup>21</sup> See introduction for a more elaborate description.

<sup>22</sup> Original text: 'NAVO zegt ja tegen nieuwe raket'; "NAVO zegt ja tegen nieuwe raket," *Algemeen Dagblad* (Rotterdam) December 13, 1979, 1, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=KBPERS01:002960011:mpeg21:p00001.

<sup>23</sup> Original text: 'Wachtkamerpositie'; Sytze van der Zee, "Nederland en België in 'wachtkamerpositie,'" *NRC Handelsblad* (Rotterdam) December 13, 1979, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=KBNRC01:000027226:mpeg21:a0050.

<sup>24</sup> van der Zee, "Nederland en België in 'wachtkamerpositie'."

*Dagblad. De Volkskrant*'s choice of words in the headline, 'NATO agrees upon nuclear weapons' is notable. 'Nuclear weapon' sparks significantly more outrage than *Algemeen Dagblad*'s 'rocket'.<sup>25</sup> Not just rockets, but nuclear weapons will be stationed in Europe, *de Volkskrant* is trying to say. With the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the Second World War in everyone's collective memories, the idea of a nuclear weapon creates fear. What if such a bomb explodes in the Netherlands, or someone decides to target the Netherlands for having stored dangerous bombs in its arsenal? This choice of words establishes another frame prevalent in newspapers during the nuclear missile crisis in the Netherlands in the 1980s: the missiles America aims to place in the Netherlands are not only incredibly destructive but also dangerous for the Dutch population.

Another remarkable detail in this specific edition of *de Volkskrant* is the opinion piece that sits directly next to the news article about NATO's cruise missile decision. In terms of layout, one can see clearly that the opinion piece is meant to be read alongside the news article, connecting the two texts with a thick line above and the header '*ten geleide*', which essentially means 'accompanied by'.<sup>26</sup> The headline of the opinion piece reads '*gesjoemel*', and it describes the 'foggy' dealings of the Dutch government in the NATO deal, which according to the writer, was not as honest and upfront as it could have been.<sup>27</sup> Even though the idea that the agreement included some *gesjoemel* here is the writer's opinion, seeing it so close to the news plants a seed in the reader's mind: was *gesjoemel* part of the deal, and as such, was it somewhat fraudulent? This is another case of NATO and international politics being framed as disrupting national politics. NATO, in this case, is portrayed as 'the bad guy', an easy but effective storytelling technique.

Christian newspaper *Trouw* similarly frames NATO as the bad guy and international politics as the cause of national unrest. The news of NATO's decision on the placement of new cruise missiles dominates the front page of *Trouw*'s edition of December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1979. Immediately the situation is called a 'crisis', according to the first word of the headline: 'Crisis not entirely at bay'.<sup>28</sup> The cruise missiles are then mentioned in a few sentences, after which the article focuses on the cabinet crisis that originated from the discussions about the missile

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<sup>25</sup> Original text: '*NAVO stemt in met kernwapens*' and '*raket*'; Jan Luijten, "NAVO stemt in met kernwapens," *de Volkskrant* (Amsterdam) December 13, 1979, 3, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010881814:mpeg21:a0133.; "NAVO zegt ja tegen nieuwe raket."

<sup>26</sup> Jan Luijten, "Ten Geleide: Gesjoemel," *de Volkskrant* (Amsterdam) December 12, 1979, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010881814:mpeg21:p003.

<sup>27</sup> '*Gesjoemel*' does not have a true English equivalent. Its meaning comes close to trickery, but it has a fraudulent element as well; Luijten, "Ten Geleide: Gesjoemel."

<sup>28</sup> Original text: '*Crisis nog niet geheel bezworen*'; "Crisis nog niet geheel bezworen," *Trouw* (Amsterdam) December 13, 1979, 1, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010825134:mpeg21:p001.

placement. Again NATO and international politics are deemed the disruptors of national politics here.

Socialist paper *Het Parool* does something similar, writing in its December 13<sup>th</sup> front-page headline that political party CDA is ‘furious’ that ‘no letter of the Dutch point of view’ was mentioned in NATO’s final declaration.<sup>29</sup> *Het Parool*, however, is the only paper that mentions a specific number of missiles that would be placed in the Netherlands by accompanying the article about national disruption with a picture in which they name how many missiles each country would get and how far the new missiles would go (see fig. 1). This could be interpreted in two ways: either as a way to put worries about the placement into perspective, showing that Russia can already reach us, so a stronger arsenal is necessary. The other, and due to *de Parool*’s socialist background more probable, way is that the image was included to increase concerns about the order of the bombs because Russia can now see the Netherlands as a potential threat and thus target because our nuclear arsenal can also reach them now.



Figure 1. Image accompanying the article “CDA is woedend over verklaring NAVO” in the December 13<sup>th</sup> 1979 edition of *Het Parool*.

So, even though at the very beginning of the Dutch nuclear missile crisis in 1979, most newspapers remained rather mild and factual and sometimes, some early examples of frames that will become much more prevalent later on are already visible. Three frames stand out especially: international politics disrupting national stability, NATO as ‘the bad guy’, and the nuclear missiles directly threatening Dutch society. Especially the fact that the Netherlands does not really have a say in international politics and is being put in ‘a waiting room position’ seems

<sup>29</sup> Original text: ‘Woedend’ and ‘Geen letter over Nederlands standpunt’; “CDA is woedend over verklaring NAVO,” *Het Parool* (Amsterdam) December 13, 1979, [resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010847537:mpeg21:p001](https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010847537:mpeg21:p001).

to grab the attention of the papers. Newspapers with a Christian or left-wing readership seem to write from an opinionated point of view more often than the others.

#### 1.4 Uncovering the frames: the protest of 1983

The second development this chapter focuses on is the massive *Komitee Kruisraketten Nee* protest of 1983. On October 29<sup>th</sup> that year, 550.000 protestors took to the streets of The Hague to speak out against the placement of the 48 cruise missiles with nuclear war heads in Woensdrecht. Until this day, this is still the largest demonstration in the Netherlands of all time. One can imagine that at this time, the public debate was significantly more active than in 1979, when NATO's decision to place more and better nuclear missiles in Europe was just announced. This is also visible in newspapers, in which the earlier established frames are used more in order for the paper to establish a position in the debate.

While the sheer size of the protest was impressive, and newspapers addressing it as such cannot be defined as a frame, an interesting feature a couple of newspapers seem to use is a contrast between the large and impactful demonstration and the subdued reaction from the government. Looking at how the October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1983 edition of *de Volkskrant* presents it, for example, the reader would not be able to deny that the protest was big, successful, and should have an impact on politics.<sup>30</sup> Nearly three entire pages are reserved for articles on the rally. Moreover, the top headline of the front page, one of the most effective guiding devices for a newspaper, reads 'Protest against nuclear armament turns The Hague on its head'.<sup>31</sup> To use '*kernbewapening*' instead of a more neutral word like '*kernwapens*' or even just '*kruisraketten*' makes the issue sound much heavier.<sup>32</sup> The headline has a double meaning as well: the protest literally turned The Hague on its head because of the large number of people protesting in its streets, but the term '*Den Haag*' is often used synonymously for the Dutch parliament in the Netherlands too. In this sense, the headline could also mean that the demonstration had a political impact.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> October 30<sup>th</sup> was a Sunday, and as such, there was no paper that day.

<sup>31</sup> Original text: '*Protest tegen kernbewapening zet Den Haag op zijn kop*'; "Protest tegen kernbewapening zet Den Haag op zijn kop," *de Volkskrant* (Amsterdam) October 31, 1983, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010857136:mpeg21:p001.

<sup>32</sup> For the sake of argument the words here are depicted in Dutch. In English, respectively: 'nuclear armament', 'nuclear arms', 'cruise missiles'; "Protest tegen kernbewapening zet Den Haag op zijn kop."

<sup>33</sup> Den Haag is the Dutch name for the city The Hague; "Protest tegen kernbewapening zet Den Haag op zijn kop."

The kicker below the picture of the huge crowd on the front page of *de Volkskrant* says, ‘VVD not impressed by 550.000 people turn-out’.<sup>34</sup> This is in sharp contrast with what we just established, namely that the turn-out was, in fact, impressive. That is what *de Volkskrant* is trying to make you see, after which the comment by governing party VVD seems strange and out of place.

Together with the article's main headline, ‘CDA recognizes meaning peace march’, this also creates a ‘good guy, bad guy’ narrative to describe the tensions in the cabinet. Throughout the discussion, Christian CDA represented a much more temperate opinion on the placement of the rockets in Woensdrecht than liberal VVD, who wanted to comply with NATO’s double track decision. By placing VVD’s indifference next to CDA’s compassion, VVD is made out to be the bad guy. This is a thing we see in all newspapers with readerships affiliated with the *Kruisraketten* Nee movement: the discussion is not framed anymore as a political discourse in which both sides have good arguments. Instead, the news is portrayed as a story of the good side, being the antinuclear movement and its proponents, and the bad side, being the ones pushing the nuclear agenda like NATO, VVD, and others.

*Het Parool* does something similar. The front page of October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1983, opens with the headline ‘Lubbers: no promises’, emphasizing the political indifference after the protests.<sup>35</sup> The article is accompanied by a large image of the massive crowd, again referencing the contrast between the size of the protest and the political reaction.<sup>36</sup> Further on in the paper, the size of the protest is emphasized once more by including an image that takes up more than half of the page with an article headlined ‘A day of peace with little to no dissonance’.<sup>37</sup> *Het Parool* frames the protest as large and peaceful, nearly perfect, and for politicians to then speak indifferently with no promises or commitments does not fit within that image.

*Trouw* is less outspoken than *de Volkskrant* in its support of the protest, but some features still stand out. The front page pays some attention to the rally by including a picture of the crowd accompanied by the text ‘The Malieveld was full’ and an article dedicated to the protest below.<sup>38</sup> What stands out the most, though, is an advertisement on the bottom of the

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<sup>34</sup> Original text: ‘VVD niet onder indruk van opkomst 550 duizend mensen’; “CDA erkent betekenis vredesmars,” *de Volkskrant* (Amsterdam) October 31, 1983, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010857136:mpeg21:p001.

<sup>35</sup> Original text: ‘Lubbers: geen toezeggingen’.

<sup>36</sup> “Lubbers: geen toezeggingen,” *Het Parool* (Amsterdam) October 31, 1983, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010846357:mpeg21:p001.

<sup>37</sup> Original text: ‘Een vredesdag vrijwel zonder wanklank’; Bert Bommels et al., “Een vredesdag vrijwel zonder wanklank,” *Het Parool* (Amsterdam) October 31, 1983, 5, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010846357:mpeg21:p005.

<sup>38</sup> *Het Malieveld* is a large field close to the buildings of parliament in The Hague where most Dutch protests take place; Original text: ‘Het was vol op het Malieveld’; “Het was vol op het Malieveld,” *Trouw* (Amsterdam) October 31, 1983, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010820679:mpeg21:p001.

page for a book about the demonstration called ‘*Kruisraketten Ongewenst*’ (see fig. 2).<sup>39</sup> Indeed, a newspaper itself might not write an advertisement. They are even getting paid for it. They do, however, decide to put it there, on the front page. By placing an ad for a book in which the authors collaborated with the KKN, you show your readers you are affiliated with them. ‘A reader of *Trouw* supports the antinuclear movement, and thus the antinuclear movement is good’ is the frame they aim to create.



Figure 2. Advertisement that appeared on the front page of *Trouw* on October 31st, 1983.

Nearly all framing seems to be leaning to the side of the anti-nuclear movement. *Algemeen Dagblad*, which earlier remained rather neutral and factual, also captures the emotion and size of the protest on its front page. The main headline, ‘500.000 times ‘no’’ in all capitals, emphasizes the size of the protest.<sup>40</sup> The contrast frame is also apparent here, with a kicker that reads ‘Lubbers: decision on rockets remains with the parliament’.<sup>41</sup> *Algemeen Dagblad* also decided to put princess Irene, a member of the Dutch royal family who decided to hold a speech at the protest, on a pedestal on its front page. The emotional exclamation of the princess has a central position with the headline ‘Irene: Peace must come’.<sup>42</sup> The front page captures the emotion of the demonstration, elevating its reporting beyond the simple factualness that characterized the *Algemeen Dagblad* in 1979.

*NRC Handelsblad* seems to be the only paper on the list that refrains from emotional language and supportive framing devices. The main headline on October 31<sup>st</sup>, for example, does not even speak about the protest itself. It reads: ‘Peace council aims for showdown with CDA’.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, *NRC Handelsblad* is more balanced in its eyewitness report written by Gerda Telgenhof on page two. The entire page is spent describing the demonstration, but there are no clear framing devices apparent in the layout like the exceptionally big image in *het Parool*.<sup>44</sup> The article opens with: “Like a hurricane went over it. That is how downtown the

<sup>39</sup> De Horstink en Uitgeverij Jan Mets m.m.v. KKN, "Kruisraketten Ongewenst," Advertisement, *Trouw* (Amsterdam) October 31, 1983, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010820679:mpeg21:p001.

<sup>40</sup> Original text: ‘500.000 keer ‘nee’’.

<sup>41</sup> Original text: ‘Lubbers: besluit raketten blijft zaak parlement’; "500.000 keer 'nee'," *Algemeen Dagblad* (Rotterdam) 31-10-1983, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=KBPERS01:003023026:mpeg21:p00001.

<sup>42</sup> Original text: ‘Irene: vrede moet’; "Irene: vrede moet," *Algemeen Dagblad* (Rotterdam) October 31, 1983, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=KBPERS01:003023026:mpeg21:p00001.

<sup>43</sup> Original text: ‘Vredesberaad richt zich op krachtmeting met CDA’; Hubert Smeets, "Vredesberaad richt zich op krachtmeting met CDA," *NRC Handelsblad* (Rotterdam) October 31, 1983, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=KBNRC01:000027912:mpeg21:p001.

<sup>44</sup> Bommels et al., "Een vredesdag vrijwel zonder wanklank."

Hague looks like on Saturday late at night.”<sup>45</sup> The first sentence of the lead sets the tone of the article, and this does not necessarily sound positive. The article is not entirely negative either, though, underlining the ‘contentment’ of the KKN, municipality, and police.

All in all, the eyewitness account seems more balanced, possibly even tipping towards the negative side. Telgenhof mentions in the concluding paragraphs, with emphasis because of the subheading ‘opponents’, that opponents of the peace movement were also present at the demonstration, resulting in a commotion in which these opponents were ‘bombarded with red paint bombs and a well-aimed orange’.<sup>46</sup> Later on, Telgenhof writes that protestors burned the American flag at the American embassy and burned their banners on the way to the station. Other papers on the list do not mention these events in similar articles. Telgenhof even uses the word ‘chaos’ to describe the situation at some point.<sup>47</sup>

Looking at Telgenhof’s contribution to October 31<sup>st</sup>’s edition of *NRC Handelsblad*, one can undoubtedly conclude that the paper aims to frame the protest differently than the other newspapers we have seen. While the others elaborate on earlier established frames of painting proponents of the nuclear agenda in the Netherlands as the ‘bad guys’, and not only NATO anymore, *NRC Handelsblad* refrains from doing this. Other papers also emphasize the size of the protest and put that in contrast with the political reaction. The demonstration itself, then, is portrayed as orderly, neat, and peaceful. *NRC Handelsblad* takes a different route, establishing themselves as neutral and possibly leaning towards the side for the placement of the nuclear missiles. Even though you can conclude that the protest went well after reading Telgenhof’s article, it is also portrayed as chaotic and disorderly. More than in 1979, in which only the leftist- and Christian-based newspapers actively framed their articles, newspapers have taken sides and framed their articles in accordance.

So, during this period the frames established in 1979 are elaborated upon. Whereas first only NATO was described as the ‘bad guy’, now newspapers opposing the placement of the missiles have expanded this to all proponents of the placement, including political parties. The frame of contrast between the massive protest and indifferent politicians affirms this larger from of ‘good versus bad’, almost painting the scene that international needs might be corrupting the ideals of political parties like CDA, which in its core ideals is pacifist but now seems to allow

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<sup>45</sup> Original text: ‘*Alsofer een orkaan over is geraasd, zo ziet zaterdagavond laat de Haagse binnenstad eruit.*’; Gerda Telgenhof, “Binnenstad Den Haag één schuifelende mensenzee,” *NRC Handelsblad* (Rotterdam) October 31, 1983, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?um=KBNRC01:000027912:mpeg21:p002.

<sup>46</sup> Original text: ‘*Tegedemonstranten*’ and ‘*De betogers bekogelen hen met rode verbommetjes en een welgemikte sinaasappel*’; Telgenhof, “Binnenstad Den Haag één schuifelende mensenzee.”

<sup>47</sup> Telgenhof, “Binnenstad Den Haag één schuifelende mensenzee.”

for the rockets to come. Most newspapers have chosen sides at this point in the crisis, and the appearance of framing to convince the public is not only reserved for the side supporting the peace movements anymore. As seen in *NRC Handelsblad*, the opponents of the peace movements dabble in the process of framing to tip the scales to their side too.

### 1.5 Uncovering the frames: the KKN popular petition

In 1985 the KKN decided to organize a popular petition to once and for all make clear that a majority of the Dutch population was on their side, or at least they hoped so. The Dutch parliament had promised NATO to announce their definitive decision on the placement of nuclear missiles in Woensdrecht before November 1<sup>st</sup>, and thus the petition was launched on August 31<sup>st</sup>. The period that followed would become the climax of the discussion about the placement of the missiles in the papers, with both sides opposing each other with increasing vigor. Eventually, on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 1985, the petition received 3.7 million signatures. KKN president Sienie Strikwerda presented this to prime-minister Ruud Lubbers, accompanied by an angry gathering of about 75.000 fierce opponents of nuclear armament in the Netherlands.

A frame immediately apparent in most newspapers is that the petition is presented as a final battle of some sort in the long war against the placement of nuclear missiles. *NRC Handelsblad* included a page-filling article in its Saturday section of the August 31<sup>st</sup> newspaper with the headline: ‘Cards against cruise missiles, the battle for your signature’.<sup>48</sup> *Trouw* does the same a week later, opening the introductory paragraph of its extensive article about the petition on September 7<sup>th</sup> with the phrase: “supporters and opponents assume their battle positions.”<sup>49</sup> *De Volkskrant* also frames the petition as a battle. The concluding phrase of the article ‘Cruise missiles: not a done deal’ on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1985, reads: “The battle for the cruise missiles could be the deciding arena in that respect.”<sup>50</sup>

Like every battle in a story, this one also needs to have its victors and its losers, and as we have seen originate in 1979 and grow in 1983, newspapers surely have chosen sides now. By framing their side of the discussion as good and the other side as bad, the story about the petition on the placement of nuclear missiles in the Netherlands gets constructed differently.

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<sup>48</sup> Original text: ‘Kaarten kontra kruisraketten, de slag om uw handtekening’; Henri Beunders and Hubert Smeets, "Kaarten kontra kruisraketten, de slag om uw handtekening," *NRC Handelsblad* (Rotterdam) August 31 1985, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=KBNRC01:000029868:mpeg21:p022.

<sup>49</sup> Original text: ‘Voor- en tegenstanders stellen zich in slagorde op’; Bram Pols, "De Hollanditis maakt zich weer langzaam meester van het land," *Trouw* (Amsterdam) September 7, 1985, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010828232:mpeg21:p021.

<sup>50</sup> Original text: ‘Kruisraketten: geen gelopen race’ and ‘De strijd om de kruisraketten kon ook wat dat betreft wel eens de beslissende arena zijn’; Jan Joost Lindner, "Kruisraketten: geen gelopen race," *de Volkskrant* (Amsterdam) September 7, 1985, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?um=ABCDDD:010878924:mpeg21:p019.

*De Volkskrant* is most explicit in its contempt for the other side. In the article referenced above, which is not presented as an opinion piece, writer Jan Joost Lindner speaks of the decision to sign a treaty with the US about placing missiles as ‘that silly nuclear balance between Moscow and The Hague’.<sup>51</sup> The frame of painting the opponent as the antagonist is elaborated upon once more by now, even including media aligning themselves with the supporters of the placement: “Nerves are getting visible through the frequent hysteria with which the rightwing-demagogue press now smashes the signature campaign to pieces.”<sup>52</sup> *The rightwing-demagogue press* is a strong choice of words to condemn the other side of the discussion, framing them in a bad light.

That the press appealing more to a rightwing readership was critical of the popular petition is not wrong, though. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 1985, *NRC Handelsblad*, who we have seen slowly taking sides over time, questions the petition explicitly in an article with the headline ‘Popular petition praiseworthy even though content is debatable’.<sup>53</sup> In the article itself Waanders does not elaborate on this criticism that ‘the content of a popular petition is debatable’, presenting and thus framing it as if it is just a known fact.<sup>54</sup>

Coverage of the handover of the petition from Sienie Strikwerda to Ruud Lubbers is also much more violent and negative in *NRC Handelsblad* than in leftwing-aligned newspapers like *de Volkskrant*. *NRC Handelsblad* opened its newspaper on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1985, with an article headlined ‘Lubbers verbally abused and booed at popular petition’, emphasizing how uncivilized opponents of the placement of nuclear missiles could be.<sup>55</sup> For a similar article, *de Volkskrant* uses the headline ‘Petition has little consequence’ while writing about a ‘massive manifestation’ and only mentioning that the audience ‘turned their backs’ on Lubbers.<sup>56</sup>

The last feature that stood out in newspapers at the time that could influence the reader’s point of view in reading certain articles is the number of advertisements placed in the papers in which different organizations expressed whether they were going to sign the petition. Notably,

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<sup>51</sup> Original text: ‘*die malle nucleaire balans tussen Moskou en Den Haag*’; Lindner, “Kruisraketten: geen gelopen race.”

<sup>52</sup> Original text: ‘*Nervositeit hierover wordt zichtbaar via de frequente histerie, waarmee de rechts-demagogische pers nu op de handtekeningactie inhakt*’; Lindner, “Kruisraketten: geen gelopen race.”

<sup>53</sup> Original text: ‘*Volkspetitie prijzenswaardig al is inhoud betwistbaar*’; Mr. B.C.L. Waanders, “Volkspetitie prijzenswaardig al is inhoud betwistbaar,” *NRC Handelsblad* (Rotterdam) August 31, 1985, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=KBNRC01:000029868:mpeg21:p003.

<sup>54</sup> Waanders, “Volkspetitie prijzenswaardig al is inhoud betwistbaar.”

<sup>55</sup> There was no paper on October 27<sup>th</sup> 1985 since it was a Sunday; Original text: ‘*Lubbers uitgescholden en weggefloten bij volkspetitionnement*’; Hubert Smeets, “Lubbers uitgescholden en weggefloten bij volkspetitionnement,” *NRC Handelsblad* October 28, 1985, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=KBNRC01:000029982:mpeg21:p001.

<sup>56</sup> Original text: ‘*Petitionnement heeft weinig gevolgen*’, ‘*Massale manifestatie*’, and ‘*de rug toegekeerd*’; “Petitionnement heeft weinig gevolgen,” *De Volkskrant* (Amsterdam) October 28, 1985, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010878892:mpeg21:p001.

the *Interkerkelijk Comité Tweezijdige Ontwapening* (ICTO), a rightwing counterpart of the IKV, advocated in multiple papers like *Algemeen Dagblad* and *Trouw* not to support the petition. Putting the message ‘Popular petition: We will not sign’ among news about the petition, the advertisers assist in constructing a frame.<sup>57</sup> This advertisement was posted multiple times throughout the period.

The KKN itself also did not hesitate to use advertisements to convince the public. In *Algemeen Dagblad*, among others, KKN posted the familiar logo of a cartoon woman crossing out a rocket accompanied by the text ‘The only thing that counts is your signature’.<sup>58</sup> Like before, the ad might not have been written by the paper itself, but the designers still have chosen to put it in, and it still works as a framing device. Hence, the battle was also fought out in the advertisements.

So, during the popular petition, the public debate between the people who supported the placement of nuclear cruise missiles in Woensdrecht and the ones opposing it peaks in media coverage. Newspapers frame it like some sort of final battle of nuclear disarmament, while clearly taking sides. Frames established early in the discussion evolve, like the ‘good guy, bad guy’ narrative expanded to include media supporting the other side as a bad guy as well. We also see advertisements used by third parties to incite framing, a phenomenon which earlier only happened on occasion.

## 1.6 Conclusion

In short, after the analysis of this chapter, multiple frames have been found that were used during the period of the nuclear cruise missile crisis in the Netherlands. During the three explored periods, newspapers have created frames that evolved over time to accommodate the ever-increasing pressure that the crisis put on society.

Whereas in 1979, articles on the subject remained rather mild, and certain small frames can be discovered, this chapter has uncovered that over time these frames have been more explicit and differed based on the newspaper’s affiliation. In 1985, framing was used as a weapon in a battle against the other side, with each paper clearly taking sides. Frames developed

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<sup>57</sup> Original text: ‘*Volkspetitionnement: wij tekenen niet*’; Interkerkelijk Comité Tweezijdige Ontwapening, “Volkspetitionnement: wij tekenen niet,” Advertisement, *Trouw* 31-08-1985, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDD:010820478:mpeg21:p013.

<sup>58</sup> Original text: ‘*Het enige wat nu telt, is uw handtekening*’; Komitee Kruisraketten Nee. Advertisement, “Het enige wat nu telt, is uw handtekening,” Advertisement, *Algemeen Dagblad* (Rotterdam) October 5, 1985, resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=KBPERS01:003035005:mpeg21:p00005.

with the increasing vigor of the newspapers, expanding their scope to include and say more than they did before.

An important framed narrative told by both sides was to describe the story as a battle of 'good versus bad', in which the other side of the discussion was framed as the villain. Leftwing and Christian newspapers started the harshest, already painting NATO as 'the bad guy' in the story of Dutch international and national politics. Immediately, the cruise missiles were framed as dangerous for the Dutch population. In 1985 this frame developed to encompass everyone that supports the placement of nuclear missiles as 'bad'. Even media writing from the supporters' point of view are made out to be 'demagogues', a politically loaded negative term.

Another notable frame is that the nuclear missiles aimed to be placed in the Netherlands were a direct threat to Dutch society. As early as 1979, newspapers used threatening language to describe the nuclear cruise missiles agreed upon in NATO's Double-Track decision, also showing their range, and the range of Russian missiles. Opponents of the placement used increasingly bigger words to describe the missiles.

A last notable frame is the idea that the international politics was heavily disrupting national politics. Already, papers focused on the fact that the Double-Track decision resulted in a cabinet crisis in 1979. Later, this was elaborated upon, even implying certain political parties were corrupting their own ideals by aligning themselves with international needs.

Most notably, we see newspapers taking sides, establishing themselves in the debates more as active members than objective observers. While leftist *de Volkskrant* and *het Parool*, and Christian *Trouw* establish themselves on the side of the peace movements, *NRC Handelsblad* forms a front for the supporters of the rocket placement. *Algemeen Dagblad* hangs in between but also seems to lean towards the peace movements. The discovery of media actively involving themselves in the public debate is an important preview for the following chapter, in which we will see the role of the journalist change accordingly.

## **Chapter 2: Journalists: scaremongers or reporters?**

It is easy to stick with what was written in uncovering how the written press shaped the public debate surrounding the placement of nuclear cruise missiles. One should, however, not forget the agency of journalists themselves whilst writing the stories. The last chapter established the frames the media created in covering the nuclear missile crisis of the 1980s in the Netherlands. Following De Vreese's analysis, though, framing should be analyzed in the form of a process which exists out of *frame building* and *frame setting*.<sup>59</sup>

This chapter will focus on the first of these two: *frame building*. A journalist's own experience is significant in creating frames. As already established in the introduction, it is paramount to find out how a journalist's personal experience and background influenced how they covered the news when seeking to discover how the written press shaped a public debate.<sup>60</sup> Were they consciously constructing their articles to convey a certain message, or was the process of framing done unwittingly? Covering news is much more than simply writing what you see. It is a process of decision-making in which factors like emotion and personal preference play a big part.

Following this idea, this chapter will focus on the journalists covering the nuclear cruise missile crisis themselves. Three personal interviews with journalists aligned to different media in the 1980s will provide an account of the experience of working as a news reporter on the subject, providing an insight into the intent behind the public image the written press helped construct during the ten pivotal years of transatlantic public debate. Moreover, a memoir written by W.L. Brugsma, one of the leading journalists and opinion leaders at the time, will add to that argument. An important link will be made between framing and objectivity in journalism. Being objective and partaking in the process of framing, needless to say, are heavily intertwined, and how journalists saw the ideal of objectivity was rapidly changing during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Eventually, this chapter aims to find a concluding answer to the question if journalists considered themselves to be mediators in the public debate or if the influence they exuded was much more unintentional.

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<sup>59</sup> De Vreese, "News framing: Theory and typology," 161.

<sup>60</sup> Stephen Jukes, *Journalism and Emotion* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2020), 164.

## 2.1 Methodology: oral history

One could say that the best way of discovering the role journalists perceived themselves to have during the debate surrounding the placement of nuclear cruise missiles in the Netherlands is to simply ask them. In academic terms, this means to collect oral histories – personal memories and stories by the ones who experienced history themselves.

To practice oral history, professor of gender and culture at Lancaster University Corinna M. Peniston-Bird argues, is to use ‘a historical process and methodology and source base which can be integrated into approaches to history’. The historian is able to fulfill ‘the desire to capture the experiences ... of everyday life’ by having interviews and conversations with the people that have actually been in the situations the research is about.<sup>61</sup>

In doing this, though, you have to take into account the limits and possibilities of oral history. The most constricting facet of oral history is the fallibility of human memory. Peniston-Bird explains: “Oral interviews have been criticized as inaccurate and subjective, prone to exhibiting all types of bias. Given that human memory is notoriously inaccurate, eye-witness accounts are easily construed as highly unreliable.”<sup>62</sup> The notion that personal experience and memories are not always factual and reliable should not keep historians from using these unique sources, Peniston-Bird argues. “It is the oral historian’s task to interpret the meaning of that narration and its end. The critique of oral histories as subjective and inaccurate therefore risks discarding one of their greatest values, the insight they offer into subjective experience.”<sup>63</sup>

In other words, oral history is just a story until the historian comes in to interpret and contextualize it. Then, and only then, does it become a useful and insightful source for historical research that, even though sometimes unreliable, adds an important facet to the study: human experience. The process of interpreting oral history, according to Peniston-Bird, then requires ‘an acknowledgment of the explicit presence of the historian and their interventions in the text’.<sup>64</sup> By constructing an ‘explicit interpretative framework’, the historian takes the narrative power from the storyteller to create an argument.

This chapter will do exactly that. By putting personal stories of Dutch journalists active in the 1980s next to the historical context of the development of the ideal of objectivity in journalism, I will evaluate how the oral histories face up against the theory. We have seen in

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<sup>61</sup> Corinna M. Peniston-Bird, "Oral History: the sound of memory," in *History Beyond the Text: a student's guide to approaching alternative sources*, ed. Sarah Barber and Corinna M. Peniston-Bird (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 105.

<sup>62</sup> Peniston-Bird, "Oral History: the sound of memory," 107.

<sup>63</sup> Peniston-Bird, "Oral History: the sound of memory," 110.

<sup>64</sup> Peniston-Bird, "Oral History: the sound of memory," 113.

chapter one that the issue of the nuclear missile crisis of the 1980s lends itself to newspapers explicitly taking sides in the discussion. As a result, one could say that objectivity was in dispute. Could it be, then, that the ideal journalistic objectivity was already developing in that direction? By first constructing a framework for the evolution of journalistic objectivity, this will be looked into to find if the development shown in chapter one also took place on the journalist's side. Then, three personal accounts gathered for this thesis will be placed in the bigger picture of journalism during the nuclear cruise missile crisis in the Netherlands in the 1980s.

The stories of three journalists active in the 1980s will stand central in the analysis of this chapter: one beginning his career during the nuclear missile crisis, one already established in the journalistic scene, and the last a journalistic veteran already in the business for years. First, Hans van Zon, the youngest of the three. He was born in 1955 and started his journalistic career right at the start of the Dutch nuclear missile crisis. In 1979, the year of NATO's double-track decision, he was accepted for the newly established *Academie voor Journalistiek* in Tilburg. As an active student, he was part of the program committee, which established the education for many journalists studying at the academy in the first few years. In 1983 Van Zon got a job at *NRC Handelsblad* (NRC), a large newspaper with a liberal-progressive agenda. Part of a team 'full of heavyweights', he learned working at the foreign desk 'from the best'.<sup>65</sup> In 1984, he transferred to the *Algemeen Dagblad* (AD), a sizeable newspaper with a liberal-neutral point of view. Van Zon remained employed at the AD until December 2021, after which he retired. During these years, he held multiple positions in the organization: foreign editor, managing editor of the Saturday section, deputy managing editor of the foreign desk, managing editor of the news desk, and then finally back as an editor for the foreign desk.<sup>66</sup> After 37 years at the AD, Van Zon could not put his pen down entirely; he still writes for the science section of the Saturday newspaper as a freelancer. During his time at NRC and his first years at the AD, he experienced editorial discussions about the nuclear missile crisis firsthand, and at the foreign desk was tasked with writing about the international side of the conflict.<sup>67</sup> The interview with Hans van Zon took place by phone on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

The second journalist on the list is Ferry Mingelen. Born in 1947, Mingelen started his career in written journalism in 1969 for *Het Vrije Volk*, a social democratic newspaper seated

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<sup>65</sup> Hans Van Zon, interview by Wouter Peer, conversation by phone, 6 July, 2022. Transcript in possession of author. Translation done by the author.

<sup>66</sup> Dutch positions translated by author. In order: *buitenlandredacteur, chef zaterdagkatern, sous-chef buitenland, nieuwschef, en opnieuw buitenlandredacteur.*

<sup>67</sup> Van Zon, interview.

in The Hague. In 1970 he became a parliamentary reporter for *Trouw*, a newspaper rooted in Christian tradition with a mostly protestant readership. This is where he experienced the start of the cruise missile discussions in the Netherlands with NATO's Double-Track Decision being made in 1979. In 1980 Mingelen traveled to Brussels to take up the job as a correspondent for the GPD (*Geassocieerde Pers Diensten*), a newspaper conglomerate including mostly local newspapers like *De Gelderlander*, *de Leeuwarder Courant*, and *het Parool*. In 1984 Mingelen exchanged the pen for the camera and started his television career at the state-funded news broadcaster NOS by presenting the analytical news show *Den Haag Vandaag*. After the 1980s, Mingelen remained a familiar face for political commentary in television shows like *NOVA* and *Nieuwsuur* until his retirement in 2013.<sup>68</sup> Due to Mingelen's personal health issues, the interview took place by e-mail on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022.

The third and oldest journalist central to this chapter is W.L. Brugsma. Willem Leonard Brugsma, born in 1922, started his career in journalism directly after World War II, in which he was captured as a resistance fighter and imprisoned at concentration camp Dachau. In 1946 he acquired a position at the *Haarlemsche Courant*, which he fulfilled until 1954. Afterward, he became a traveling journalist for GPD, a position lost to modern times in which a journalist would fly anywhere where the news brought them. In 1965 Brugsma was asked to be the deputy editor-in-chief for the *Haagsche Courant*, and a year later, in 1966, he transferred to the position of editor-in-chief for the weekly magazine *Haagsche Post*. In 1976 Brugsma was asked to present a tv show about current affairs: *Achter het Nieuws*. Afterward, he presented multiple news shows on the small screen: *VARA-visie* in 1978 and 1979 and *Het Capitool* from 1983 until 1986. During and after his television years, Brugsma remained active as a columnist for *HP/de Tijd*.<sup>69</sup> W.L. Brugsma passed away at the age of 75 after a year-long battle with cancer in 1997.<sup>70</sup>

After his death, *HP/De Tijd* published the memoirs he wrote in the last years before his death in a bundle called *Beroep: journalist*. Instead of an interview, these memoirs will provide the necessary context needed for the analysis in this chapter. Even though a written memoir does not account for the freedom of conversation, in a way, it still counts as oral history. *Beroep: journalist* is a recollection of Brugma's experiences in his career as a journalist. As such, it adds

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<sup>68</sup> "Ferry Mingelen," Beeld en Geluid Wiki (Website), Beeld en Geluid, accessed 11 July, 2022, [https://wiki.beeldengeluid.nl/index.php/Ferry\\_Mingelen](https://wiki.beeldengeluid.nl/index.php/Ferry_Mingelen).

<sup>69</sup> *Haagsche Post* fused with similar magazine *De Tijd* in 1985, creating its new title *HP/De Tijd*.

<sup>70</sup> "W.L. Brugsma, Journalist," (Website), Online Museum de Bilt, 2018, accessed 2022, 11 July, <https://onlinemuseumdebilt.nl/w-l-brugsma-journalist/>.

the same personal facet of history to the greater picture while also having the same pitfall of the fallibility of human memory.<sup>71</sup>

These three are a good representation of journalists at the time, especially regarding age and experience. Hans van Zon was still in school during the beginning of the nuclear missile crisis, and thus he experienced a significant part of the *Kruisraketten Nee* period as a beginning journalist. Ferry Mingelen, on the other hand, was already in the field for quite some time, and his multiple hats, so to say, as a parliamentary reporter, correspondent in Brussels, and on TV, makes for a good, broad point of view. W.L. Brugsma, then, represents the old guard of journalists during the period. Already having experienced his fair share of crises, he saw the period of peace movements in a different light, resulting in other considerations and decisions.

## 2.2 Objectivity and journalism

Objectivity in journalistic reporting has been a contentious subject for decades. Many news outlets pride themselves on being objective, but as associate professor in media and communication at the University of Western Australia, Steven Maras writes in *Objectivity in Journalism*: “If journalistic objectivity is an ideal, it is surely a complex one.”<sup>72</sup> On the one hand, journalists strive to be as objective as possible all the time, but on the other hand, one’s personal experiences and opinions are difficult to ignore when reporting the news.

Views on the importance and objectivity in journalism have not been stationary. Maras summarizes:

One thing to recognize about journalistic objectivity, however, is that the concept (and, indeed, the striving for it) is the product of history, linked to particular cultural formations, as well as the professional aspirations of journalists themselves.<sup>73</sup>

He describes the late-1800s as the starting point of objectivity as a journalistic ethical principle. Especially in the years after World War I, in which what Maras describes as a ‘famine of facts’ took place, ‘journalistic fact-mindedness’ became central in news reporting.<sup>74</sup> Objectivity then did not mean as much as observing literal world facts, though. The ideals of being objective were loaded with societal ideals and values: “On the surface, objectivity may look like naïve empiricism, but it addresses a different set of circumstances, and is no longer simplistically

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<sup>71</sup> W.L. Brugsma, *Beroep: Journalist* (HP/De Tijd, 1997).; This book is written in Dutch. All translations done by the author.

<sup>72</sup> Steven Maras, *Objectivity in Journalism* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013), 1.

<sup>73</sup> Maras, *Objectivity in Journalism*, 2.

<sup>74</sup> Maras, *Objectivity in Journalism*, 52.

aligned with a realism based on facts as external phenomena subject to laws.”<sup>75</sup> Objective journalism, for the greater part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century then, meant observing and handling information as what was valued to be the truth. As such, searching for the actual truth had little to do with journalistic objectivity.

This was clearly visible in the Netherlands due to the nation’s pillarized structure. Dutch professor of media studies Mark Deuze states in his book *Journalists in the Netherlands* that even though Dutch journalists of the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century held objectivity in high esteem, most were also members of political parties and let their writings be influenced by their political point of view. Each ‘pillar’ of society had its own focus of writing and reported events differently, but they still viewed their writing as objective, according to surveys at the time.<sup>76</sup> Objectivity as an ideal thus had nothing to do with the actual truth but more with the values of the writer and the public.

This shifted in the 1960s, a period in which journalists took a self-reflective turn. Maras argues that objectivity came to be seen as ‘a biased doctrine’ instead of a weapon to fight bias. As structures of power and privilege became more visible during the social movements of the time, journalists came to see objectivity and the notion of factuality as a social product, an ‘ideology’. The idea of objectivity remained central, but journalists reconsidered their own position in society, knowing that true objective news reporting is rather impossible.<sup>77</sup> As a result, distancing and remaining neutral became more important. From now on, Deuze argues, Dutch journalists would not perceive themselves as objective observers but as neutral participants.<sup>78</sup>

This meant that journalists brought facts as truthful as possible and sometimes helped the public understand the news in the way they interpreted it themselves. Dutch journalists considered analyses of the news just as important as bringing the news itself. Sometimes even neutrality did not matter, as Pleijter et al. conclude: “Dutch journalists [in 1968], in general, want to be perceived as competent and influential in society.”<sup>79</sup> The journalist, as such, became a sort of mediator of public discussion. As Deuze calls it, journalism entailed a form of ‘social responsibility’ from then on.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Maras, *Objectivity in Journalism*, 53.

<sup>76</sup> Mark Deuze, *Journalists in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2002), 12-13.

<sup>77</sup> Maras, *Objectivity in Journalism*, 55-56.

<sup>78</sup> Deuze, *Journalists in the Netherlands*, 12-13.

<sup>79</sup> Pleijter, Hermans, and Vergeer, "Journalists and Journalism in the Netherlands."

<sup>80</sup> Deuze, *Journalists in the Netherlands*, 22.

Maras, then, describes that this social responsibility – or the journalist’s feeling of duty to educate the ‘unknowing’ reader – resulted in ‘unhappiness’ with the term objectivity.<sup>81</sup> By the 1970s, public journalism, so the idea that a journalist should take a position in society to guide their reader, ‘can be read as simply good journalism’, Maras writes.<sup>82</sup> “But the sticking point is objectivity as a doctrine and its role in journalism.”<sup>83</sup>

Objectivity came to stand in the way of what was thought of as ‘good journalism’. As such, the ideal was put under pressure. Should a journalist be objective, or should he appeal to the readers as a participant? Thus, journalistic objectivity during the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be best described as a goal that existed out of the paradoxical relationship between neutrality and the need to guard and shape the public.

### **2.3 Being a journalist in the 1980s: personal experiences**

The period between NATO’s double-track decision in 1979 and the INF Treaty in 1987 was certainly turbulent for the editorial offices of news media. All three personal accounts confirm that the nuclear cruise missile crisis not only held society in its grasp but it also led to a lot of serious discussions in the press rooms. As Hans van Zon describes: “Months upon months the placement of the cruise missiles was the big topic. It held society in its grasp; it would be ridiculous not to pay attention to it as a newspaper.”<sup>84</sup> Ferry Mingelen confirms this, calling it ‘an important discussion’.<sup>85</sup>

An interesting dynamic occurred when the journalists described their take on how objective they were as opposed to their role in the cruise missile debate. Both Mingelen and Van Zon assert that objectivity was one of their top priorities. Mingelen: “My daily coverage and analysis were decently objective, I think, with attention to different interpretations of the decisions made.”<sup>86</sup> Van Zon similarly states that neutrality and objectivity were important ideals at *NRC Handelsblad*, for which he worked during the apex of the cruise missile crisis: “At *NRC*, the rule was: make sure that the news coverage is balanced, and that no party is favored.”<sup>87</sup> When directly asked about *NRC Handelsblad*’s possible bias, which chapter one of this thesis uncovered, he reacted: “A part of the Dutch society shrugged it off, or thought the missiles were

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<sup>81</sup> Maras, *Objectivity in Journalism*, 56.

<sup>82</sup> Maras, *Objectivity in Journalism*, 56.

<sup>83</sup> Maras, *Objectivity in Journalism*, 56.

<sup>84</sup> Interview conducted in Dutch, translations done by the author; Van Zon, interview.

<sup>85</sup> Interview conducted in Dutch, translations done by the author; Ferry Mingelen, interview by Wouter Peer, e-mail conversation, 22 June, 2022. Transcript in possession of author.

<sup>86</sup> Mingelen, interview.

<sup>87</sup> Van Zon, interview.

necessary. Not 100 percent of Dutch people were against the cruise missiles.”<sup>88</sup> So, no matter what it may look like from the outside, both stick to their own actions as a journalist being completely objective.

Looking at how they perceived others, however, both share that some media were clearly ‘taking sides’, directly contradicting objectivity. Van Zon: “Left-wing sentiments really featured in *de Volkskrant* The pacifist sentiments at least. I remember a few colleagues of *de Volkskrant* being members of the PSP. That party was an adamant opponent of the placement of cruise missiles in Woensdrecht.”<sup>89</sup> Mingelen shares something similar: “That my reporting was objective does not take away from the fact that *Trouw* clearly positioned itself at the side of the opponents [of the placement] during that period. Other papers, like *NRC*, chose the side of the supporters.”

These statements lay the paradoxical relationship between objectivity and the need for journalists to participate in society bare. While objectivity remained a clear goal, a criterion to adhere to and measure journalistic aptitude from, the two interviewed journalists admitted that objective journalism was becoming scarce. Of course, they see themselves as good journalists, and this is not an attempt to discredit them in any way, but in their minds, a good journalist is synonymous with an objective journalist. In that way, they would always describe their way of reporting as objective. In fact, as we established earlier, this was not the case anymore, and as such, objectivity was often put aside to partake in the debate, an ideal that was being cherished more over time. It seems, though, that this happened subconsciously.

Van Zon describes the need to split his personal opinion from that of the newspaper he worked for. “The 1980s were exciting, but I also learned a lot as a beginning journalist. To guard a neutral position, even though you are for or against the issue yourself, is one of the lessons I took with me in my career. In 1981 I stood in Amsterdam to protest against the placement of the cruise missiles, but that personal opinion could not stand in the way of my reporting.”<sup>90</sup> To not let personality shine through is one of the most important facets of journalism, Van Zon states. “I have written lots of opinion pieces, but those were the paper’s opinion, not mine. Sometimes I had to write an opinion piece that I did not agree with personally, but the paper's position was the way to go.”<sup>91</sup> Again, Van Zon speaks of his own

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<sup>88</sup> Van Zon, interview.

<sup>89</sup> PSP, or *Pacifistische Socialistische Partij*, was a Dutch socialist, pacifist party from 1957 until 1991. During the 1980s, the party was heavily involved with the peace movements in the Netherlands. Later, the party would merge with three other small socialist parties to become GroenLinks.; Van Zon, interview.

<sup>90</sup> Van Zon, interview.

<sup>91</sup> Van Zon, interview.

neutrality here in a paradoxical sense. Filtering his personal opinion in Van Zon's eyes is one of the key components of good journalism. Still, the resulting point of view is not neutral or objective either: it is the opinion of the paper he works for. While Van Zon personally aims for neutrality, the medium he works for aims for participation. As such, even journalists who fancy themselves to be objective expanded their role as participants in the debate.

W.L. Brugsma is an entirely different case, though. He drops the pretense of being objective completely in his memoirs, describing the nuclear missile crisis almost as a personal battle: "I did not want to lose my little war, and pulled every trick out of the bag. ... I got so skilled in painting an image of the horrors of a nuclear war that, as I heard, there were people who pulled ahead by jumping off the balcony on the fifth floor."<sup>92</sup>

The difference between Brugsma at one side and Van Zon and Mingelen on the other is striking. Brugsma, with his journalistic experience, fully embraced the newly developed position of the participating journalist, dropping objectivity completely. Brugsma even admits in the quote above that he 'painted an image' that was more horrible than what was actually happening. While Van Zon and Mingelen might not have wanted to influence the public directly, framing certain issues subconsciously for the sake of adhering to the news medium's position, Brugsma used frames consciously to participate in the discussion and win his 'little war'.

Brugsma even goes so far as to call himself a '*onheilsprofeet*' and '*doemdenker*', admitting his role as a scaremonger during the 1980s.<sup>93</sup> He describes using his 'power' as a public figure to sway and rouse opponents of the cruise missiles. He describes a tv-session that was recording during the massive protest of 1983: "At the end, I went outside and I 'bathed in the crowd'. The protesters found this amazing: 'That mister from television walks with us!' Not for long, by the way, because of those difficult feet, but I showed my true colors."<sup>94</sup> One might even say that Brugsma took the idea of the journalist as a participant in the public debate a step further. Because of his position in the Netherlands – quite some people looked up to him as 'that mister from television – Brugsma saw his position more as a shepherd, someone knowledgeable who gave people direction. Whereas Van Zon and Mingelen represent the side of journalism that still held on to objectivity as much as they could, Brugsma fully left it behind.

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<sup>92</sup> Brugsma, *Beroep: Journalist*, 66-67.

<sup>93</sup> These two Dutch words do not have a literal English translation. Both mean something in the sense of 'on who thinks and spreads words of impending doom'; Brugsma, *Beroep: Journalist*, 62-64.

<sup>94</sup> Brugsma, *Beroep: Journalist*, 67.

Something which all three journalists can agree upon is that the supposed scaremongering most media were accused of partaking in was justifiable. The idea of nuclear weapons is simply pretty scary. As Mingelen describes: “I would not say personally that it was scaremongering, but people surely can experience news about nuclear rockets as such. I would not have done anything differently.”<sup>95</sup> Brugsma, who certainly did not shy away from scaring the public, agrees with Mingelen, saying: “In the 1980s there just was a lot of doom to think about; a cocktail of bloodshed in eastern Europe plus a dose of nuclear Strangelove: *a very bloody Mary indeed*.”<sup>96</sup>

Van Zon adds an interesting comment on the supposed scaremongering of the media. He says:

Mient Jan Faber of the IKV was accused of scaremongering from time to time. His comments that the world would end when the rockets came were seen by his opponents as scaremongering. That the media writes these quotes down does not mean that they support them and that they want something to come out of it. A part of news reporting constitutes putting the statements of all parties in the paper.<sup>97</sup>

So, regarding scaremongering, not only the media is to blame, according to Van Zon: “A battle of propaganda accompanies large discussions like these.”<sup>98</sup> This is something we have already seen in section 1.5, in which the process of framing was partially executed by well-placed advertisements. The newspapers did decide to accept the advertisement in their papers, but they did not write the contents. At the beginning of chapter 1, *frame building* was established in part to be executed by third parties. These advertisements and the statements by Hans van Zon affirm this idea. This does not take away, however, that the largest part of creating a frame is done by journalists and others who are involved in constructing a newspaper. What it does say is that one should take into account that more factors come into play.

## 2.4 Conclusion

In short, after this chapter, one can safely conclude that how journalists perceived themselves changed significantly during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This greatly influenced media coverage of the nuclear missile crisis in the Netherlands in the 1980s. By combining three oral

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<sup>95</sup> Mingelen, interview.

<sup>96</sup> Italics in original text; Brugsma, *Beroep: Journalist*, 70.

<sup>97</sup> Van Zon, interview.

<sup>98</sup> Van Zon, interview.

histories with a historical analysis of the ideal of objectivity in journalism, we have seen that the idea of objectivity as a criterion of journalistic aptitude was put under pressure by the rising feeling that a journalist and/or journalistic outlet should participate more in societal discussions. Public journalism meant to involve yourself with the discussion as you are reporting about it, but doing that objectively is nearly impossible. This resulted in a paradoxical relationship between the public journalist and objectivity.

Conversations with Hans van Zon and Ferry Mingelen revealed how this paradoxical link worked in reality. While both observe their reporting as objective, they also see that media were taking sides in the discussions, approaching news from a participating perspective. Van Zon even described his neutral position as shutting off his own opinion but replacing that with the point of view of the paper. This shows that even though they might not have intended to write their articles with swaying the public in mind, they still participated in the construction of frames that might have influenced the public subconsciously. In other words, they, and as did probably many others, did not think about the idea of journalistic objectivity in the paradoxical sense, but they did act upon it.

W.L. Brugsma represented an entirely different part of journalism. As an experienced writer and public figure on television, he admits in his memoirs to have completely thrown out objectivity. The *'doemdenker'* actively attempted to sway the public to what he thought was the right conclusion, making no secret of his alignment with the peace movements. He consciously participated in building a frame that would shed the opponents of the cruise missiles in a better light.

What the three could agree upon is that this supposed scaremongering was justified. Nuclear missiles were scary, and the threat of all-out nuclear war frightened many people. Van Zon added that not only the media were to blame for scaring the public either. Third parties like the government or protest groups were in a 'battle of propaganda' to also convince the public.

Even though chapter one established that newspapers took sides and created frames accordingly, after this chapter it is difficult to conclude that the written press was a conscious mediator in the discussion. While some prestigious figures like W.L. Brugsma certainly dabbled in a more guiding role, most journalists like Van Zon or Mingelen did not personally and consciously question the idea of journalistic objectivity as standing in the way for 'good' public journalism. Subconsciously, they still acted upon the new role for news media though, admitting that newspapers, and also the ones they worked for themselves, supported one of the sides of the discussion.

## **Chapter 3: Agenda setting during the election of 1982**

This thesis has established now that the media used multiple frames to explicitly take sides during the period of the cruise missile crisis in the 1980s. Moreover, journalists consciously or subconsciously helped build these frames, partly because the ideal of objectivity in journalism clashed with the newly formed concept of the public journalist. The last piece of the puzzle in discovering how the written press shaped this transatlantic debate, then, is if these frames that were built and published were also received and acted upon. Are the attempts of the media to frame the conflict in a certain way visible in society and maybe even influential?

By looking at the idea of *frame setting*, established in the first chapter, more extensively, combined with an analysis of the media's role in agenda setting, this chapter aims to form a foundation for answering these final questions. Then, an analysis of agenda setting during the election of 1982 will establish if what was discovered in the first two chapters was also reflected in society, providing the last piece in the puzzle in discovering how news media shaped this transatlantic debate.

### **3.1 Methodology: media and agenda setting**

An important factor in understanding how the media's writing could have impacted society is the concept of agenda setting. Journalism scholar from the University of Texas at Austin Maxwell McCombs and Amy Reynolds, professor of journalism at the Indiana University at Bloomington, define this phenomenon as follows: "[The] ability to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda has come to be called the agenda-setting role of the news media."<sup>99</sup> This power, so to say, to set the agenda for the public is not to be underestimated. McCombs and Reynolds explain: "Establishing this salience among the public so that an issue becomes the focus of public attention, thought, and perhaps even action is the initial stage in the formation of public opinion."<sup>100</sup> In this sense, one can argue that the media sets the scene in which public opinion is formed, and as such, the media's writings should be visible in society.

According to McCombs and Reynolds, the idea of agenda setting has a particular restraint that quite some scholars face while doing their research, namely that 'traditional journalism norms emphasize that the media are trying to inform, not persuade'.<sup>101</sup> In the last

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<sup>99</sup> Maxwell McCombs and Amy Reynolds, "How the News Shapes Our Civic Agenda," in *Media Effects: advances in theory and research*, ed. Jennings Bryant and Mary Beth Oliver (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1.

<sup>100</sup> McCombs and Reynolds, "How the News Shapes Our Civic Agenda," 1.

<sup>101</sup> McCombs and Reynolds, "How the News Shapes Our Civic Agenda," 1.

chapter, however, it was already established that the traditional journalistic norm of objectivity was slowly fading during the period of the nuclear missile crisis in the Netherlands, making way for the public journalist who took a guiding position in society. As such, the obstacle described by McCombs and Reynolds is already out of the way.

Earlier, this thesis established framing as an ‘influential way that the media may shape public opinion’.<sup>102</sup> McCombs and Reynolds affirm this by linking framing to agenda setting, stating: “Both framing and attribute agenda setting call attention to the perspectives used by communicators and their audiences to picture topics in the daily news.”<sup>103</sup> Important in analysis, then, of how certain frames result in agenda setting, is *frame setting*, or how frames are interpreted by society. Lecheler and De Vreese provide a guide to uncovering the process of *frame setting*. They argue that exposure to repeated frames drives the process of frame setting forward, and as such certain frames should be visible in society.<sup>104</sup>

According to McCombs and Reynolds, ‘election settings provide a strong natural laboratory in which to study agenda-setting effects’.<sup>105</sup> During election time, political parties provide their plans for the upcoming years, and to appeal to the voter, certain aspects that the public focuses upon are emphasized more than others. Agenda setting by the media, then, should appear clearly during such a period because what the media put on the civic agenda will influence what political parties focus on. Moreover, agenda setting by the media can influence voting behavior as well. Especially for ‘inobtrusive issues’, defined by McCombs and Reynolds as ‘issues that we encounter only in the news and not in our daily lives’, the media is effective in setting the civic agenda.<sup>106</sup> The cruise missile crisis is a good example of such an inobtrusive issue, as the possible placement of nuclear missiles in Woensdrecht was not something that impacted most people directly. For obtrusive issues, like inflation or unemployment, the media is less effective in setting the agenda because people will form their opinion based on their own experiences.<sup>107</sup>

A good setting to look into the phenomenon of agenda setting, then, is the election of 1982. When the cabinet led by Dries van Agt (CDA) fell after only eight months, the parties had to scramble to organize campaigns for new elections. Political parties did not expect new elections until 1985, but now they had to get the voter on their side once again significantly

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<sup>102</sup> De Vreese, "News framing: Theory and typology," 51.

<sup>103</sup> McCombs and Reynolds, "How the News Shapes Our Civic Agenda," 7.

<sup>104</sup> Sophie Lecheler and Claes H. De Vreese, "What a Difference a Day Makes? The Effects of Repetitive and Competitive News Framing Over Time," *Communication Research* 40, no. 2 (2013).

<sup>105</sup> McCombs and Reynolds, "How the News Shapes Our Civic Agenda," 3.

<sup>106</sup> McCombs and Reynolds, "How the News Shapes Our Civic Agenda," 8.

<sup>107</sup> McCombs and Reynolds, "How the News Shapes Our Civic Agenda," 8.

earlier. As professor emeritus of political behavior and research methods at Leiden University, Galen Irwin argued in his analysis right after the election: “The short interval since the previous parliamentary elections ... had left the party electoral chests depleted. Little time was available to write or rewrite party manifestos. Basically, they were unprepared.”<sup>108</sup> As such, the parties were more dependent on the whims of the public, which were partly decided by the media’s agenda setting.

Eventually, the PvdA would emerge victorious from the elections, but because of issues during the formation, the new cabinet was formed by CDA and VVD, with Ruud Lubbers as prime minister. The nuclear missile crisis, by then in full swing in between the two massive protests in 1981 and 1983, was one of the main political issues in play during the elections.

By looking at the party programs of the three largest parties in the election of 1982 – PvdA, CDA, and VVD – this chapter will uncover how the frames established in chapter one have been set in society. The media has an important role in setting the civic agenda. As such, the political parties most certainly would have followed up on big issues in society that were constructed and reported on in the media. Did the increased attention in the media result in a more prominent place for the issue in political campaigns?

### **3.2 Frame setting in the election of 1982**

While the conflict between NATO and the Warsaw pact certainly was an important topic in politics at the time, with or without meddling by the media, we can still see some notable salience on the topic in the party programs in question. PvdA, as a leftwing, pacifist party, establishes its position on NATO and the placement of cruise missiles in Woensdrecht quite extensively in its party program, called ‘honest distribution’.<sup>109</sup> NATO and the cruise missiles are not directly mentioned in the introduction, focusing on obtrusive, national issues like the rising unemployment numbers of the time. This is logical, as people experienced these issues themselves in their daily lives, and as such political parties focused on solving those issues.

For inobtrusive issues, though, the transatlantic bond, NATO, and the placement of the cruise missiles in Woensdrecht receive a significant amount of attention in the party program. PvdA expresses its desire to ‘create a new, collective system of security in Europe’ that would

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<sup>108</sup> Galen Irwin, "The Dutch parliamentary election of 1982," *Electoral Studies* 2, no. 1 (1983).

<sup>109</sup> Original text: ‘*Eerlijk delen*’; Partij van de Arbeid, "Eerlijk delen: Verkiezingsprogramma 1982," *Witsenkader* (Party Program), August 1982, <https://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/281/1/Verkiezingsprogramma%20PvdA%201982.pdf>.

eventually result in ‘the termination of existing power blocks like NATO’.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, the placement of cruise missiles in Europe and PvdA’s reluctance to NATO’s plans to do so are mentioned in seven separate bullet points.<sup>111</sup> After those, a separate section is reserved for the placement of nuclear missiles in the Netherlands. The PvdA states: “The Netherlands should be free of nuclear weapons, but only when it brings a nuclear-free Europe closer. ... The Netherlands will undertake the following steps one-sidedly during the following political period, even when conversations with allies would yield little to no results.”<sup>112</sup> The PvdA is quite adamant in its pursuit of stopping the placement of nuclear missiles. The party also called attention to the protest in Amsterdam in 1981 with a comic (see Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Comic in PvdA’s party program for the election of 1982.

In PvdA’s party program, similar ideas shine through as the frames uncovered in chapter one. The idea that international cooperation is not necessarily bad, but NATO is which is why it should be abolished according to the PvdA, is quite similar to the frame of NATO as a ‘bad guy’. This frame was already established in 1979 and persisted throughout the crisis. Having so many bullet points dedicated to nuclear disarmament also speaks to the frame of the placement of nuclear weapons as a direct threat to Dutch society. By emphasizing disarmament in their party program, they convey that nuclear weapons are not good for the Netherlands.

In CDA’s party program, called ‘For a meaningful life’, the nuclear cruise missile crisis shines through even more.<sup>113</sup> As a member of the cabinet in the years before the election, CDA wanted to prove to its voters that their behavior towards NATO was justifiable and according to the beliefs of the party. The first section, dedicated to the differences with and revisions on the party program from 1981, is for a large part about NATO and the cruise missile placement. While CDA did have a part in allowing NATO’s Double-Track Decision to be ratified as a governing party, a large part of its constituency did not support further nuclear armament. This

<sup>110</sup> Original text: ‘het totstandkomen van een nieuw kollektief veiligheidssysteem in Europa’ and ‘de opheffing van de bestaande machtsblokken als NAVO’; Partij van de Arbeid, "Eerlijk delen: Verkiezingsprogramma 1982," 41.

<sup>111</sup> Specifically point c and g below the text ‘Het NAVO-verdragsgebied wordt niet uitgebreid...’ on page 42, and point a, b, c, e and f below the text ‘Te bevorderen door de NAVO te nemen stappen zijn: ...’ on page 42 and 43.; Partij van de Arbeid, "Eerlijk delen: Verkiezingsprogramma 1982," 42-43.

<sup>112</sup> Original text: ‘Nederland dient kernwapenvrij te worden, maar zodanig, dat het een kernwapenvrij Europa naderbij brengt. ... Daarvoor neemt Nederland in de komende kabinetsperiode eenzijdig de volgende stappen, ook als overleg met de bondgenoten weinig of niets zou opleveren’.; Partij van de Arbeid, "Eerlijk delen: Verkiezingsprogramma 1982," 43.

<sup>113</sup> Original text: ‘Om een zinvol bestaan’; CDA, "Om een zinvol bestaan," (Party Program), 1982, 1, [dnpprepu.ub.rug.nl/288/1/Verkiezingsprogramma%20CDA%201982.pdf](http://dnpprepu.ub.rug.nl/288/1/Verkiezingsprogramma%20CDA%201982.pdf).

resulted in unrest within the party. In the party program, then, CDA aims to recover from this frame by providing nuance to its statements and once and for all make its position towards NATO and its plans for nuclear weapons clear:

CDA wants, in lieu of the placement of nuclear middle-range missiles in the Netherlands, that no measures will be taken or lied down that would harm discussions in Geneva. Our approach remains to dismantle these weapons on the Eastern side and to prevent the placement of them in the west.<sup>114</sup>

CDA extensively explains that this was their intention from the start: balancing the possibility of good discussions and allyship with their personal political desire to prevent nuclear missiles from being placed. What is more, peace, security, and international cooperation are three of the main factors in the remaining part of the party program, surely dedicating more pages to it than PVDA did.<sup>115</sup>

This inflated attention towards the issue, seemingly to defend its position in the years before, could also be seen as a result of agenda setting. *Trouw*, with its Christian readership the closest to CDA's constituency of our five newspapers, did frame the international conversations on the placement of nuclear cruise missiles in the Netherlands in national constraints, seemingly accusing NATO as a disruptor of national politics. What CDA aims to achieve in this election is to nuance this frame, showing that CDA has not wavered its beliefs on the level of international politics. Instead, they placed the past policies on the missiles into the current party program, and as such, CDA was never in strife.

VVD, then, was one of few parties in Dutch politics that did not oppose the placement of nuclear missiles in the Netherlands as much. VVD's party program, called 'Urgency program 1982', though, still pays a significant amount of attention to the issue. Even though VVD is often framed as the governing party that pushed the nuclear agenda, the party program puts the position of VVD in a surprising perspective. In one of the longest bullet points of the program, they explain that 'VVD shares the concern about the increasing armament in the world, as expressed among others by the various peace movements, but does reject one-sided steps for disarmament'.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Original text: '*Het CDA wil dat terzake van het al of niet plaatsen in Nederland van kernwapens voor de middellange afstand geen maatregelen worden genomen of nagelaten, die het overleg in Geneve zouden schaden. Het beleid blijft gericht op ontmanteling van deze wapens aan oostelijke zijde en voorkoming van plaatsing daarvan in het westen*'; CDA, "Om een zinvol bestaan," 11.

<sup>115</sup> CDA, "Om een zinvol bestaan," 11-13, 17-22, 88-92.

<sup>116</sup> VVD, "Urgentieprogramma 1982," (Party Program), 1982, 8, [dnpprepro.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/52](http://dnpprepro.ub.rug.nl/id/eprint/52).

This goes directly against how VVD is framed in the media, especially by newspapers with readerships opposing the placement of the missiles. Chapter one established that VVD was often placed together with NATO and others as ‘bad guys’ because they were pushing the nuclear agenda. The party program does, however, explain why VVD has not opposed the placement as much as their fellow governing parties: “When the disarmament talks with the Soviet Union do not result in a sufficient decrease of Russian middle range nuclear weapons ... there is no escaping the placement of cruise missiles in our country.”<sup>117</sup> So, eventually, VVD comes to the point that they do not necessarily oppose the placement of the missiles. Without calling it by its name, VVD actually explains NATO’s Double-Track Decision here: If talks with the Russians will not work, Europe has to expand its nuclear arsenal.

The order in which VVD presents its arguments with this policy is curious. What they seem to be doing is to nuance the issue to lift themselves out of the ‘bad guy’ role some media assigned to the party. By first naming the shared concerns about nuclear armament VVD calls attention to the fact that they are not necessarily pushers of the nuclear agenda. The second part of their argument – VVD does not oppose the placement and the Double-Track decision and sees it as inevitable – falls to the background. The way VVD makes its argument here could be seen as a response to the frames built by opposing media in which the party hopes to disarm those frames not to lose voters. In this sense, VVD’s party program contains evidence of agenda setting as well.

### 3.3 Conclusion

All in all, this chapter established that media does have the power to influence public opinion by setting the civic agenda. By emphasizing certain events, something in which the process of framing holds a central position, the media acquires its role in agenda setting, determining what stories people think about more than others and what their point of view is.

Looking at party programs of the top three parties of the election of 1982, it becomes clear that agenda setting also took place for the topic of the placement of nuclear cruise missiles in the Netherlands. Firstly, PvdA’s plans play into the frames of NATO as the ‘bad guy’ and the placement of the missiles being a direct threat to Dutch society. Secondly, CDA wanted to defend its actions that were questioned because of the frame of NATO as a disruptor of national politics, showing that CDA always followed its core beliefs. And lastly, VVD aimed to rewrite

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<sup>117</sup> Original text: ‘*Indien het wapenbeheersingsoverleg met de Sovjetunie niet leidt tot een voldoende vermindering van Russische kernwapens voor de middellange afstand ... zal aan de plaatsing van kruisvluchtwapens in ons land niet te ontkomen zijn.*’; VVD, “Urgentieprogramma 1982,” 8.

its role in the political discussion, providing nuance to its policies and beliefs to lift itself out of the role of the 'bad guy'.

In all three of these situations, one could argue that the political parties responded to existing frames in the media because the thoughts the frames provoked existed in society too. While it is nearly impossible to conclude the media was the main agenda setter in this process – the protest movements themselves, for example, would have had an impact on society as well – one can say assuredly that the media did assist in expanding the divide in society by creating these frames, to which the political parties reacted.

## Conclusion

All in all, one can most definitely conclude that the frames that were created by the Dutch written press during the nuclear missile crisis in the 1980s in some way shaped the public debate on this transatlantic crisis. Now, the press has been put in the expanding picture as a player in the playing-field of the developing transatlantic relations in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The first chapter established five notable newspapers in the 1980s using the process of framing to take a position in the public debate about nuclear missiles. Newspapers affiliated with left-wing and Christian readerships used framing devices from the very beginning of the crisis in 1979 to create the image of NATO as the ‘bad guy’ in Dutch politics. International politics only served as a disruption of national harmony, they seemed to want to say. Moreover, the nuclear missiles aimed to be placed in the Netherlands were directly bad for Dutch society. These frames became more extensive and explicit over time, eventually painting each supporter of the placement as bad, including VVD and newspapers with rightwing readerships. *NRC Handelsblad* was the odd one out in the five researched newspapers, actually framing the peace movements as less peaceful than the others.

An important takeaway from chapter one is that newspapers were taking sides on issues such as the nuclear missile crisis, in which the public was divided to the bone as well. This put the ideal of journalistic objectivity in dispute. How can one be objective but at the same time take sides in a discussion?

Chapter two elaborated on this development, showing that journalism underwent quite a transformation during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The idea that journalists should participate in public discussions, leading the often ignorant reader through the maze of complicated discussion, gained popularity. Because of this, the idea that objectivity was key to good journalism came under pressure. Oral histories provided by three journalists active at the time of the nuclear missile crisis – Hans van Zon, Ferry Mingelen, and W.L. Brugsma – showed this paradoxical relationship in transition quite well. Van Zon and Mingelen cherished their objectivity as one of their core values as ‘good journalists’, but subconsciously they acted upon the role of public journalism, admitting newspapers taking sides in the discussion. Brugsma, as a prestigious, older journalist, seemed to have thrown out objectivity almost completely, embracing his role as a ‘shepherd’ of society. Taking the three stories together, one can say that because of the changing image journalists had of themselves, they engaged in different forms of framing, subconsciously by working for a newspaper that had taken sides or consciously, in the case of Brugsma, embracing the new role now objectivity was out of the window.

Chapter three, then, showed that the frames established in chapter 1 were also reflected in society and politics. By setting the civic agenda by means of framing, the media can influence society. By analyzing the election of 1982, for which political parties had little time and money to prepare, this process was brought to light. The party programs of the top three parties in this election portrayed the issue of the placement of nuclear missiles in the Netherlands in such a way that it seemed to be reacting to certain frames established earlier. PvdA in its program played into the frames created by leftwing newspapers, CDA defended itself against frames of disruption of national politics, and VVD added nuance to their position on disarmament because of ‘bad guy’ frames against the party. While no conclusion can be made about the isolated influence of the media, it is safe to say that news media at least assisted in spreading these ideas in society.

Throughout the chapters, frames have been shown not to be static at all but rather a process. Framing happens on multiple levels, existing out of a constant movement between *frame building* and *frame setting*. A frame’s creation is determined by an endless number of factors like the journalist’s personal opinion, the newspaper’s stance, and even a paper’s lay out and other news. Framing cannot work, though, without the reader interpreting it. Like a tennis ball the frame is constantly in motion in between these two points, defined somewhere in between. Moreover, these frames also develop throughout the years, keeping up with the times in perpetual motion, setting differently in the minds of readers.

Everything combined, I argue that the written press shaped the public debate during the nuclear missile crisis in the 1980s passively but effectively. The image journalists had of themselves was changing, which was also reflected in newspapers. By means of framing, newspapers created images of the placement of nuclear missiles in Woensdrecht and the discussions around it that impacted the public debate so effectively that politics felt the need to react to it. To say that the written press was actively partaking in the process of shaping the public debate, though, is a step too far. The oral histories of the journalists have shown that even though some journalists with certain prestige might have started to feel the duty to give up objectivity and lead the discussion, most were still working with objectivity on their minds, writing from the point of view of the newspaper.

For the bigger discussion of the role of the press in public debates about transatlantic relations, this thesis shows at least that the press should be considered an important player in the development of transatlantic relations in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Because of the rapid change of news media after the Cold War, the period before is often overlooked. This thesis, however, has shown that the core idea of the CNN effect, that the media has the power

to evoke considerable reaction in the public, which in turn can influence politics, can be pulled back in time to earlier periods as well. Looking at the 1980s and possibly even earlier through this framework might also provide interesting results.

For future research, it could be interesting to look into the news media's influence on other moments of transatlantic crisis during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Are the ways in which they shaped the public debates similar, or how do they differ? Analysis of the nuclear missile crisis in the Netherlands in the 1980s can also be elaborated upon. How did other forms of press – tv or radio – frame the issue? How does it compare to the written press? Quantitative research accompanied by digital research devices could provide interesting results as well, about word choice, for example.

Never before had the Netherlands ever seen such a big protest as in 1983. Until now, it still never has, which is weird because in a certain way, the situation in the 1980s is similar to today, in 2022. The Netherlands is, through transatlantic alliances, pulled into a conflict with Russia while simultaneously going through multiple domestic crises. High inflation, a failed student loan program and a shortage of homes threaten an entire generation, and at the same time, fears of 'the bomb' play up again. Moreover, journalism is once again changing rapidly with social media opening the doors for everyone to raise their voice to a large audience, spreading news that might not even be true.

Society once again is divided to the bone, and a new group seems to be protesting every day. Protests are not about solidarity anymore though, but about how the situation hurts people personally. People take to social media, cursing each other into the ground, and even the press is attacked. Retreating into their own bubbles, no one sees the other anymore.

Surely, the 1980s were not perfect at all, but perhaps it is time to look at it again, and we could learn a thing or two. Something needs to be done against this metaphorical nuclear cruise missile called polarization that is threatening to break Dutch society into pieces. At least I will have finished this thesis, *voordat de bom valt*.

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## Appendix: Fraud and plagiarism statement

Undersigned

[first name, last name and student number],

Wouter Peer, s4669509

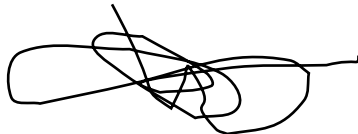
Master student at the Faculty of Arts of Radboud University Nijmegen,

declares that the submitted thesis is completely original and written exclusively by him/herself. For all information and ideas derived from other sources, the undersigned made explicit and detailed references to the locations. The research data presented therein were collected by the undersigned him/herself in the manner described in the thesis.

Place and date:

Nijmegen, 13-08-2022

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.