

Implementing the Strategic Compass in the European Safety and Security Mechanism?

A Qualitative Examination of the Impact of the Strategic Compass for the Netherlands.

by

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Abstract

This thesis researches the Dutch's position and ability in aligning with the European Union's Strategic Compass (EUSC), highlighting the interplay of strategic posture (SP), classic intergovernmentalism (CI), and bureaucratic politics (BP). Via a structured comparison this thesis examines how the domestic and international dynamics shape the Dutch's ability in contributing to the renewed European defense objectives written down in the EUSC. The time scope of this thesis is until the end of 2024, documents published after 2025 are not taken into consideration. The findings indicate that the Netherlands supports the ideological baseline of the EUSC, but the capability in implementing the objectives or structural contribution is constrained due to systematic underfunding, bureaucratic conflicts -located between the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Finance- and the non-binding nature of the EUSC prevents the EU to enforce the objectives to its Member States (MS), and is thus dependent on solidarity. This thesis research explores the challenge of balancing diverse national interest in the composition phase of the EUSC through CI and uses BP to examine the internal misalignment limiting the Netherlands' readiness and organizational capabilities in the output phase.

The scientific relevance of this thesis lays in that it bridges the gap between the functioning of European ambitions in the defense domain and the national policy implications at the implementation level. Through the robust theoretical framework and the analysis of the Dutch case, this study contributes to the comprehension of the tensions MS have to maneuver itself in when dealing with domestic constraints and international collective goals. The findings in this research underline the necessity of internal reforms, involving enhanced and stable defense funding as well as improved inter-ministerial coordination, to generate a better baseline for the Netherlands strengthening its international credibility. Ultimately, this thesis concludes that the Netherlands wants to be a committed partner in the European defense domain but needs to implement systematic national changes to reach its full contribution capacity. These insights enhance the academic discussion as it invites scholars to rethink and renew ministerial and organizational positions.

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List of Abbreviations

BP	Bureaucratic Politics
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CI	Classic Intergovernmentalism
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DDN	Dutch Defense Note
EEAS	European External Action Service
ET&IB	European Technology & Industrial Base
EU	European Union
EUSC	Strategic Compass
HRVP	High Representative / Vice President
LI	Liberal Intergovernmentalism
MS	Member States
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NI	New Intergovernmentalism
SC	Strategic Culture
SD	Strategic Dialogue
SG	Secretary General
SP	Strategic Posture
US	United States

1. Introduction

February 24, 2022, marked the beginning of the Russian Federation's invasion in Ukraine. Two years later, the continuous fighting has led to approximately 4 million displaced people, 6.8 million people traveling to neighboring countries, mainly in Poland, Moldova, and Hungary (UNHCR, 2024). The Russian attack on Ukraine has created momentum for European policymakers to push the European Union's Strategic Compass (EUSC) forwards. For the EUSC to result in further European integration, a nuanced strategy needs to be obtained to streamline the Member States (MS) strategic postures. This thesis departs from the perceived Russian threat for the Netherlands and is embedded in researching the impact of further Europeanization in the Dutch defense mechanism through the EUSC.

It is important to understand that the EUSC is a blueprint that MS could follow to strengthen the European defense and security front for challenges such as the Russian Ukraine war (Sus, 2024). The escalation at the Eastern front of Europe has led to a propulsion in the publication of the EUSC, the EUSC tries to motivate MS to adapt to this new blueprint to weapon the EU against safety threats (Daehnhardt, 2022). The EU's EUSC is a nuanced strategic document that describes European goals to give weight to its global position and desires to become a more robust and sound defense and security apparatus (Sweeney & Winn, 2022).

The historical context, political alliances, and cultural granulation is adding to the complexity of pushing the administrative power of the EU forward in the defense and security domain (Genschel et al., 2023). Essentially, with the publication of the EUSC one could assume that the EU present the international defense and security arena with a straightforward European strategy that is obtained by all MS. Nevertheless, the EUSC displays the complexity in which the EU tries to leverage its influence through the publication of a strategic document speaking to all MS. As a result, the EU's capability in becoming a more robust and stronger entity depends on the solidarity of its MS to implement the goals set out in the EUSC.

This research examines the grapple of developing a blueprint that leads to increasing European integration for the Netherlands in one of the most closed off areas in the EU, namely: the defense and security domain. The quest for further Europeanizing the defense and security domain is paired with national tensions, as the interest of MS can be contrasting (Molenaar, 2021). Therefore, aligning strategic postures is crucial in the adoption of this blueprint that combines the interests of 27 MS (Tallis, 2022). Exploring if the EUSC is

welcomed or contested against by the Netherlands shows if the strategic narrative is in line with the Dutch vision under Ollongren's ministry and displays if further European integration can be expected. While scholars dispute the EUSC, the ambition of the EU and the need for a stronger European front is evident: individual European MS are too vulnerable to the variety of threats challenging the geopolitical balance (Hindrén, 2021).

There is unavoidable proof illustrating that the geopolitical environment has triggered the EU to invest in becoming a strategic autonomous actor (Palm, 2021). The core of this thesis is not to display the tensions in the geopolitical environment, but to uncover the reach of the EUSC for the Netherlands. Therefore, analyzing the normative narrative and the underlying structures of the EU in its new strategic posture is examined and compared to the Netherlands.

To systematically analyze the underlying structures and implications, this examination conducts a structured comparison in which an adjusted version of Graham Allison's framework is used. The research is based on a three-folded step-by-step method to conduct the foreign policy analysis. The first step is analyzing the EUSC, the second step is conducting the same analysis on the Dutch Defense Note of 2022 (DDN), and it ends with a comparison table, in which the outcomes are compared. Allison's framework gives four analytical dimensions exploring different levels of the policy documents. The first dimension of the analysis is concerned with the policy objective; thus, this section determines the precise goal of the policy documents. The second dimension examines if alternative routes are discussed. The third dimension specifically tries to identify the core message and the strategic posturing of the policy documents. Lastly, the fourth dimension concerns itself with the cost-benefit ratio of the specified actors. The foreign policy analysis ends with a comparison table, in which the findings of the EUSC and the DDN are compared.

By analyzing the Dutch response through a structured comparison to the EUSC, this research overhauls the complexity of matching an agreed upon European desire, with the actual capabilities of the Netherlands as a MS. The scientific relevance of this thesis lies in the exploration if the EU can develop a document that leads to transformative action taken by a MS, in this case the Netherlands, to strengthen its defense and security position. By conducting a structured comparison this research adds to the conversation and showcases the underlying structures of the EU and a MS, and the organizational challenges faced.

Conducting a structured comparison satisfies the quest for understanding if the EUSC is compatible or contrasting to the strategic posture (SP) set out by the Netherlands, and if further European integration can be expected. The research question of this thesis is formulated to be *“To what extent and under which conditions can the goals of the Strategic Compass be achieved under the current policy of the Netherlands?”* To answer the research question two sub-questions are formulated, namely: *“What is the difference between the current status and the intended goals of the Strategic Compass for the Netherlands.”* The second sub-question is: *“What are the necessary resource allocations regarding to the goals of the Strategic Compass for the Netherlands?”*

The introduction will be followed by Chapter 2, involving the state of the art of the literature and the theoretical framework. Chapter 2 will contain strategic culture (SC) in which the concept and relevance of SP is explained, classic intergovernmentalism (CI) which explores the organizational workings of the EU and the Netherlands in terms of high politics, and bureaucratic politics (BP) highlights the implications that follows when a European document is pushed while national ministries have different interest. The decision is made to separate the composition phase and output phase of the theoretical framework in CI and BP, as CI explores international bargaining more detailed, and BP is specifically interesting in the context of inter-ministerial tensions. This thesis acknowledges that multiple angles to this topic could be chosen, but in this work, CI is seen as a suitable theory to work with in the international sphere, and BP for the Dutch national ministerial sphere. After the literature section Chapter 3 introduces the methodology, in which the guidelines of the analysis are explained. Chapter 4 will provide the analysis in which the EUSC and DDN are examined, and the chapter ends with a comparative table. This thesis will close with Chapter 5, in which the conclusion of this research is presented.

2. Theory

The theoretical chapter is divided in three sections. To comprehend and compartmentalize the Netherlands within the EU's EUSC the impact of the Russian Ukraine war and the tensions at the international order need to be identified. SC identifies the driving factors for Russia, and the Dutch response to this perceived threat. This theoretical chapter continuous with the quest to increase European integration and examines the composition phase of the EUSC via CI. Lastly, BP discusses how the differing organizational interest influence and impact the Dutch ability to meet the goals set out by the EUSC. The three main theoretical approaches condense the information to three phases, namely the input, the composition, and output. The theoretical chapter can best be defined as funnel, in which the progression of the EUSC depends on the MS national ability to navigate national interest and resources to the EUSC. This chapter ends with the formulation of the research hypotheses.

2.1 Strategic Culture

To understand SC, this research first conceptualizes SC, due to research limitations, this thesis cannot define 'culture,' and therefore moves from SC to SP. Which still highlights the importance of strategically developing a narrative, but does not define an actors' culture, as the conceptualization relies on Western sources. The Russian perception will be discussed, as it has added to the publication of the EUSC in its current form. Followed by the Dutch posture, as the Russian Ukraine war renewed the Dutch momentum to highlight its defensive vulnerability.

Historically, SC looks into the decision-making construction of defense posturing done by nations (Irondele† et al., 2015). The conceptualization of SC for this thesis is a combination of Alaister Iain Johnston, Jeffrey Lantis, and Christoph O. Meyer. Johnston theoretical work. As these are seen as the most influential SC theorist coming from the third generation and Johnston argues that "strategic culture is an integrated system of symbols (e.g., argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors) which acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious (Johnston, 1995)". Lantis' work is complementary to Johnston, as it establishes that political culture change does not need to be fixed. Thus, according to Lantis "changes in political culture may occur when 'strategic cultural dilemmas' arise – that is, when external shocks 'fundamentally challenge

existing beliefs and undermine past historical narratives' (Pirani, 2014)". Next to Johnston and Lantis, Meyer's contribution towards the definition of SC cannot be left out. The facet of decision-making in SC is identified by Meyer as "strategic culture' as 'comprising the socially-transmitted, identity-derived norms, ideas and patterns of behaviour that are shared among the most influential actors and social groups within a political community, which help to shape a ranked set of options for a community's pursuit of security and defence goals. (Meyer, 2006, p.20)." In the conceptualization of SP the foundational work of Johnston will be used, with the adaptation of Lantis in that strategies can change when impactful happenings take place, and Meyer's perspective in which the role of decision-makers is highlighted.

This research conceptualizes SP as a system of symbols that plays a role in security policy development, strategic posturing is based on the fluidity of national/international interactions, can alter when external shocks takes place, and requires the researcher to examine the role of the decision-makers in the policymaking process. SP recognizes that the international defense and security domain is a fluid arena, in which escalations can alter policy trajectories set out by institutions, decision-makers, and individual actors. In the case of this thesis, the interaction of Russia and the West, steered the EU to finalize the composition of the EUSC.

The Russian Strategic Posture:

As discussed, the competition of power at the international arena led to the escalation at the Eastern front in the form of the Russian Ukraine war (Wiltenburg, 2020). Changes to the geopolitical order shapes the political course of action taken by international actors (Fiott, 2021). The Russian narrative espouses a response by its adversary, in this case being North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the EU. Russia's strategic posturing is based on four narrations that have been imbedded in their political course for decades.

The Russia's strategic posturing is composed out of four decisive narrations that take a hold on the decision-makers political perspective. The first narration that impacts the Russian Federation international political actions is led by the geographical width of the Russian border, and the perceived vulnerability from this (Rumer & Sokolsky, 2020b). The largeness of the Russian border makes it increasingly difficult to defend all areas (Götz & Staun, 2022). This discourse is backed up with historical events such as numerous invasion Russia has had

to deal with. These ingrained experiences have translated in the second political ideology which entails, generating a buffer zone (Nitoiu, 2023). Dominating neighboring countries is therefore seen as a mean to expand its national security mechanism (Yurchenko, 2024). The third is the entrenched vulnerability to the West due to the political ideology conflict existing between the two (Eitelhuber, 2009). Three big events to support this insecurity towards the West are the Napoleonic France invasion, Nazi Germany invasion, and the Cold War conflict, in which the threat came from the West. In addition, Russia's military doctrines are categorizing NATO's expansion as a probable threat (Wiltenburg, 2020). The enlargement of NATO countries and therefore NATO's military framework is one of the biggest perceived risks. The fourth narration highlights the impact of the West in former Soviet states and is explaining the color shift in their former Russian political ideology (Suslov, 2018). Meaning that, former Soviet states are altering their political color to a more Western oriented ideology.

The Russian invasion in Ukraine is an escalation of existing tensions, that can be derived from the Russian posturing. Western research explored that the Russia's perspective of Ukraine is dominated by two ideas, namely the notion that Ukraine is both 'divided' and 'weak' (Oksamytna, 2023). For Russia, framing Ukraine as a fragmented nation opened the field to strengthen the discourse of Ukraine being an unofficial state and the need to become part of the Russian Federation. By portraying Ukraine as a divided country, Russia attempts to justify the displayed aggression (Rumer & Sokolsky, 2020a). In this case, Russia frames itself as a savior for Ukraine. Secondly, stating that Ukraine is 'weak,' generates this false sense of superiority. Thus, Russia legitimized their desire to have a bigger influence in Ukraine and changed the narration that justifies their aggressive invasion and the continuing of the Russian war on Ukraine.

Through Russia's usage of altering Ukraine's discourse, Russia is strengthening its strategic position. It is important to understand that the outlook of SP envisions to use discourse and narration as a strategic mechanism to weaponize its own narration and legitimize its action (Klein, 1991). The desired narration is given by either a political leader or an elite ruling group, and has a military function (Götz & Staun, 2022). SP does not account for the actions of states specifically but displays how government bodies perceive the world surrounding them. Thus, the perception created by governing body results in a certain type of policymaking. The benefit of weaponizing the SP of a nation is that it is a fluid mechanism

and not fixed. In other words, narrations can be altered, changed, and or re-used, which can reshape a cultural standpoint towards competing nations.

This research conceptualizes Russia's SP as rooted in its geographical, historical, and ideological experiences of external invasions, capturing a perception of hegemonic vulnerability. This drives the pursuit of generating a strategic buffer zone through the annexation of neighboring countries. The continuous tension between Russia's quest of maintaining its great power status and the increasing democratic ideology of the West, results in a zero-sum game, where Russia uses an offensive military campaign, to preserve its status quo.

The Dutch Strategic Posture:

The identification of the Dutch SP is based on the DDN of 2013, 2018, 2022, and the annual progression reports published by the Ministry of Finance from 2013 onwards.

The DDN should be seen as the document that dictates the strategic objectives of the Netherlands, which dictates the ends, the means, and the ways of the Dutch military (Redactie, 2024). The ministry of Finance publishes a report concerning all aspects of defense, especially focused on the distribution of the national resources. The distribution of money reflects if the objectives set out by the Ministry of Defense are met, and discusses each spending, including international cooperation.

The Dutch progression of defense is discussed in the annual reports published by the Ministry of Finance. The Netherlands has obtained a reducing budgetary trend dating back to 1996 until 2014, in which the 2% GDP NATO agreement dropped from 1,80% to 1,04% (CBS, 2019). The financial pattern of the Netherlands showcases that the Dutch political priority did not represent an active need to invest, maintain, and expand military capacities both national as international (WWR, 2017).

Until 2013, the year before the annexation of the Crim, the Netherlands continued the trend of budgetary cuts (CBS, 2019). The annual report of 2013-2014 announced that the Netherlands would reduce international military functions partially due to NATO's reduction of command structures, and positions at the international stage were to be cut as the Dutch defense organization faced reorganizations (Hennis- Plasschaert, 2014). The DDN of 2013, emphasizes the budgetary cuts, and argues that financial restraints lead to higher levels of

efficiency (Hennis- Plasschaert, 2013). Paradoxically, in the same year, the DDN points to the importance of the maintenance of international relationships, as international cooperation could lead to a stronger European front. 2014 represented a break in this the Dutch vision, as the geopolitical environment changed and the tensions following from this were undeniable (Hennis- Plasschaert, 2015).

The annual progression report has highlighted from 2014 onward the need to invest in the Dutch defense capabilities and international relationships. Underlining the bilateral relationships between the Benelux, Germany, Belgium, and Norway, as well as the multilateral relationships, captured in NATO and the EU (Bijleveld- Schouten, 2020). As demonstrated, SP is a contemporary endeavor, that can change with external shocks, and the Netherlands seems to be sensitive for this. According to the annual reports, the Netherlands recognizes that instances such as the annexation of the Crim, and currently the Russian invasion in Ukraine, requires an answer to the shifting power dynamics in terms of strengthening its military capacities mostly through strengthening international alliances (Wiltenburg, 2020).

Since the annexation of the Crim, the tensions between Russia and the European front have been systematically highlighted (Casteleijn, 2014). The Netherlands identified that Russia invested in the modernization and expansion of its armed forces in the DDN of 2018 (Bijleveld- Schouten, 2018). Following from the Russian investment in its military, the Netherlands conceptualized this increase as a hybrid threat (Bijleveld- Schouten, 2018). The Netherlands has consistently promoted an increase in budget, strengthening the relationship with its alliances, and transforming the Dutch military organization into resilient actor; however, the 2% GDP agreement was systematically not met.

The annual progression reports and the three DDN's illustrate that the vision of the current Minister of Defense vision has been an extension on previous documentation. Making Ollongren's DDN an amplification of foregoing threats as it illustrates how the threat perception and the need for investment are continuous.

The Dutch defensive position depends on its alliances, making the Dutch SP internationally orientated. The Dutch international position is shaped by actions, plans, and investments made by the EU and NATO. The WRR highlighted the changing geopolitical environment,

and provided the Dutch government with advice, stating to increase its budget, to recognize that national safety is intertwined with the international power arena, and therefore emphasizes the importance of maintaining and strengthening its European and NATO relationship by investing in its national organization (WWR, 2017). Therefore, the Russian Ukraine war seems to produce a repetitive message for the Dutch military discourse. As the Netherlands has systematically recognized the importance of developing an integrated defense and security vision but has consistently not met the investment requirements set out by NATO.

Ultimately, this research conceptualizes the Dutch SP under Ollongren's rule as a blend of pragmatism, adaptability, and multilateral relationships, shaped by its military vulnerability to external shock. The Dutch military vision is shaped by coalition-building, prioritizing ideological stability, and favoring soft power. The Dutch military political course supports neutrality and tries to adapt to the strategic documents published by NATO and the EU. Therefore, the Dutch SP is dominated by balancing its role as an active global player, while simultaneously ensuring national resilience against contemporary threats. The Russian Ukraine war can be seen as a motivator for the Netherlands to investigate its SP and recognizes its international defense and security dependency. Thus, the external shock leads to the transition of the input phase to the composition.

2.2 Classic Intergovernmentalism

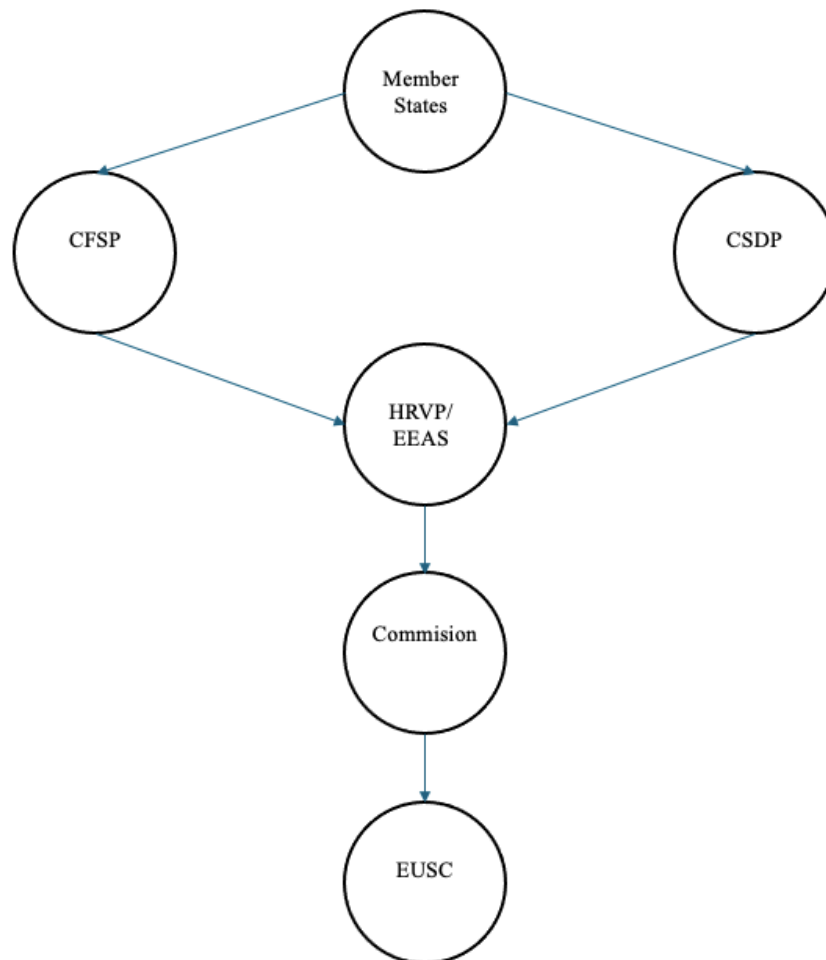
The Russian Ukraine war highlights the sensitivity of the international power balance to external shocks and the ephemeral nature of the geopolitical order. Power competition and shocks, such as the Russian Ukraine war, influence the drive for a sturdier European defense and security domain, as national actors' vulnerabilities are exposed, as demonstrated by the Netherlands. The war has accelerated the composition phase of the EUSC due to perception of an immediate threat. CI investigates and showcases the underlying dynamics and challenges faced in the condensation of the MS input into a workable policy document.

CI shows that the bargaining and negotiation phases form the foundation for the EUSC's composition. The process depends on the active involvement of all MS and the delegation of diverse interests. CI posits that national states seek mutually beneficial covenants, categorizing defense and security policies as "high politics," while "low politics" encompasses areas like economic (Kuhn, 2019). Delegation in low politics tends to encounter

less resistance due to lower costs, whereas high politics faces greater reluctance as the defense and security domain is closely linked to national sovereignty. This thesis compartmentalizes the EUSC in the realm of high politics, as its composition lines up with the principles of CI. The EUSC reflects the complexities of balancing national sovereignty with collective security goals.

The EU's MS must adapt to the evolving geopolitical landscape, particularly the immediate defense and security threats posed by the Russian Ukraine war. The SP of MS serves as the foundation for shaping the EUSC. The EUSC is a product from the negotiation process within the EU's institutional framework in which MS interests are discussed. The High Representative/Vice President (HRVP), head of the European External Action Service (EEAS), receives its information from meetings held by the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). These platforms facilitate the arena for the MS' to engage in the bargaining process. In the bargaining arena the articulated strategic preferences are shared, which is based on information coming from the MS' intelligence analyses.

The development of the EUSC follows the principles set out by CI. As a domain of high politics, defense and security demands a negotiation process in which nation-states propose rational, calculated strategies reflecting their national interest. The development of the EUSC follows the principles of CI. The HRVP consolidates the outcomes of these negotiations within the Commission, making the EUSC's construction inherently dependent on the preceding MS bargaining processes. A visual representation of the structure is as followed:

Figure 1: Stages CI

CI demonstrates the fluidity of the bargaining process; the contribution and the position of MS shape the input and composition of the EUSC. A MS' contribution could potentially shape the international message and position presented by the EU, and therefore impacts the interactions of different international players. Stanley Hoffman's CI argues that European integration is not a self-sustaining principle but is dependent on the calculated and rational bargaining processes between nation states (Kuhn, 2019). The expansion of the European defense and security influence can only be met if MS come to a consensus, or if failing forward presents incomplete policy adjustments at the CSDP level (Bergmann & Müller, 2021).

Failing forward is the principle of: "intergovernmental bargains led to the creation of incomplete institutions, which in turn sowed the seeds of future crises, which then propelled deeper integration through reformed but still incomplete institutions – thus setting the stage for the process to move integration forward (Jones et al., 2021)." This dynamic aligns with

CI, where crises expose institutional shortcomings, prompting a renewed bargaining process, that drives incremental yet continuous integration. Making the quest for further European military integration ongoing as defense and security policies are categorized under high politics. The steps in the composition phase of the EUSC can come to a halt if disagreement is met, with failing forward as a result to push the composition. Therefore, the composition phase of the EUSC has the probability to exemplify this interactive, iterative process captured in failing forward.

Based on the logic of CI, the levels of integration are dependent on the functional outcome of cooperation. The CI tries to redirect European integration to a cost-effective situation, instead of readdressing integration issues (Hodson & Puetter, 2019). CI argues that bargaining and negotiation happens at the supranational level in which nation states come together (Verdun, 2020). High politics, state power, and the bargaining process needs to be included in understanding the potential progression of integration through the EUSC. CI views integration as a process in which the levels of integration are determined by the progression and consequence of collaboration and vying between national governments (Hooghe & Marks, 2019).

Thus, from a CI perspective, the EUSC is a product reflecting international bargaining, as MS recognize the necessity of cooperation in defense and security (Wiltenburg, 2020). Its construction attempts to present MS an attractive cost-benefit ratio, ensuring that further integration is streamlined with their national interests and security priorities. Given the CI perspective the construction of the EUSC is a result of international bargaining, as MS recognize the importance of international cooperation for their security and defense mechanism as MS alone are too vulnerable (Riddervold & Rieker, 2024).

The other two streams of intergovernmentalism, new and liberal, are less applicable for analyzing the composition phase of the EUSC as they do not operate in the realm of high politics as explained above. Liberal intergovernmentalism (LI), developed by Moravcsik, posits that “national governments will seek to cooperate in a European setting to safeguard their own interests (Verdun, 2020).” Nevertheless, LI falls short in explaining the influence of day-to-day and informal politics, as well as the role of supranational institutions in policy development (Thomas, 2021). Thus, LI does not give an adequate representation for the mechanisms underlying the development for in this case the EUSC. Contrarily, new

intergovernmentalism (NI) contends that “member states as pressing ahead with integration but in ways that redirect rather than redress the problems of legitimacy facing the EU (Hodson & Puetter, 2019).” NI highlights the disequilibrium that exist between the public opinion and international political goals, contending that intensified integration often fails to address underlying public tensions (Bickerton et al., 2015). Unlike CI, NI resonates to post-functionalism as it does not involve the hard bargaining logic, but that of a shared identity.

Ultimately, this research conceptualizes that the construction of the EUSC reflects efforts addressing shared vulnerabilities, especially visible in external shocks like the Russian Ukraine war, through the bargaining and negotiation game while protecting national interests. The EUSC embodies a cost-effective, consensus-driven strategy, aligning collective defense and security needs that matches the national interest of MS. CI emphasizes the dominance of the bargaining game in the development of a policy document that could lead to further European integration (Smeets & Beach, 2020). The EUSC is based on the input stemming from the MS, is condensed and streamlined to their best ability (Hooghe & Marks, 2019). The analysis will examine if the goals set out by the EUSC are in line with the Netherlands. The focus area of the theoretical chapter moves from the composition phase to the output phase, in which BP will be discussed.

2.3 Decision-Making Theory- Bureaucratic Politics

After the composition phase of the new European defense and security blueprint, the condensation of the funnel results in the published work. The composition phase showcased how asymmetrical interests had to be streamlined to get to a common outcome. The last step that concerns itself with the success rate of implementing the objectives set out by the EU is best captured in BP. This theory concerns itself with how to match underlying differences at ministerial level. BP allows for further compartmentalization and distinguishes how intricacies between ministries impact and alter the trajectory set out by the EU. The compartmentalization directs this thesis towards the critical question if the EUSC impacts the Netherlands or if that is vice versa?

Decision-making theory explores the process how government leaders make decisions, highlighting the transition of matching international policies to national trajectories. Within decision-making literature one theory stands out for this thesis work, namely BP. BP examines the underlying assumptions held by competing nations, the potential implications,

and the anticipated behavior (Freedman, 1976). BP accentuate that the succession of implementing policy outputs, such as the EUSC, is based on fragmentation and negotiation at national level, as national actors emphasize different interest.

Allison and Morton Halperin can be seen as the founding fathers of BP, as they argue that foreign policy outputs face a dynamic field of competing actors, driven by institutional attachment, personal interest, and departmental priorities (Allison & Halperin, 1972). This position is especially relevant when analyzing the output of the EUSC at the Dutch national level. The linchpin for the EU in generating further integration in the collective security and defense domain depends on how MS navigate the intricate inter-ministerial processes in allocating the necessary resources to the EUSC objectives. For the Netherlands specific, ministries such as Defense and Finance, must harmonize objectives to align national contributions to the objectives set out in the EUSC.

Analytically, BP recognizes the interplay of hierarchy and autonomy. A hierarchical policy implementation structure proposes a top-down decision-making mechanism, but BP emphasizes that national actors influence the implementation and or alter higher-level given directives (Halperin & Clapp, 2007). BP nuances that it is likely that the implementation of the EU's EUSC faces bureaucratic asymmetries at national level, represented in ministerial interest, and this impacts the procedural application of meeting the European objectives. In application, BP thus showcases how multiple ministries influence the outcome of a foreign policy proposals (Allison & Halperin, 1972).

BP suggests that the outcome of the EUSC for the Netherlands is not preordained but depends on the alignment of the objectives of the EUSC to that of the national interest that emerges from the bargaining, compromising, and power dynamics represented in the different ministries. BP underlines that the resource allocation, operational priorities, and political dynamics shape the implementation stage of the EUSC (Clifford, 1990). BP allows for a nuanced comprehension of the implementation stage at domestic level, when framing the EUSC as a product of CI bargaining game. BP theorizes that the European output faces the central role of internal institutional dynamics that shape the external commitment (Bevir). Thus, it is unlikely that the European output is fully streamlined competing interest stemming from national actors representing various ministries.

As discussed, the EUSC exemplifies the outcome of the negotiation game presented in the composition phase and BP showcases the underlying structures faced by the competing interest of ministries at the national level of MS (Anderson, 1983). The European defense and security domain can best be categorized as a gathering of SP stemming from their MS. It is likely that the EUSC reflects a set of different priorities given the diverse set of actors that compose the EU's multilevel governance structure. BP explores if MS are willing to implement the objectives set out by the EU, while managing tensions between ministries, and national actors. Thus, interagency dynamics in the Netherlands adds to the complexity of progressing in the implementation of the EUSC.

The conceptualization of BP for this thesis is that foreign policymaking presents the Netherlands with a pluralistic system. Where the proposed policy is the output of a CI interaction, and presents national ministries with the challenge to streamline competing interest to fulfil the proposed objectives stated in the EUSC (Paul & Rosenthal, 1998). BP provides the tools to examine if the Netherlands faces fragmentation between the Ministry of Finance and Defense. Thus, BP theorizes how the output phase of the EUSC tries to streamline the mosaic of interest with competing national ministries.

Conclusively, this thesis recognizes that BP is particularly relevant for examining the Dutch engagement with the EUSC, given the Dutch national multilevel governance structure and how coalition changes influence factors for the Dutch domestic politics. The Netherlands showcases how a European document is positioned and read by diverging ministries, that reflect different interest. Especially relevant will be the tension between the Ministry of Finance and Defense, as the budgetary resource allocation tells if priority is given to this renewed European collective defense guideline.

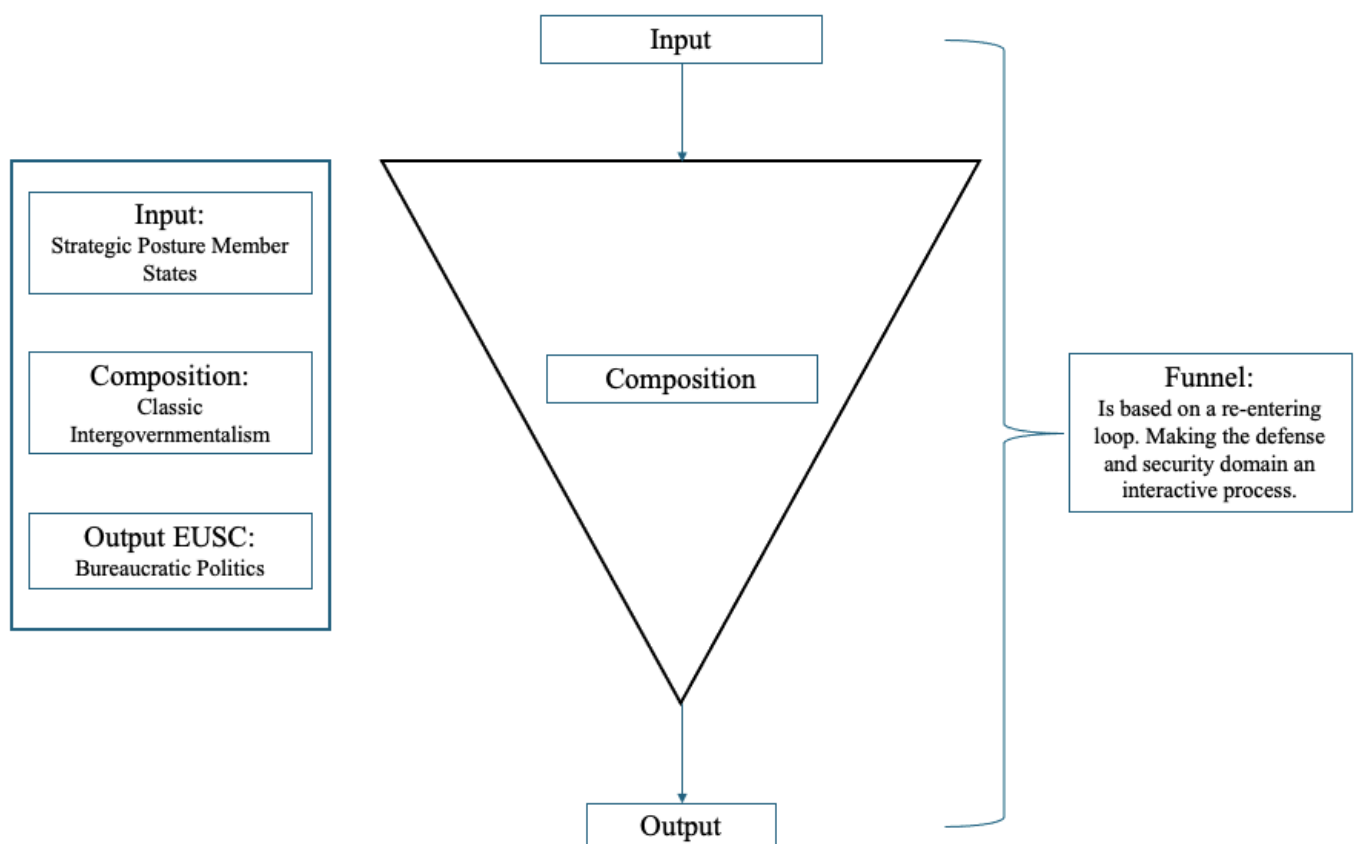
2.4. Visualization Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this thesis is best visualized as a funnel, highlighting the dynamic and interactive nature of the policy formulation. The Russian Ukraine war is identified as the external shock providing the EU with a significant impetus for the publication of the EUSC. This conflict, best captured as a substantial security threat, has allowed the EU, to combine information from all 27 MS intelligence services and their respective SP

The theoretical framework is divided into three steps. The initial phase is categorized as the *input phase*, in which the SP of the MS are defined as the input for this new blueprint. Following from this, the *composition phase*, involved the bargaining process, which was conceptualized through CI, which gathered the SP, and further condensed this information. When compromises were reached, SP harmonized and or consensus were met, the *output phase*, represents the published EUSC. The last phase emphasizes the challenges for MS at national level, as discussed in BP. This phase underlines the challenge of aligning national interest with collective European strategies.

It is important to emphasize that the defense and security domain is best defined as highly dynamic, including multiple interactive steps. The funnel represents the possibility of a re-entering loop, in case that a new external shock impacts the European safety or if the EUSC does not achieve its desired goals, and adaptation is required. The visualization of this theoretical framework is presented below:

Figure 2: Theoretical framework



2.5 Hypotheses

The research established that the SP of the 27 MS functions as the input for the construction of the EUSC. The theory of CI explains the bargaining process at the international level, BP explains how the positioning of leaders, ministries, and actors generate an additional level of complexity in the succession of the implementation of the EUSC. The research aims at understanding if the EUSC impacts the Netherlands and or vice versa.

The first part of the analysis explores the mechanisms of the EU and the Netherlands in terms of organizational factors that can establish integration. As the research identified that bargaining and negotiation game stands central in the composition phase and is based the national standpoint. The outcome of the EUSC stands and falls with managing competing national interest into one mutually fitting document. Literature suggest that generating a stronger European front is desirable to create a credible international player at the defense and security arena. It further assumes that investing in the guidelines of the EUSC improves the international position of the EU from vulnerable to security and defense threats to a credible global player without coercion.

***H1:** The presence of the EUSC provides the ground to strengthen the EU's global security position.*

After deciphering the organizational structures of the EU, the research pivots to analyze the impact of the power relations of the EU to its MS. Theory suggest that strategic positioning depends on the cultural experiences, geographical stance, and bureaucratic norms. Therefore, strategic positioning is not a rational endeavor, but one that is motivated through normative goals. Dutch collaboration at the EU would amplify the credibility of this EU-front, as it enhances the magnitude of the EUSC. Hence, the research presumes that the probability of EU credibility relies on MS involvement. The Netherlands can influence the global positioning of the EU, but the literature suggest that the height to which the Netherlands can contribute to the EUSC are limited.

***H2a:** The Netherlands' contribution amplifies the global credibility of the European SC in the international security domain.*

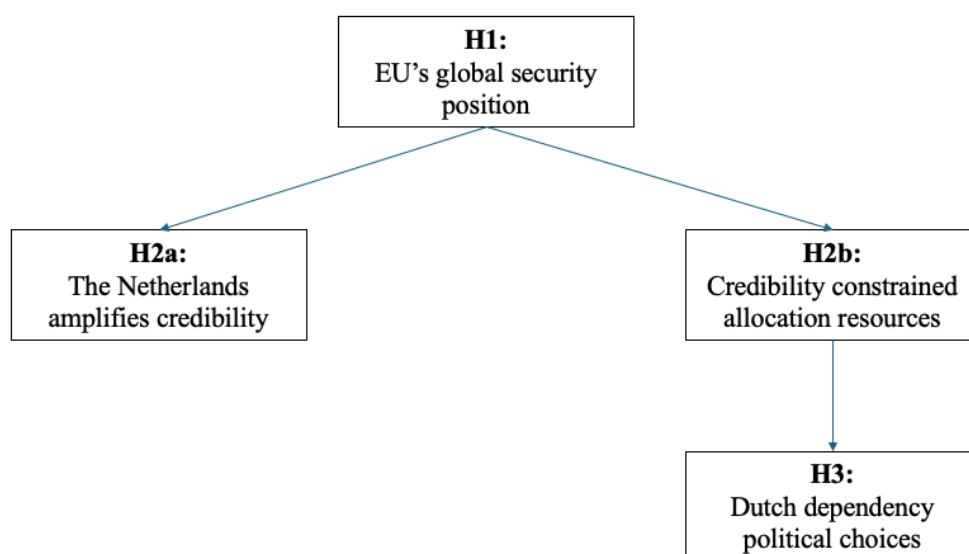
***H2b:** The global credibility is constrained by limitations in the allocation of national resources and organizational dependency.*

As the EU's EUSC invites its MS to increase contribution to the European safety domain, this shift challenges the Netherlands to adjust in its national defense and security organization. Academics suggest that further European engagement for the Netherlands is possible if the goals in the EUSC represent the trajectory set out by the Netherlands. Strategic balancing is important for the EU to interact with the Dutch defense and security proposition as the EU does not have the option to reinforce or coerce its MS to flow their blueprint. The paradigm shift that the EU promotes is therefore a place in which integration theory, SP, and conflicting organizational structures must be overcome to be streamlined.

H3: *The Dutch military's combat readiness is bounded by its political dependency on the allocation of national resources.*

The literature suggests that substantial changes to the Dutch defense and security organization is time consuming and needs to be attentive to the process of streamlining ministerial differences. A defensive balancing approach is utilized in the Dutch military organization, as combat readiness has not been the core focus of the last few decades. Russia presents the Netherlands with a serious defense and security threat, at pushed momentum forwards to alter the Dutch military's core task. However, the defensive approach that stood central is not likely to face rapid changes due to lacking resources. It is unlikely that the SP of the Netherlands will face rapid changes due to organizational structures. A visualization of the hypotheses can be viewed below:

Figure 3: Order of hypotheses



3. Methodology

This chapter illuminates the best fitting research design to test the articulated hypotheses. The structure of the methodological chapter is as followed: an overview of the research design (i.e. case comparison, supported with references); case selection/ document criteria; method of analysis (i.e. document analysis); and the limits of the proposed design and research approach.

3.1 Research design:

The purpose of this research is to evaluate if the goals elucidated in the EUSC are impacting the trajectory of the Dutch defense pathway. This research employs a qualitative research method, utilizing non-numerical data from the EUSC and DDN. The research follows the logic of a foreign policy analysis, including process tracing to ensure a comprehensive and detailed examination (Collier, 2011). Process tracing enables this research to develop a sequential analysis, in which each component builds on the preceding one, thereby magnifying the coherence and depth of the research analysis.

This study aims to untangle the underlying structures between the Netherlands and the EU in their defense and security visions. The hypotheses testing is done through the adjusted framework of Allison, in which each analytical step is sequential in nature. This cumulation of information is necessary to compose a systematic accumulation of information essential for formulating an explanatory answer to the main research question.

The next chapter extends the foundation developed in the previous sections. The conceptual framework showed that recurring empirical regularities are found as well as connected to the theoretical baseline, this resulted in the composition of the hypotheses. The hypotheses are discussed through the analysis of the qualitative work to generate an explanatory answer to the main research question (Waltz, 1979). Visually the foreign policy structured comparison looks as followed:

Figure 4: Structured comparison



3.2 Methodological Approach

Foreign policy is the most suitable methodological approach for this thesis, as it explores how institutional dynamics function within both international and domestic arenas (Alden et al., 2016). This thesis focuses on examining whether and how foreign policy decision-making affects the Dutch defense vision. Foreign policy analysis provides the lens to investigate how international relations affect domestic institutional dynamics and vice versa (Hill, 2003).

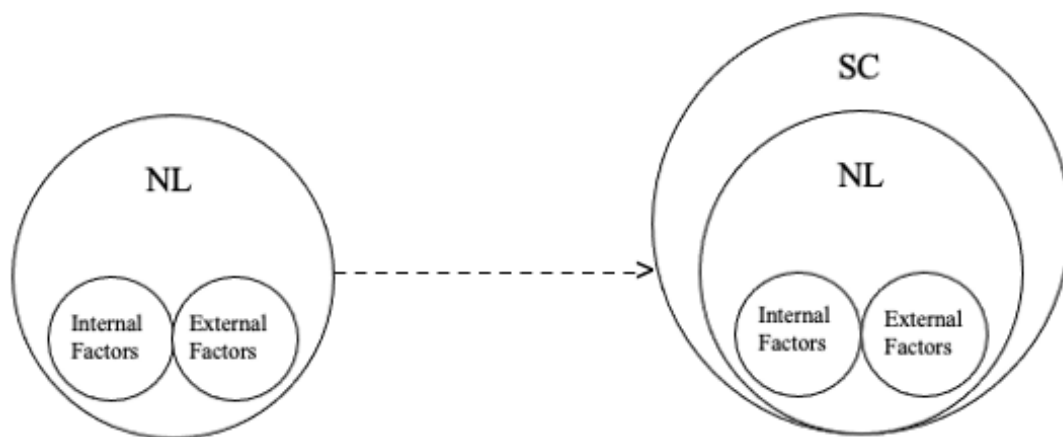
As explained in the literature, this thesis foreign policy analyses examines the relationship between the EU and the Netherlands in the domain of high politics. This thesis obtains a structured progression, based on process tracing to enable methodological transparency. The progression of the analysis is done through the framework of Allison, in which four dimensions are constructed and accompanied with sub-questions. The structured comparison will facilitate an understanding of what motivates the EU and the Netherlands in establishing their defense and security pathways. By using the same questions in both policy documents, this method ensures that the documents are systematically analyzed, providing material for a meaningful comparison.

The foreign policy analysis is based on qualitative data that is gathered from the primary documents, namely the EUSC and the DDN. References coming from these two documents are either direct or paraphrased, and that will form the basis of the structured comparison. Given the length of the EUSC and the DDN, this thesis focuses specific on the narrative sections, highlighting how the articulation of the policy objectives and strategy came to be. The analysis applies the concepts discussed in SP, CI and BP to dissect the original text and the potential implications. The official documents will be dissected into a visual chart where

the important compartments will be highlighted. Segmenting the official documents provides a visualization that emphasizes the critical elements that might need structural changes or face general reforms.

The case selection of the policy documents originating from 2022 is intentional, as it represents how these institutions reacted to contemporary defense and security challenges and formulated goals. While it is valuable to understand the key points written in the EUSC, an isolated analysis risks the potential of assuming that the MS can implement the goals set out by the EU. Therefore, comparing the EUSC and DDN offers valuable insights in answering the question of these policy trajectories are interconnected or significantly differ. Visually the European desires and the interplay with the Dutch defense trajectory looks as followed:

Figure 5: EU ambition vs. current Dutch position



3.3 Case selection/ Document Criteria

This thesis uses the EUSC, and the DDN from 2022 as the selected case studies. These documents are both publicly available, and their descriptions, concepts, and ideas are examined following the theoretical framework provided in the preceding chapter. The foreign policy analysis explores the causes, effects, inputs, and outputs of foreign policy decision-making, offering a detailed approach to comprehending these processes. The selection of the documents creates the opportunity to examine the EU and the Netherlands specific, contributing to the actor-centered approach of foreign policy analysis (Hill, 2003). The basic criterion for this thesis is that the documentation is publicly accessible, that they originate from the EU and The Netherlands, and that the published language is either English or Dutch, so no translation is influencing the content.

3.4 Method of analysis

The structured comparison approach will enable process tracing to be included in the conduction of the foreign policy analysis. This method permits this thesis to explore how the EU and the Dutch defense and security pathways are constructed and whether they align. The foreign policy analysis method is identified to be “the study of how states, or the individuals that lead them, make foreign policy, execute foreign policy, and react to the foreign policies of other states (Potter, 2017).” This research utilizes content analysis to examine if the EUSC and DDN are aligned and if not, which implications arise.

The examination is guided by an adapted version of Allison’s framework, which is categorized in four main questions and divided into a set of additional sub-questions. Allison’s original framework is given in the appendix, this study operationalizes the dimensions to make it applicable for the analysis. The first step in the foreign policy analysis is identifying the goal that needs to be accomplished for the Netherlands and the EU. Accomplishment is operationalized as the ability to completely achieve, meet, or establish the goals that are outlined in the official documents. Six categories are developed to evaluate the importance of achieving these goals. The second step is concerned with the alternative paths and their definition. An alternative path is defined as a new trajectory differing from the main goals. The third step analyzes the framing tactics used within the policy documents. Framing tactics are operationalized as the technique which presents messages, goals, and their importance. Conclusively, the analysis includes the dimension of means and ends, examining the cost-benefit calculation. This thesis work does not involve quantitative measurements, but instead uses a qualitative approach, based on the prisoner’s dilemma, examining if the anticipated benefit outweighs the costs. The qualitative data that is used in this thesis is directly extracted from the official documents, allowing this research to conduct a robust foreign policy analysis. Categorizing the dimensions and operationalizing their meaning establishes the step-by-step pre-requisite.

3.5 Research limits:

This thesis faces several limitations, namely a language barrier, reliance on a Western perspectives and sources, restricted access to certain documents, and an exceeding timeframe. The language barrier and the predominantly Western perspective captured in the resources used, is a significant limitation when analyzing SC. The Russian perspective, provided in chapter 2, is derived from publicly available resources written in English. As the sources of

this research stem from a Western viewpoint, this thesis does not attempt to make cultural interpretations or statements, and therefore transitions from SC to SP. Another limitation that this thesis faces is that the documents from the EUSC composition phase involve unavailable documentation stemming from intelligence services of the MS. Analyzing the actual interactions at the bargaining table of the CFSP/ CSDP meetings can therefore not be done. Similarly, foundational documentations and reports of the composition of the DDN are unavailable, constraining the depth of this thesis work. Lastly, the EUSC and the DDN have extending timelines, preventing this thesis to analyze the full impact of these policy documents.

4. Case Study

Encased in a robust theoretical framework and methodological approach, this thesis continues with the in-depth analysis. This chapter is appointed to the collection and investigation of the qualitative data drawn from the EUSC, the DDN, Dutch historical military expenditures, and the proposed budgetary targets of 2024-2025.

The chapter starts by analyzing the EUSC, followed by an investigation of the DDN, which is paired with the examination of the historical military spendings and the upcoming plans. The systematic approach ensures that the policy documents are uniformly analyzed, securing the step-by-step comparison at the end. This chapter concludes with the synthesization of the findings, in which the comparison highlights the resemblances, deviations, and the potential implications.

4.1.1 The Strategic Compass

The first step in the analysis concerns itself with identifying the major elements written down in the EUSC. This analysis starts with the prominent policy directions that are established in the EUSC to generate a unified defense and security platform for the European MS.

Table 1: Policy directions EUSC

Components SC	Objective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Act</i> 	Strengthen measures to act rapid and robustly, through increasement of experts, exercises, and available troops.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Secure</i> 	Strengthen deterrence and reaction function on the multi-facet types of threats that are faced.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Invest</i> 	Desire for MS to increase budgets. To strengthen not only on national territory, but also to invest in the European

	Technological & Industrial Base (ET&IB).
• <i>Partner</i>	Strengthen alliances.

Table 1 summarizes the four main domains of the EUSC, these are the areas in which the EU wants to expand its influence. The theoretical framework identified that documents such as the published EUSC often projects that the EUSC is based on unanimity, albeit it is unlikely that the interest of all MS is captured as explained by CI. These four goals show that the EU does not possess a well-rounded multi-facet defense and security mechanism. The EU's EUSC emphasizes European partnership and the strengthening of alliances to be central for the EU in becoming a global robust defense and security player. CI and BP explained that it is likely that the EUSC is an asymmetrical representation of MS national interest but captures the European aspiration best. The goal of the EU is to become a more dexterous, capable, and multiskilled defense infrastructure to uphold European values and interests. Therefore, the EUSC is an attempt to create and expand the European influence in the defense and security domain.

The following section analyzes the EUSC detailed through the adjusted framework of Allison. The EUSC serves as the qualitative material to be researched, and offers insights in the rationale, goals, and aspirations of the EU in the defense and security domain. By employing an explanatory approach, to dissect and analyze the EUSC, with the goal to evaluate the formulated hypotheses, in which the outcome will be discussed in the comparison table.

Table 2: Allison's framework EUSC

EU framework:
1. <i>What is it precisely that the European Strategic Compass wants to accomplish?</i>
a. First attempt to identify how the Strategic Compass came to realization
b. Attempt to find out of what type of decision-making was utilized.
i. In the construction of the Strategic Compass was there groupthink?
ii. Or polythink?
c. Identify what the motivator of the Strategic Compass is.
d. Why does it seek that/ why does it want to establish something new?
i. Good in itself given the EU's values. (If so, does the EU wish to consider its values?)
ii. The EU believes it will lead to further outcome which it values. (If so, can they state the causal chain, so retesting is possible?)
iii. The EU believes it will lead to member state participation. (If so, does the SC consider that member states are not a unitary actor and that its bureaucracy does what is in line with their interest. What is the function of coercive power in the form of incentives.)

e. How likely is the EU in getting the outcome they want?
i. Withhold judgment until working out paths to action and strategy.
ii. Consider relevant programs and standard operating procedures.
iii. Consider internal and external bias.
f. How important is this outcome for the EU compared to the worldwide safety climate?
2. <i>Alternative paths to action</i>
a. Map out alternative routes to the desired outcome.
b. Consider the possibility that a change in policy may be neither necessary nor sufficient.
c. Seek to change policy if
i. Necessary to remove an absolute barrier to changing action;
ii. Necessary given the access to those who must perform the action;
iii. Likely to lead easily to a change in action.
d. Consider how high the EU needs to go.
e. If seeking a change in policy, plot the action path from there to changes in actions.
f. Consider for each path who will have the action.
g. What resources does the EU have to move action along each path with success?
3. <i>Framing tactics- maneuvers and arguments- to move along a path</i>
a. Identification of the participants and their interest.
i. Who will inevitably be involved according to the rules of the game?
ii. What is the likely interest of the various participants, what face of the issue will they see, how will they define the stakes?
b. How can the EU lead the participants to see that the outcome is desired and in the member states' interest.
c. How can the EU change the situation to have an outcome that is not conflicting with the interest of member states?
d. What maneuvers should the EU use at what stage?
e. What arguments should the EU use?
f. If the EU wants member states to change its behavior, it must consider the interest, standard operating procedures, and programs of those states, is that sufficiently reflected in the SC?
g. How can the EU tell if the SC is doing well?
4. <i>Gauging costs and benefits</i>
a. How should the decision sought to relate to the change desired?
b. By what means will the initial decision which is sought to be converted into the desired action?
c. Plan of action
i. How to move the action to the waystation and final outcome desired.
ii. What maneuvers and arguments to use on or with the other participants.

4.1.2 Subsection 1: The Main Objective

The precise goal of the EU's EUSC is to establish a durable and actionable policy framework to strengthen the collective European defense and security domain. According to the Council of the European Union (2021): "The Strategic Compass will enhance and guide the implementation of the Level of Ambition in the area of security and defence agreed in November 2016 in the context of the EU Global Strategy." Therefore, the EUSC originates from the shifting global geopolitical order. Scholarly work suggest that substantial advancements needs to be made for the EU to become a more robust and strong international player (Koenig, 2022).

The composition phase of the EUSC showcases CI, this phase is constructed out of a comprehensive threat-analysis involving all 27 MS called the Strategic Dialogue (SD) (Zandee et.al., 2021). Throughout the SD a synthesization of the information presented by MS' intelligence services was done to understand the individual threats and concerns from the MS. Thus, according to the rules of CI, the interest of the MS's was gathered, which filled the bargaining and negotiation game. Although the information of the SD remains classified, the Council of the European Union (2021) does emphasize the significance as they state: "The Council underlines the importance of the ongoing informal reflections among Member States that are taking place as part of the strategic dialogue phase." The composition of the SC is partially based on incorporating lessons learned from the intelligence services stemming from the MS. Nevertheless, including information and lessons learned from intelligence services does not bridge the diverging geographical, historical, and national interests from MS (Molenaar, 2022). To summarize, the undergone process looks visually as followed:

Figure 6: Order of progression



As discussed, the EUSC promotes a transition for its MS from a reactive to an assertive defense and security profile. At the core of the EUSC is the vision of establishing a unified mechanism capable of positioning, acting, organizing, and protecting the European defense domain. According to the EEAS: "The adoption of the Strategic Compass is a strong signal of unity. EU Member States, for the first time, agree on a common vision with detailed objectives of what they want to be able to achieve in security and defence (2023)." In other words, the publication of the EUSC communicates the desired trajectory for its MS to enhance European solidarity on the defense and security domain, to strengthen its global position.

The main threats by the EUSC to the European ideal are identified to be "hybrid threats, cyberattacks, and climate-related risks, natural disasters and pandemics (Strategic Compass,

2024, p.62).” To answer these threats, the EUSC highlights the need to invest both national, and international especially in the development of the ET&IB. This points to the idea that targeted investments can significantly impact the collective European defense and security capabilities.

Ultimately, the goal of the EUSC is to safeguard the European population by strengthening the collective defense and security capabilities through the proposed policy alterations outlined in the EUSC. The proposed policy alteration is structured around four specific pillars, namely: *Act, Secure, Invest, Partner* (Borrell, 2022). Via the EUSC the EU recognizes current defense and security limitations, such as the inability to weaponize itself to current threats and uses the EUSC to underscore the importance of MS cooperation to overcome the current European defense and security vulnerabilities (Molenaar, 2021). The EUSC is therefore in line with the values that the EU promotes, the EU wants to remain a democratic entity, via the perceived threats to the status quo policy alterations are proposed. However, it remains a critical question if the EUSC represents the objectives of all 27 MS as the composition phase has likely faced CI. Therefore, the output of the EUSC needs to be examined to see if it represents a EU’s MS wide interest, of that of a select group.

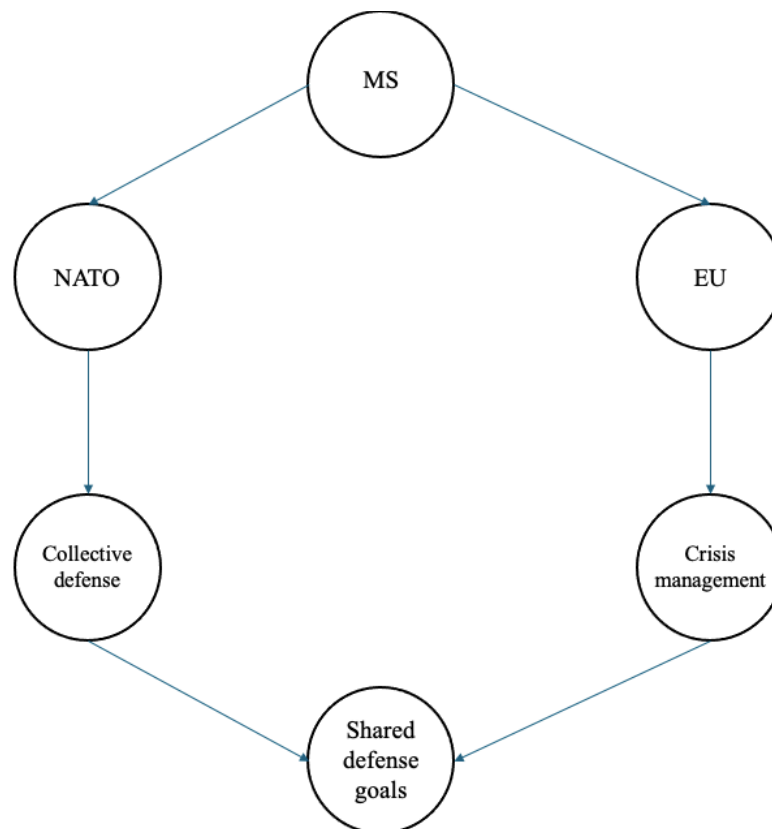
4.1.3 Subsection 2: Alternative Paths to Action

The EUSC gives a clear defined goal and pathway for the strengthening of the European defense and security domain, accompanied by the first ever European risk assessment involving all MS, and proposes no alternatives (Blockmans et al., 2022). The progress is monitored through an annual progression report, with the primary task to record if the EU’s EUSC is creating a more robust and strong European security and defense domain (Perissich, 2021). Central to the EUSC is the promotion of a mentality shift, in which the EU should transform itself in becoming a global power, which is accountable for developing a sound security domain, and most importantly understand that integration depends upon collective MS investment (Biscop, 2022). The EUSC encourages its MS to engage in multinational formations, led by a subset of MS to meet the objectives of the EUSC.

Two articles explain how the responsibilities of European MS work in relationship to crisis control. The first document is Article 42(7) TEU, which entails that EU MS have the responsibility to act, support, and fight in case of an attack on an ally, however, when an European MS is a member of NATO, the directions given by NATO are overruling the

European partnership (Strategic Communications, 2022). The second article is Charter 51 of the United Nations, which says: “Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security (Gibson, 1957).” These two articles are at the base of the structure and reach of the EU’s EUSC, as they state the requirements for MS more specifically. Note that the EUSC outcome relies on the actions taken by the MS. The EUSC poses a blueprint for its MS, but not a requirement (Zandee, 2022). Thus, the EU cannot go higher than working closely with NATO and their upcoming plans. In principle, NATO is the mechanism that historically concerns itself over collective defense, whereas the EU is concerned with crisis management. The EUSC is the EU’s attempt to shift this paradigm, motivates MS to align national defense and security strategies, to build a stronger European front. Visually the dispersion of the historical role of NATO and the EU looks like:

Figure 7: Dispersion NATO & EU



4.1.4 Subsection 3: Framing Tactics

The EUSC is based on the EU’s acknowledgment of its vulnerability to substantial threats, such as illustrated by the Russian Ukraine war (Blockmans et al., 2022). The EUSC critiques the EU’s lack of having a sufficient strategic platform and reactive nature of EU’s MS to

threats, and the EUSC promotes its MS to contribute to this paradigm shift to become more assertive in the security and defense domain.

The EUSC argues that the dependency on NATO should be limited through MS cooperation at EU level. The EUSC envisions to motivate its MS to contribute in material, expertise, and military capabilities to the safety and security domain through the emphasis on the collective vulnerability (Novaky, 2020). According to article 42(7) TEU MS must act when an ally is being attacked on European ground (EEAS, 2022). Via the progressive threat analysis in which all 27 MS are represented, the EUSC mobilizes and combines information gathered from the risk analysis to generate an inclusive blueprint. Therefore, the EUSC is a representation of agreed upon defense and security visions resulting from the CI bargains, and functions as a guideline based on MS interest (Castro & Lobo, 2022). Making the MS inevitably involved in the EUSC according to the rules of the game following from article 42(7) TEU.

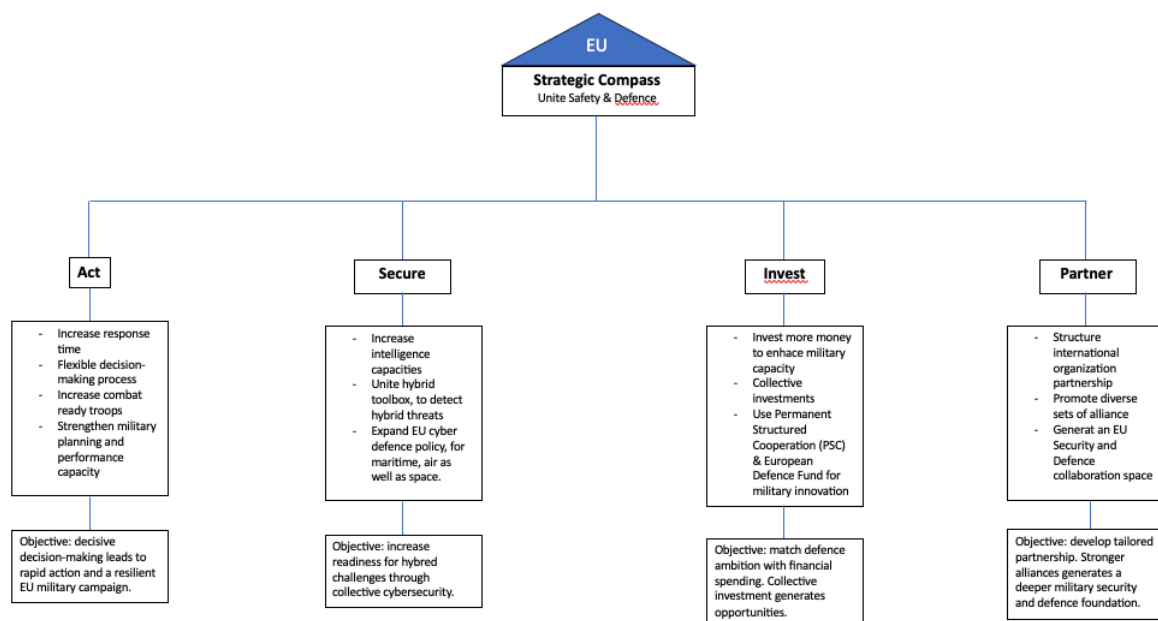
In the realm of the EU's political arena, it is unlikely that all MS will get an outcome that is satisfactory on all levels given by their national politics (Molenaar, 2022). The EU is maneuvering itself in the direction of increasing the collective importance of a shared security, safety, and defense mechanism through the EUSC (Council, 2021). The argument held is somewhat repetitive but is constant and highlights the importance of increasing the unity and strength of the EU in military capacity as MS are as individual actors too vulnerable. Thus, the argument that the EU uses is not discriminatory in nature, more so a general argument that applies to the MS. The value of a clear set of goals and directions for the MS is arguably a pivotal component. The EU's EUSC requires behavioral and procedural changes from the MS, it must consider their interest, procedures, and military programs. The EUSC advocates for a robust and strong European front and invites its MS to contribute in terms of resources, expertise, and military capabilities to meet the EUSC objectives.

4.1.5 Subsection 4: Cost Benefit

The EUSC implementation phase entails structural and foundational adaptations at the national and international level. The EUSC must include the interest of all 27 MS in a manner that is reducing the risk of counter-productive measures taken by individual MS. Therefore, finding means and trajectories to promote collective weaponization should be a motivating factor in the decision-making process in the composition phase of the EUSC. The proposed policy

alterations following from the publication of the EUSC should reflect an increase in strength and capabilities of the EU defense domain (Koenig, 2022). The initial decision to produce a policy document given out by the EU is the first step towards structural changes at the international level. The annual progression report analyzes the steps taken and shows if stated plans have been converted into action. The annual progress analysis will be conducted by “The High Representative, in consultation with the Commission and the European Defence Agency (team, 2023).” Making statements about the applicability of the EUSC is too early. What needs to be highlighted in this, is that the EUSC document’s CI nature makes it increasingly difficult to state that this blueprint is a representation of all MS, and therefore, needs to be compared with a MS. Figure 8 is a detailed representation of the how the EUSC is composed, which domains are discussed, and what objectives are stated.

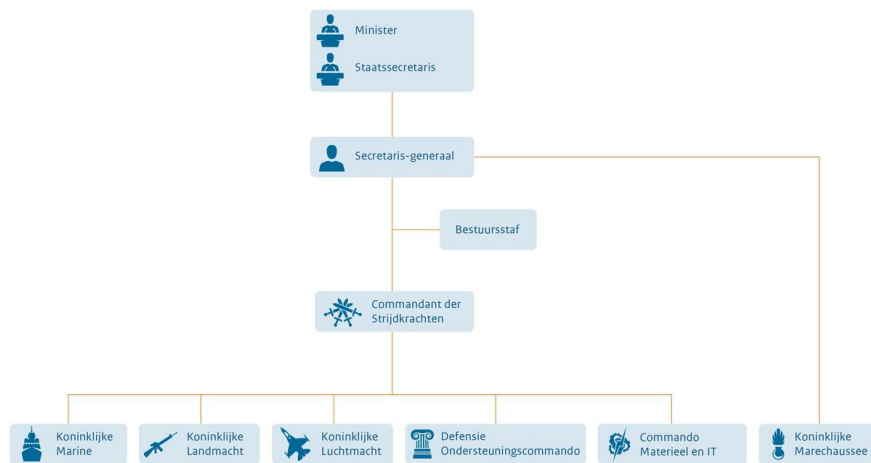
Figure 8: Summary EUSC



4.2.1 The Dutch Defense Note

The first step of the analysis entails identifying the organizational structure of the Ministry of Defense and from that point understanding how the Dutch armed forces are positioned within this framework. Understanding the relationship of politics and the trajectory set out for the Dutch military is the first step in the analysis followed by a table summarizing the main objectives of the Dutch defense note 2022. The organizational chart of the Dutch defense organization looks as followed (MoD, 2024):

Figure 9: Organizational chart NL



From: Ministerie van Defensie. (2024, 24 juni). *Organogram ministerie van Defensie*. Ministerie van Defensie | Rijksoverheid.nl. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-defensie/organisatie/organogram>

The Dutch defense framework is divided into four sections: *political, official, management, and military staff*. The political top relies on the input coming from its management team and the military staff. The Secretary General (SG) serves as the bridge between the management team and military staff and consolidates the information to the political top. Thus, the SG has a key position as this function determines the policy objectives for defense and communicates this to the political top.

The second step of the analysis is to identify the six major elements written down in the DDN of 2022. These six core elements form the base of the trajectory set out by the Ollongren’s Ministry.

Table 3: Components DDN

Components Defense note	Objective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Strong support</i> 	Strengthen logistical measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Being a good employer</i> 	Increase working conditions and maintain societal connection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Strengthen specialty</i> 	Invest in new technologies

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increase European cooperation</i> 	Strengthen, invest, and expand international relations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Innovative capacities & New domains</i> 	Invest in a dynamic well-rounded knowledge and technology baseline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Information driven work and performance</i> 	Expand cyber expertise and material

Table 2 summarizes the six domains of the DDN and shows the areas in which the Netherlands wants to improve its defense and security domain. These six objectives highlight that the Dutch defense mechanism is incomplete in intrinsic and extrinsic factors and requires both national as well as international improvements. The Ministry of Defense determines the steps and areas in which progression is desired. Based on the organizational chart and the theoretical chapter, it is likely that the Netherlands' military organization is subject to periodic change due to the political dependency, challenging a long-term course of action to be presented for the armed forces. The Dutch military organization is a representation of the sitting coalition, meaning that the course of action changes with an interval of four years, making long-term strategic visions difficult. The DDN of 2022 provides a holistic view in which the Netherlands needs to expand, invest, and maintain national and international relationships to strengthen its military credibility.

The following section of this chapter analyzes the DDN through Allison's adjusted framework. The DDN serves as the qualitative material to be researched, and offers insights in the rationale, goals, and aspirations of the Netherlands in the defense and security domain. By employing an explanatory approach, to dissect and analyze the DDN, the goal is to evaluate the formulated hypotheses, in which the outcome will be discussed in the comparison table.

Dutch framework:
1. <i>What is it precisely that the Netherlands wants to accomplish with the defense note?</i>
a. First attempt to identify how the Dutch defense note came to realization
b. Attempt to find out of what type of decision-making was utilized.
i. In the construction of the Dutch Defense note was there groupthink?
ii. Or polythink?
c. Identify precisely the outcome the Dutch defense note seeks.
d. Why does it seek that?
i. Good in itself given the Dutch values. (If so, does the Netherlands wish to consider its values?)
ii. The Netherlands believes it will lead to further outcome which it values. (If so, can they state the causal chain, so retesting is possible?)
iii. The Netherlands believes it will lead to EU member states' participation. (If so, does the Netherlands consider that member states are not a unitary actor and that its bureaucracy does what is in line with their interest. What is the function of coercive power in the form of incentives.)
e. How likely is the Netherlands in getting the outcome they want?
i. Withhold judgment until working out paths to action and strategy.
ii. Consider relevant programs and standard operating procedures.
iii. Consider internal and external bias.
f. How important is the outcome for the Netherlands compared to the worldwide safety climate?
2. <i>Alternative paths to action</i>
a. Map out alternative routes to the desired outcome.
b. Consider the possibility that a change in policy may be neither necessary nor sufficient.
c. Seek to change policy if
i. Necessary to remove an absolute barrier to changing action;
ii. Necessary given the access to those who must perform the action;
iii. Likely to lead easily to a change in action.
d. Consider how high the Netherlands needs to go.
e. If seeking a change in policy, plot the action path from there to changes in actions.
f. Consider for each path who will have the action.
g. Specify the formal actions which are necessary.
h. What resources does the Netherlands have to move action along each path with success?
3. <i>Framing tactics- maneuvers and arguments- to move along a path</i>
a. Identification of the participants and their interest.
i. Who will inevitably be involved according to the rules of the game?
ii. What is the likely interest of the various participants, what face of the issue will they see, how will they define the stakes?
b. How can the Netherlands lead the participants to see that the outcome is desired and in their interest?
c. How can the Netherlands change the situation to have an outcome that is not conflicting with its capabilities?
d. What maneuvers should the Netherlands use at what stage?
e. What arguments should the Netherlands use?
i. In general?
ii. On a discriminatory basis?
f. If the Netherlands wants defense to change behavior, it must consider the interest, standard operating procedures, and programs of those states, is that sufficiently reflected in the defense note?
g. How can the Netherlands tell the defense note is doing well?
4. <i>Gauging costs and benefits</i>
a. How should the decision sought to relate to the change desired?
b. By what means will the initial decision which is sought to be converted into the desired action?
c. Plan of action
i. How to move the action to the waystation and final outcome desired.
ii. What maneuvers and arguments to use or with the other participants.

4.2.2 Subsection 1: The Main Objective

Minister Ollongren, her ministry, and her team published in 2022 the DDN, presenting the Dutch objectives for the military. The DDN is composed out of six directions, providing the Netherlands with a holistic and comprehensive plan for military development. The main goal for the Dutch military organization is to contribute to the increased quest of international cooperation, for both the EU and NATO, without losing sight on improving national logistics and functionality (Defensie, 2022). This objective entails an increase in financial spending, which will be approximately 14.8 billion extra (Defensie, 2022). The primary goal of the Dutch defense department is given weight by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Defensieraad, 2022), and is to take the necessary steps to make the Netherlands stronger and Europe safer (Defensie, 2022).

The six action points are the result of information and advice given by the SG to the political top. However, the outcome of the DDN remains uncertain, due to the overarching timeframe in which it is published and the potential coalition change. Given this information, the trajectory of this defense note is ongoing. The action points serve as a guide to get to higher levels of international cooperation in a high politics domain. Especially action point four contributes to the international quest to integrate EU's MS military organization into a more robust EU (Defensie, 2022). Action point four describes four specific measures that Ollongren's Ministry desires to implement, namely:

- Deepening the cooperation with European partners.
- Advance the development defense capabilities at the European level.
- Increase the Dutch contribution towards the current European headquarters.
- Remain invested and increase interoperability as well as standardization at NATO and EU level.

Overall, the objective of the action plan four is to incorporate higher levels of readiness, deploy-ability, combat readiness, and maneuverability. The Ministry of Defense Foreign Affairs recognizes that the Russia Ukraine conflict has created momentum for developing a safety and security architecture that increases the strength at European and NATO level. By broadening these alliances, the geopolitical role of the Netherlands is thought to be more credible (Breimer, 2023). However, to develop this stronger defense and security architecture a stable money flow and budget need to be available for the Dutch military organization, which the Ministry of Finance needs to provide.

The DDN values international cooperation as it recognizes the importance for the national safety (Zaken, 2018). The increased defense spending underlines the Dutch commitment in developing a stronger combat mechanism. Additionally, the DDN recognizes that increasing the interoperability of the European front stands or falls with aligning international cooperation, joint purchases, and standardized procedures. The DDN acknowledges the diversity of threats -from the Russian Ukraine war to disinformation, cyberattacks, and the changing geopolitical climate- and therefore underscores the importance of improving national structures, to contribute to the international European defense domain (Defensie, 2022). It is likely that the European MS' ability in aligning national interest, explained through CI, can be found back in the levels of interoperability.

4.2.3 Subsection 2: Alternative Paths

The DDN does not map out alternative routes to the desired outcome. Instead, special attention is placed on how to increase readiness, deploy-ability, and agility. The Dutch defense organization recognizes the needs to improve its employment conditions, strengthen its organizational structure as well as procedures, and support its operational combat units (Defensie, 2022). Concretely, this entails that the Netherlands wants to “increase its stocks, strengthen air transport capacities, strengthen the medical chain, expand firearms capacities, and invest in expanding the capacities for intelligence surveillance reconnaissance (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022, p.8).” Thus, the envisioned policy plan, described in the DDN, attempts to transform the Dutch military organization into a multidomain actor via cooperation and international partnership. The DDN of 2022 is given significant weight, as the NATO 2% benchmark was met for the first time during 2024-2025. In other words, the increased budget might allow the Netherlands to meet the policy changes that are proposed in the DDN if structural funding is present. Which remains an ongoing negotiation with the Ministry of Finance. Ultimately, it is important that the Netherlands recovers from the budgetary constraints and develops a narrative in which the Dutch armed forces are not facing retrenchments.

4.2.4 Subsection 3: Framing Tactics

The Netherlands is both part of NATO as well as the EU. The vision of the Dutch doctrine (NDD) is based on directions given by NATO (Bauer, 2019). The DDN is an official document published by the political top, articulating the desires and goals for the Dutch

military organization. As stated above, the Netherlands admits that its defense and security position as an individual actor is too vulnerable (Wiltenburg, 2020). Therefore, the Netherlands has partaken in the creation of the EUSC as stated in the Rapportage Internationale Defensiesamenwerking (2021). The participants for the Netherlands are thus both NATO as well as EU, as these form the international partners.

The Netherlands uses a similar framing tactic and aligns its argument with NATO and the EU. The Netherlands departs from the desire to strengthen the fundament of the Dutch armed forces as it is defined to be too vulnerable to threats coming from outside (Wiltenburg, 2020). Increasing the readiness, deploy-ability, and agility of the Dutch armed forces shows outside actors its operational stability and financial capabilities. Investing in the Dutch armed forces has the goal to either deter or compel outside parties to threaten the Netherlands.

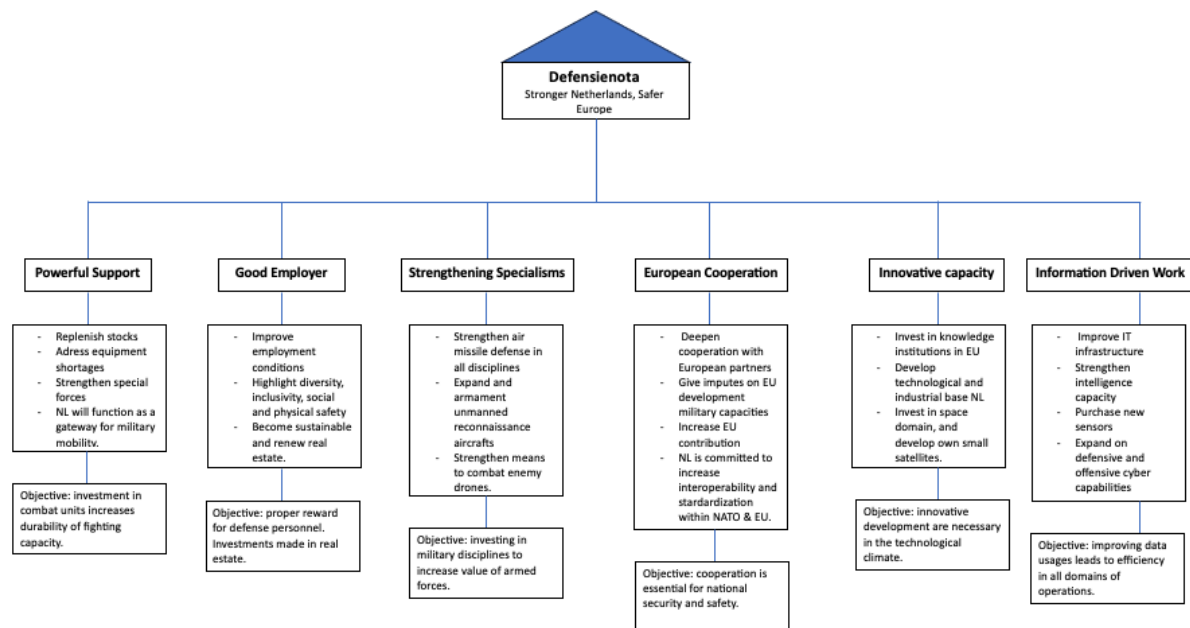
When examining the Dutch armed forces, it becomes evident that their partnership with NATO and EU are at the base of their future. In this context, the DDN captures six action plans to increase investment and organizational improvement, while highlighting that international cooperation is at the base of weaponing oneself against international threats, weaponing oneself against threats requires international cooperation. Especially action point for underlines the importance of aligning international interest to enhance conflict readiness. The Dutch aim is to position oneself as a credible international defense partner, but before getting to that point, structural investments need to be made, organizational reforms are necessary, and streamlining national interest with MS of the EU and NATO is required. With the prevalent threats showcasing the Dutch vulnerability, the inter-ministerial challenges between the Ministry of Finance and Defense, Defense has a favorable momentum in the allocation of funding as a lot of attention is placed on defense and security. Whether this momentum is long-lasting remains uncertain within the scope of this research.

4.2.5 Subsection 4: Cost Benefit

The Netherlands has committed to increase defense expenses up to the NATO standard of 2% GDP, this increase in expenses signals the Dutch intent to strengthen the defense and security domain both national and international. The budgetary expansion increases the ability to meet the policy alterations proposed in the DDN. However, if the Netherlands will meet the new plans remains uncertain and requires further evaluation as the timeline of the DDN exceeds this thesis. Therefore, analyzing the annual expenses of the Netherlands in relationship with

the Ministry of Finance, showcases if discrepancy exists in the goals of the Ministry of Defense and the resource allocation provided by the Ministry of Finance, pointing to BP and inter-ministerial challenges. Ultimately, the Netherlands seems to be attempting to enhance their position as a credible international actor by investing in the national structures via the DDN. The organization chart of the DDN is provided below:

Figure 10: Summary DDN



4.3.1 Dutch Defense Spending

This section of the thesis analyzes the pattern of the Dutch defense spending to evaluate the position of the Netherlands in achieving international goals. The Dutch defense spending has been examined in relationship with its 2% GDP NATO commitment and in the light of the shifting geopolitical environment. Historically, the Netherlands has systematically underinvested in its armed forces (Ministerie van Financiën, 2020), this pattern is reflected in the allocation described in the annual *Rijksbegroting*. The yearly *Rijksbegroting* details government expenditures the Dutch priorities and illustrates the tension of strategic defense obligations and the fiscal allocation that constraints the defense development (Rijksoverheid, 2024).

The annual *Rijksbegroting* provides insights in how the Dutch government's priorities are prioritized and financially distributed, which showcases how the Dutch defense spending

fluctuates based on external threats, such as the Russian Ukraine war. The Netherlands has not met the 2% GDP expenditure since 1994, and maintained a system of underinvesting in the defense domain until 2024 (Stoffer, 2024). The recent tensions at the Eastern front of the EU made the Netherlands increase funding to booster its defense and security domain, marking a shift in Dutch financial priorities.

This portion of the thesis analyzes the Dutch trend in defense spending as outlined in the *Rijksbegroting* and emphasizes that the *Rijksbegroting* has structurally named the shifting geopolitical tensions but has not met this information with appropriate financial resources to strengthen the defense domain (Financiën, 2020). By evaluating the Dutch defense spending, it becomes evident that the Netherlands tries to recover from its chronic underinvestment, with the increased need to bolster its defense and security domain and adapt to global security challenges.

4.3.2 The Dutch's Defense Spending: An Analytical Perspective

Recent discussion concerning the height of the Dutch defense spending has questioned the Dutch ability to meet national and international security demands. This section explores four key dimensions that shape the Dutch defense spending:

- Past patterns of underinvestment.
- Recent increases in spending.
- Challenges to policy goals.
- Broader implications for NATO and the EU.

In conjunction these dimensions issue a comprehensive understanding of the pathway and potential implication for the capacity in meeting defense policy goals.

1. Past Patterns of Underinvestment

The Netherlands has structurally failed to meet the NATO 2% GDP benchmark for defense spending (Stoffer, 2024). The pattern of chronic underinvestment dates to 1994 and highlights the Dutch governments' tendency to structurally prioritize other areas receiving national budget over the Ministry of Defense (Ministerie van Financiën, 2020). Data stemming from the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) and NATO exemplifies that the Netherlands has consistently failed to meet the agreed upon benchmark (NATO, 2024):

<u>Year</u>	<u>GDP%</u>
• 2014	1,15
• 2015	1,13
• 2016	1,16
• 2017	1,15
• 2018	1,22
• 2019	1,32
• 2020	1,41
• 2021	1,36
• 2022	1,44
• 2023	1,66
• 2024	2,05

Table 3 provides the numbers showcasing this clear pattern of underinvestment until recent years, which has seen a gradual increase in budgetary allocations, but is still not up to par based on longstanding agreements (CBS, 2019). The systematic budgetary constraints in the Dutch defense spendings left its armed forces limited in addressing, meeting, and developing progressive strategy as well as operational goals.

2. Recent Increases in Spending

Starting from 2017 onward, the Dutch military spending has shown a gradual and stable upward trend. 2024 marked the peak of this trend, when the Dutch defense spending went above 2% GDP for the first time. The geopolitical turbulence, illustrated by the Russian Ukraine war, underscored the necessity of boosting the national defense organization, which should be reflected in an appropriate budgetary allocation (Wiltenburg, 2020). Even though the upward trend marks progress in the Dutch defense budgetary allocation, it brings to light that the Dutch defense organization is sensitive to the climax of external threats and is not proactive in financial planning. Despite consistent recognition that the geopolitical climate has been changing since 2013 in the Rijksbegrotingen, proactive and efficient resource distribution to the foreseen challenges for defense remained elusive (Financiën, 2015). This directly points to the ministerial interactions explained in BP, the Netherlands showcases a case in which the Ministry of Defense has been explaining the need for adequate funding

during a longer period, without the desired funding coming from the Ministry of Finance. Thus, funding priorities between these ministries did not align.

3. Challenges to Policy Goals

The chronic budgetary constraints for the Netherlands result in significant challenges in the Dutch ability to meet policy goals both national as internationally. Both the DDN and the EUSC require the Dutch defense organization to provide a stable departure point, which the Netherlands cannot offer due to its systematic military underinvestment. Rebuilding the Dutch military capacity requires recovering from the financial limitations and involves:

- *Operational readiness deficits*: as discussed in the DDN, the Netherlands needs to address logistical gaps, in terms of equipment, training, as well as the modernization and mobilization of its armed forces (Defensie, 2022).
- *Geopolitical complexities*: The Netherlands must maneuver in balancing its sovereign power to its agreed commitments to the defensive frameworks provided by NATO and EU.
- *Budgetary adjustments*: if the Netherlands wants to implement sustainable adaptations to the resilience of its military organization maintaining the 2% GDP investment level is desirable while competing with other domestic priorities.

Based on this information, the Netherlands seems to be stuck in a paradox in which it emphasizes the importance of strengthening and maintaining international cooperation, while it simultaneously states that decisions concerning its armed forces remains a sovereign endeavor (Financiën, 2024). This Dutch stance complicates streamlining national policies with collective EU and NATO defense and security trajectories.

4. Broader Implications for NATO and the EU

The Dutch military spending faced structural underinvestment; moreover, the recent budgetary increases have implications in the Dutch credibility and reliability. On the one hand, it can be argued that the delayed Dutch reaction to the external threat, height of expenses, and the reactive military trajectory limits its ability to synchronize with the collective goals set out by the EUSC. On the other hand, the increase of military expenses and the Dutch commitment to the collective defense and security trajectory shows willingness to invest in becoming a reliable partner in this European defense framework.

The geopolitical shift emphasizes the need for the Netherlands to sustain the height of the military spending to establish a forward-looking and stable organization. Generating a start-

point that is financially stable will help the Netherlands in positioning itself as a legit international partner that has the organizational capabilities to synchronize its interest to the European defense framework, if the Netherlands gets to this point is dependent on the financial allocation coming from the Ministry of Finance. Even though the increase in military spending is a positive step in the right direction, the historical investment pattern shows that maintaining the budgetary commitment of 2% GDP remains a challenge for the Netherlands and could potentially reflect negatively in its international position as a global player.

Conclusively, the shifting geopolitical order and the defense and security threats faced by the Netherlands resulted in a significant shift in Dutch defense spending. After structural underinvestment the 2% GDP benchmark was met in 2024-2025 and shows the shift in political priorities in the Netherlands, as reflected in the budget allocation of the Ministry of Finance. The DDN emphasizes that the systematic budgetary constraints challenge the Dutch start-point in meeting international initiatives. Achieving the goals outlined in the DDN requires the Netherlands to maintain military spending to restructure and strengthen the military organization. As of right now, the increase in Dutch military spending marks a positive sign in attempting to align interest with European partners on strategic level; however, it faces challenges due to the chronic underinvestment from which the Dutch military organization needs to recover.

4.4 Structured Comparison

This section of the chapter proceeds with the structured comparison based on the information gathered, to address the formulated hypothesis. The structured comparison is organized around the four dimensions of Allison's framework representing the following questions:

- *Dimension 1:* What is it precisely that the EUSC and the DDN want to accomplish?
- *Dimension 2:* Are there alternative pathways to accomplish these goals?
- *Dimension 3:* What framing tactics were used?
- *Dimension 4:* How is the cost benefit balance determined?

4.4.1 Dimension 1

The case study shows that the policy document provided by the EU at the start of the Russian Ukraine conflict, focused on strengthening the European safety and security domain, give weight towards highlighting MS European solidarity (Fiott, 2021). The EUSC wants to

implement this new trajectory to make the EU more robust and an accountable provider of safety to its citizen.

The primary goal describes that further European defense and security integration can be established through a select investment group consisting out of MS, which would inspire other MS to follow (Biscop, 2022). By finding common ground in the threat perception, the EUSC follows the logic that this overlapping interest results in a shared defense framework, in which MS establish the European strategic autonomy (Biscop, 2022). Therefore, CI can be seen as a leading theory in the composition phase of the EUSC, as this showcases how national priorities are streamlined for an international work. Thus, groupings of MS are thought to help in the progression of the implementation phase of the EUSC objectives, and this rhetoric of emphasizing identity-building exceeds national borders (Palm, 2021). The recommendations and action plans developed by the EU can be seen as a blueprint in which the role of MS is accentuated as they can help in positioning the EU as a credible global actor.

The EUSC amalgamates the policy plans to expand, sustain, and modernize its defense resource allocation to improve the European mobilization capabilities. The EUSC can be viewed as an attempt for further European integration which combines practical as well as theoretical policy-plans for its MS to generate a robust and strong command and control structure that adds to the global credibility of the EU (Fiott, 2021). Ultimately, the outcome of the EUSC strongly relies on the willingness, solidarity, and investments made by MS in strengthening the European defense and security domain, as explained through CI, it is likely that if the EUSC is well streamlined with the MS' priorities, cooperation has a better starting position.

Laterally, the DDN sends an overlapping message conversing its commitment to strengthen its relationship with the EU and NATO. However, the DDN has a more pragmatic nature, presenting areas in which the national organization needs to improve. While the Netherlands says to be committed to the goals presented in the EUSC, the focus of the DDN is predominantly domestic, and presents inter-ministerial challenges. The aim of the increased national investments is to signal to its alliances that the Netherlands can be viewed as an international reliable partner, but in the Dutch case, internal challenges prohibit the Netherlands to meet the EUSC objectives. From an organizational standpoint, the Dutch

armed forces are not up to par, structural changes need to be made, and a stable financial flow needs to be present. BP explains how inter-ministerial challenges make it difficult for ministries to achieve the desired goals. As explained, the Ministry of Defense is dependent on the Ministry of Finance for the yearly budget, if priorities do not align an adequate budget cannot be expected for the Ministry of Defense. Throughout the annual *Rijksbegroting* it became evident that the Ministry of Defense has repeatedly made the case for a higher budget. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Finance did not provide the funding until the momentum and attention to the weakened position of the Dutch defense position became undeniable. Overcoming priority discrepancies between ministries shows to be a big fluid national challenges for the Netherlands.

Thus, the first hypothesis, “*The presence of the EUSC provides the ground to strengthen the EU’s global security position,*” can be partially supported. The EUSC lays out a sound normative foundation for strengthening the European defense and security domain, nevertheless the practical realization of the EUSC is contingent upon continuous MS participation. The main critique is that the Russian Ukraine war generated momentum for the EU to push the EUSC forwards due to the European vulnerability to external threats, however, without concrete MS participation the EUSC risks to be seen as a symbolic document. The EU’s credibility is dependent on MS participation, therefore the presence of the EUSC partially strengthens the EU’s global security position as it motivates MS to act.

4.4.2 Dimension 2

Neither the EUSC nor the DDN provide alternative pathways. Both documents highlight the importance of weaponing itself against a variety of external threats, in which the EUSC focuses on promoting further European military capacity integration, whereas the DDN prioritizes national organizational reforms. As the EUSC is not a binding document, it emphasizes MS solidarity in strengthening the European defense domain. For instance, if the Netherlands would invest to the EUSC vision, it could function as a leading MS, motivating further MS participation. But, the Netherlands has more a participative and executive position, instead of a directive role due to the financial restraints, organizational imbalance, and governmental dependency. Even though, the Netherlands is committed and aligned its principles to that of the EUSC, the Dutch capacity for action is strained due to the budgetary challenges as well as logistical challenges, and insufficient combat readiness.

This results in the answering of hypothesis h2a, “*The Netherlands’ contribution amplifies the global credibility of the European EUSC in the international security domain.*” Despite the Dutch commitment to the goals of the EUSC, the Netherlands lacks the decisive influence to drive broader European interest. Moreover, hypothesis h2b, “*The global credibility is constrained by limitations in the allocation of national resources and organizational dependency,*” finds strong support. The Dutch case underscores that its military organization is dependent on national resource allocation and highlights that the EU’s EUSC achievement is vulnerable to MS-specific constraints.

4.4.3 Dimension 3

Both the EUSC and the DDN use similar framing tactics, highlighting the shared safety vulnerability and the necessity of solidarity. The basis of the EUSC can be found in the threat analysis conducted by the 27 MS intelligence services. The outcome placed strong emphasis on the perceived vulnerability of the EU and its MS as individual actors and showcases the need to find a strategic consensus that protects the EU (Molenaar, 2021). The framing tactics in the EUSC and the DDN underline the need of generating a platform capturing these shared norms and long-term strategic objectives (Palm, 2021). The EUSC can therefore best be described as the articulation of the EU’s defense and security aspiration based on MS input. Even though the DDN mirrors this normative alignment, it predominantly addresses national challenges, which creates a narrower framing scope. The Dutch defense organization highlights domestic priorities over the European objectives written down in the EUSC. Overall, the framing tactic and emphasis on solidarity is similar in both documents, but the significant differences lay in the scale of ambition between the two documents, and the different inter-ministerial challenges that are faced at the Dutch national level.

4.4.4 Dimension 4

The cost-benefit balance is in both documents relatively underdiscussed but seems to imply that the cost-benefit balance is tied to national contributions. For the EUSC to work, it is essential that MS constructively invest to weapon the EU to external threats which translates to the advancement of the European security domain. The willingness of a few MS to invest and align itself with the EUSC is critical in the success of the EUSC. For the Netherlands specific, the EUSC costs and benefit ratio is weighed against the domestic priorities. The DDN emphasizes that the Netherlands needs to increase its investments in personnel, materials, and its logistical infrastructure. These budgetary and structural challenges, such as

personnel turnover and limited combat readiness, prohibit the Netherlands to contribute to the EUSC accordingly. What is implied is that the Netherlands must address the internal challenges before it can significantly contribute to the European goals. Thus, the DDN underscores the need to resolve the Dutch logistical and structural deficiencies, while the EUSC emphasizes the need for broader MS investment to make the EU more resilient. This results in the answering of hypothesis h3, “*The Dutch military’s combat readiness is bounded by its political dependency on the allocation of national resources,*” which is supported. The Dutch defense organization faces significant financial, organization, and structural challenges that prevent the Netherlands to notably contribute to the goals of the EUSC. The position of the Dutch defense organization is closely tied to the funding of the ruling coalition, making the Dutch defense organization dependent on financial resources and limits the international contribution it can provide. The inter-ministerial tension and the positioning of the military organization in the Netherlands prohibit long-term strategic goals to be developed and met, which raises a design issue.

4.5 Influencing Factors Limiting Further European Integration

The position and actions taken by the Dutch military organization markedly influence the Dutch ability to meet the EUSC objectives. Even though progress has been made in the parts of international cooperation and the budgetary increase, various internal challenges persist, the key limitations being:

1. Personnel retention and recruitment: even with the increase in military staff, high turnover rates challenge the organizational stability. The enhanced employment conditions function as a mean to solve this issue, but time will tell if this is successful (Ministerie van Defensie, 2024).
2. Logistical issues and material shortage: the Dutch military organization deals with both deficits in functional materials as well as maintenance capabilities. The logistical challenges prevent the Dutch military organization to progress in combat readiness and operational reliability.
3. Interconnected challenges: many of these types of challenges faced by the Dutch defense organization are interconnected. The limitations named above are structural challenges that exacerbate weak points of the organization.

Despite these limitations, the positive developments cannot be left out. Some pillars of the Dutch defense organization are working well, especially the functional cooperation visible between military, national reserve, and civil organization -such as the police or ambulance-

which increases the national safety and readiness. Tight cooperation allows the military to focus on their first task. Additionally, budgetary increases provide the Dutch military with the necessary resources to further modernize and strengthen the Dutch army and might lead to concrete alignment with the EUSC objectives.

However, the current improvements are insufficient to position the Netherlands as a leader in the EUSC objectives, nor will the Netherlands function as a driver of further European defense and security integration due to internal challenges. Therefore, addressing the internal deficiencies stays a prerequisite for the Netherlands to provide the grounds for itself to align with the EUSC goals. The objectives of the EUSC do not provide a wide range of interpretability, but in the Dutch case, the interaction and position of the Ministry of Finance and Defense prohibit the Netherlands, in its current form, to adequately contribute to these objectives given the organizational challenges that need to be overcome.

5. Results

This thesis researched the position of the Netherlands in its ability to meet the goals described in the EUSC. The theoretical baseline was in the form of a funnel which showcased how SP, CI, and BP function as well as explain national and international policy challenges. Additionally, the structured comparison examined the objectives and desired trajectory of the EUSC and the DDN, and analyzed how the Netherlands interacts with the EUSC at both national as well as international level. The structured comparison demonstrates that even though the Netherlands ideologically supports the objectives set out by the EU, its practical capability of implementing these objectives is hindered by structural internal challenges, financial limitations, and coalition shifts.

The changing geopolitical environment led to a shift in strategic posturing and highlighted the European MS' vulnerability to external threats. The Dutch strategic posturing shares a common narrative with the EU, in that the strengthening of the European defense and security domain can be done through enhanced MS cooperation and shared investments in defense capabilities. The shifting strategic posturing can best be described as the input phase for the construction of the European defense trajectory. Throughout the composition phase CI stood central, 27 MS intelligence services gave input and negotiation at the European level happened. Therefore, the EUSC reflects the European MS' compromising ability, as this is inherently at the base of balancing 27 MS interest in a defense and security guideline. The limitation that follows from the EUSC position to its MS is that its enforceability is predominantly based on voluntary participation, and with that dependent on MS national priorities.

At the domestic level, the output phase can best be explained through BP, which emphasizes that the Dutch alignment with the implementation of the EUSC objectives is constrained through ministerial differences. The key actors identified were the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Defense. The inter-ministerial challenge is not due to the interpretability of the EUSC but lies in ministerial agenda-setting and priorities. The Ministry of Defense has structurally asked for an increase in budget to address the long-standing deficiencies in readiness, logistics, and organizational capabilities. However, the Ministry of Finance has not provided the necessary resources for defense to maintain and modernize its organization.

It is difficult to precisely pinpoint what the shifting geopolitical environment says about the Netherlands specific. What becomes evident is that this inter-ministerial disbalance underlines the key challenge for the Netherlands: the ability to make a meaningful contribution to the EUSC objectives depends on aligning diverging priorities in the Dutch national government. It comes to show, that the Dutch defense vision has been reactive in nature, and based on the allocation of financial funding, it has not been directed towards the strengthening of its military security domain.

Therefore, the main research question, *“To what extent and under which conditions can the goals of the Strategic Compass be achieved under the current policy of the Netherlands?”* is answered as followed: currently the Netherlands can partially contribute to the EUSC, however, is limited through bureaucratic conflicts, resource curtailments, and the recovering from structural budgetary underinvestment. Through the absence of a binding component, the Netherlands is not obligated to contribute to the EUSC which leaves cooperation to be an act of voluntary solidarity.

The sub-questions provide additional insights, as the first sub-question asked, *“What is the difference between the current status and the intended goals of the Strategic Compass for the Netherlands?”* The case study and analysis disclosed that a significant difference exist between the ambitions written in the EUSC and the Dutch capabilities, which are restricted through organizational limitations and financial resources. While the EUSC requires substantial investment in defense, the Dutch armed forces are recovering from structural underfunding, making the Netherlands unable to completely align priorities with the vision of the EUSC. The second sub-question, *“What are the necessary resource allocations regarding to the goals of the Strategic Compass for the Netherlands?”* highlights the need for substantial organizational, structural, and most importantly financial reforms. The inter-ministerial tension between the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Finance can be a limiting factor, as it remains uncertain if the Netherlands will structurally meet the 2% GDP benchmark. If the Netherlands does not resolve this inter-governmental bureaucratic conflict, the Netherlands is unlikely to meet the EUSC objectives in full as modernization of the defense organization would be restricted.

5.1 Limitations

This research comes with a few limitations, the biggest one being the temporal scope. The EUSC and the DDN have a timeframe exceeding this thesis work, and as a result, this thesis provides a snapshot of the current Dutch position, but it cannot predict the outcome of the policy plans that are still unfolding. Moreover, due to the exceeding timeframe this thesis work uses resources made available until 2024. Besides that, this research deals with reliance on public policy documents as well as official statements, which might not completely represent the complexities of implementing the plans nor the influence of unforeseen geopolitical shifts and developments. Additionally, as the EUSC is not a binding document, the progression of MS participation and compliance is complicated as it is based on voluntary solidarity. Overall, this thesis work faces challenges in the exceeding timeframe, resource limitation -in that it is dependent on public documentation-, and the progression of the EUSC faces measurement difficulties through its non-binding character.

5.2 Discussion

This thesis contributes to the understanding how the Netherlands interacts with the EU's strategic vision by researching the interconnectedness of EUSC and the DDN through the structured comparison supported by the sound theoretical framework. At the European level, the EUSC portrays an aspirational idea of strategic autonomy, underlined by the need of collective action in the face of the changing geopolitical environment and evolving security threats. The negotiation phase of the EUSC showcases that the negotiation game maneuvers the European output towards a document where compromises are likely to have happened. Due to the non-binding component of the EUSC the enforceability remains absent, making MS involvement based on solidarity.

For the Netherlands specific, the non-binding element of the EUSC exposes the challenges of aligning the Dutch national policies with the EU ambition. Even though the Netherlands emphasizes that a collective SP against external threats is important, BP highlighted that inter-ministerial differences are prohibiting the Netherlands to conform itself in full to the EUSC. The interplay of these ministerial dynamics underscores the difficulty in reconciling national interest with European objectives, and that highlights that the Dutch strategic quest and practical capabilities do not align. In the current design, the Ministry of Defense remains highly dependent on coalition shifts, and the financial allocation of the Ministry of Finance.

Looking into alternative designs that provides the Ministry of Defense higher levels of independency could help in shaping and working to long-term strategic visions.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

This thesis recommends future research to be focused on the implications of BP for defense policies in greater depth, specifically on the interplay of the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Finance in the Netherlands. This could be paired with a comparative analysis with another MS of the EU, which could lead to insights how similar inter-ministerial conflicts affect the interaction and engagement with the EUSC. Moreover, longitudinal studies are recommended to measure the progression of the Netherlands in addressing its structural and financial challenges. Longitudinal studies can examine the impact of heightened defense spendings on readiness, logistics, and organizational effectiveness, which could give a clearer picture of the Dutch ability in meeting the EUSC objectives.

Furthermore, additional research could also examine the broader implication of CI within the EUSC framework. By exploring and analyzing the balance between national investment and collective action, future research could potentially identify pitfalls as well as areas for adjustment to enhance the EUSC effectiveness. Lastly, this thesis acknowledges that future research could investigate the influence of external factors, such as shifting NATO preferences and the impact of changing global security dynamics for EU's MS in the progression of the EUSC. But the biggest practical suggestion that could be examined is how to re-position the Ministry of Defense in the Dutch governmental branch, without losing control, but with increased levels of independency to promote long-term strategic vision development and action plans. If a stable money flow is directed to the Ministry of Defense, with the increased independency, it could potentially resolve the current inter-ministerial challenges. So, it is recommended to re-evaluate the position of the Ministry of Defense and look into potential new designs for its position.

5.4. Final Remarks

Ultimately, this thesis analyzed the interconnectedness of the EUSC and the DDN, explored the Dutch inter-ministerial tension through BP, and concluded that aligning the Dutch defense policies with the EUSC is a complex endeavor demanding systematic internal changes in the Dutch military organization. For the Netherlands, achieving cohesion with the EUSC requires

that structural deficiencies are addressed, securing and most importantly sustaining a stable financial flow, and overcoming the inter-ministerial challenges posed by BP.

The EUSC represents an important initiative to strengthen the EU defense and security domain, but through its non-binding nature and dependency on MS involvement, the effectiveness could be limited. In the Dutch case, cooperation can be expected in a participative role, as the Netherlands must overcome internal challenges before it can commit itself to the long-term European goals. Which evidently highlights a discrepancy in what the Netherlands desires to create, a stronger European front, and what it can contribute, a participative international partner dealing with internal challenges. Thus, the Netherlands' role in strengthening the EU's strategic framework is currently expected to be limited.

In conclusion, this thesis work laid the groundwork in comprehending the Dutch position within the EU strategic framework. Further research is needed to completely understand the long-term implications of the EUSC for the Netherlands. By examining the interplay of national and European policy plans a longitudinal study can provide valuable insights in the challenges, opportunities, and reach of this European quest for strategic autonomy, and the role the Netherlands had. The complexity for the Netherlands with the EUSC is not in the interpretability of the document, but in the levels in which the Dutch armed forces can contribute to interoperability. That is a clear distinction that needs to be made, the EUSC provides clear goals, but due to organizational constraints the Netherlands cannot take a directive role in the progression of further European integration.

This thesis work invites future research to explore alternative designs of the position of the Ministry of Defense in the Dutch government in a post-Trump period. Perhaps finding ways to make the Ministry of Defense less dependent on governmental shifts, inter-ministerial tensions, and budgetary restraints could help the Dutch armed forces to work towards a multi-year plan in a systematic and structured manner. In which weaponization is directed towards increasing the Dutch deterrence position and promoting the repositioning of the soldier in warfare strategies. The Netherlands stands at a bifurcation, in which the reformation of the Dutch military organization will determine its global position.

6. References

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7. Appendix

I. *What precisely do I want to accomplish?*

- A. First attempt to predict what will occur.
- B. Plan and implement only if
 - 1. Disaster appears likely (possible);
 - 2. Substantial improvement is likely.
- C. Identify precisely the outcome I seek.
- D. Why do I seek it?
 - 1. Good in itself given my values. (If so, do I wish to reconsider my values?)
 - 2. I believe it will lead to a further outcome which I value. (If so, can I state the causal chain so I can retest?)
 - 3. I believe it will lead to behavior by other governments. (If so, consider that the other government is not a unitary actor and that its bureaucracy will do only what is in their interest in their own terms. Influence is most likely to take the form of altering incentives and power. Consider also how reliable my information is about the other government.)
- E. How likely am I to get the outcome as I desire it?
 - 1. Withhold judgment until working out paths to action and strategy.
 - 2. Consider relevant programs and standard operating procedures.
 - 3. Consider internal and external biases.
- F. How important is this outcome to me as compared to others?

II. *Alternative paths to action*

- A. Map out alternative routes to the desired outcome.
- B. Recognize that a change in policy may be neither necessary nor sufficient.
- C. Seek to change policy only if
 - 1. Necessary to remove an absolute barrier to changing action;
 - 2. Useful as a hunting license;
 - 3. Necessary given my access to those who must perform the action;
 - 4. Likely to lead easily to a change in action.
- D. Consider how high I need to go. (Do not involve the President unless necessary or he is likely to be sympathetic, i.e., unless he has a problem this may solve.)
- E. If seeking a change in policy, plot the action path from there to changes in actions.
- F. Consider for each path who will have the action. (Is there any path in which I will have the action?)
- G. Specify the formal actions which are necessary.

- H. What resources do I have to move action along each path with success? (Re-judge after considering tactics.) Relative advantages of each path.
- I. How will resources expended to get to one way-station outcome affect ability to get to further stations?
- J. What additional information will help? Can I get it? At what cost?

III. *Framing tactics—maneuvers and arguments—to move along a path*

- A. Identification of the participants and their interests, including those beyond the executive branch.
 - 1. Who will inevitably be involved according to the rules of the game?
 - 2. Who might seek to play but could be excluded?
 - 3. Who might not seek to play but could be brought in?
 - 4. What are the likely interests of the various participants, what face of the issue will they see, how will they define the stakes? Consider organization, personal, political, and national interests.
 - 5. Who are natural allies, unappeasable opponents, neutrals who might be converted to support, or opponents who might be converted to neutrality?
- B. How can I lead a participant to see that the outcomes I desire are in his interest as he sees it?
- C. How can I change the situation to have an outcome conflicting less (or not at all) with participants' interests as they see them?
- D. Do I have the resources for this purpose? If not, can I get others to use theirs?
- E. What specific maneuvers should I use at what stages?
- F. What arguments should I use:
 - 1. In general?
 - 2. On a discriminatory basis?
- G. If I must get a large organization to change its behavior, I must consider the interests, standard operating procedures, and programs of that organization.
- H. Should I try to bring in players outside the executive branch? If so, how?
- I. How can I tell how well I am doing?

IV. *Gauging costs and benefits*

- A. Reconsider all phases from time to time. Specifically:
 - 1. How high up should one seek a decision?
 - 2. How should the decision sought relate to the change desired, i.e., should it be a decision to change policy, to change patterns of action, or to take a single particular new step (or to stop an on-going action)?
 - 3. By what means will the initial decision which is sought be converted into the desired action?

- B. Plan of action.
 - 1. How to move the action to the way-station and final outcome desired.
 - 2. What maneuvers and arguments to use on or with the other participants.
 - 3. A time sequence.
- C. To what extent is this process consciously duplicated by participants seeking a change? Are some participants more likely to plan than others? To plan effectively?
- D. How is the choice of way-station outcomes and route action made?

Source (Allison & Halperin, 1972)