



# Bachelor Thesis

## Do They Punch Above Their Weight? A Role Theory Analysis of Dutch Foreign- and Defense Policy

Jan van Dorp  
3788938

Supervisor

Dr. Gerard van der Ree  
International Relations  
University College Utrecht  
Utrecht University

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*Effective foreign policy rests upon a shared sense of national identity, of a nation-state's 'place in the world', its friends and enemies, its interests and aspirations. These underlying assumptions are embedded in national history and myth, changing slowly over time as political leaders reinterpret them and external and internal developments reshape them.*

Christopher Hill

## Abstract

Concerned with post-Cold War Dutch foreign- and defense policy, this study makes use of social constructivism and role theory to find out how national role conceptions, role prescriptions and role performance have developed and interacted over time. To that extent, the research question that is being addressed in this thesis is the following: *How have Dutch national role conceptions, role prescriptions and role performance developed individually and interacted collectively in the context of changing NATO-EU dynamics since the end of the Cold War?* Although nowadays NATO and the EU can both be considered main actors in European security, the peculiar development of both organizations since the end of the Cold War has brought considerable brainteasers to Dutch policymakers. For that reason, the interview data gathered across 9 interviews have proven to be of immense value alongside academic literature and policy documents. After an elaboration on social constructivism, role theory and methodology, this study puts forward an empirical analysis that is divided into three sections. The first part of the empirical analysis discusses trends in NATO and EU development; thereby highlighting the implications these trends have had for Dutch foreign- and defense policy. The second part is concerned with Dutch national role conceptions and role prescriptions as issued by NATO and the EU, and aims to show that discrepancies between these two concepts have (had) an influence on Dutch role performance. Therefore, the third part seeks to pinpoint at the clashes that have occurred between national role conceptions and role prescriptions. For instance, it was found that budget cuts on defense have threatened the credibility of Dutch national role conceptions, which subsequently required rhetorical repair by policymakers to ensure that the 'road map' that can be used to simplify a complex political reality does not become unreadable. Lastly, it should be remarked that this thesis does not seek to make generalizable claims about Dutch foreign- and defense policy. Rather, its main aim is to accentuate temporary disruptions in the triangular relationship between Dutch national role conceptions, role prescriptions and role performance in the context of changing NATO-EU dynamics since the end of the Cold War.

## Acknowledgements

This thesis is the product of an increasing personal interest in (Dutch) foreign- and defense policy, which mainly took place during my final year of studies at University College Utrecht. The process of conceptualizing, analyzing and writing has been eventful, with its respective ups and downs. Although the cover page of this thesis bears my name, I would not want to have the reader proceed without having thanked several people who have been thoroughly involved in the process. First of all, I would like to thank Minze Beuving and Rene van Dorp for their efforts towards providing me with access to all of the interviewees.

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Lastly, I would like to dedicate a few words to my closest family and friends. First of all to my parents, who have always exhibited their interest for my project and repeatedly supported me when I was stuck in the process of thinking and writing. Secondly, I feel obliged to show my gratefulness towards my grandparents. Under all circumstances, they supported me through showing a sense of pride about even my smallest accomplishments. A word of thanks should be directed as well to Rens Bakker and Pau Castellví Canet, two of my closest friends at UCU. You provided me with the necessary distraction to be able to continue working on my thesis. Finally, I would like to underline the sincere feelings of thankfulness and happiness that I bear with me due to the continuous support of my beloved girlfriend. Katerina, I cherished your psychological assistance through many messages and cards and I owe you hours of support when you will be working on your Masters thesis next year.

# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1 Preface

In one of NATO's most recent operations, codenamed Anatolian Protector (2012), the Netherlands has been playing a crucial role: as one out of only three NATO-member states (together with the United States and Germany), the Dutch possess Patriot air defense systems that are being deployed in Turkey to protect the territory and its population against potential missile attacks from Syria. According to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, an attack against one of the NATO member states is considered an attack on all. As requested by Turkey and the entire NATO community, the Dutch government approved of the latest contribution of the Netherlands to NATO peacekeeping efforts. In July 2013, Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) of NATO general Philip Breedlove visited the Dutch patriot detachment in Turkey, and he expressed his 'sincere admiration for the exemplary execution of the mission by the Dutch NATO-forces.'<sup>1</sup> As such, Operation Anatolian Protector has become part of a long list of NATO-led operations in which the Netherlands has been involved. And the Netherlands is not only actively involved in NATO; it also contributes to defense through the EU.

To that extent, this thesis is concerned with Dutch foreign- and defense policy in the context of NATO and the EU since the end of the Cold War. In particular, it seeks to investigate the reciprocal relationship between these three subjects by making use of theoretical elements originating from social constructivism and role theory. Although not excluding materialist arguments (which mainly stem from realist and liberalist schools of thought), the focus of this thesis is on the importance of social practice and interaction in the creation of Dutch foreign- and defense policy. This perspective has been adopted because the Dutch case proves that to a large extent its foreign- and defense policy is grounded in a firm belief of Dutch policymakers in ideals concerning human rights and the rule of

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<sup>1</sup>Ministry of Defense (2013), Dutch excerpt:  
<http://www.defensie.nl/actueel/nieuws/2013/07/11/hogste-navo-commandant-in->

law. Therefore, social constructivist theory is used to clarify some of the most important objectives of Dutch foreign- and defense policy. Central in this research however are the concepts of national role conceptions, role prescriptions and role role performance. This 'imaginary triangle' emanates from role theory as developed by Kalevi Holsti, and serves as a simplification of Dutch foreign- and defense policy. Together, these three concepts allow for this thesis to substantiate findings about the image that Dutch policymakers have concerning "*the appropriate orientations or functions of their state toward, or in, the external environment*" (Holsti: 246).

## **1.2 Scope and relevance**

Of course, Dutch foreign- and defense policy since the end of the Cold War encompasses too much data for a Bachelor thesis to grasp. It was therefore decided to focus solely on the triangular relationship between the core elements of role theory, in order to distill findings that otherwise might have remained hidden from the academic debate. That is also what comprises the strength of this theory, and of its application to Dutch foreign- and defense policy.

Simultaneously, this thesis does not claim to provide generalizable patterns concerning Dutch foreign- and defense policy. The use of role theory allows for this thesis to provide an insight into the minds of Dutch policy makers and their understandings of what Dutch foreign- and defense policy entails. In specific, this thesis seeks to find an answer to the following research question:

*How have Dutch national role conceptions, role prescriptions and role performance developed individually and interacted collectively in the context of changing NATO-EU dynamics since the end of the Cold War?*

As opposed to the organizations of NATO and the EU, the UN will not play a major role in this thesis, and will only be mentioned occasionally to ensure an accurate depiction of what concerns Dutch foreign- and defense policy. The main reason for the omission of the UN is that the EU, as opposed to the UN, has



become an increasingly important actor in the field of European security since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

### **1.3 Structure**

The following elaborates on the set up of this study. Firstly, a theoretical framework is put forward that discusses existing literature regarding social constructivist theory and role theory. Theoretical concepts elaborated upon in that chapter will serve as a basis for discussion in the chapters thereafter. This thesis considers social constructivism and role theory as being highly applicable to understanding the motivations and objectives of Dutch foreign and defense policy in general. Social constructivist theory is used to analyze the functioning of Dutch foreign- and defense policy while addressing the question of how NATO and the EU fit in that framework. The emphasis of Dutch foreign- and defense policy on shared norms and values has contributed to the adoption of social constructivist theory for this study. Secondly, a content analysis of policy documents and interviews with Dutch policymakers will be presented. Thus, the empirical analysis of this thesis is divided into three sections. The first section is concerned with trends in NATO and EU development, thereby drawing upon interview excerpts and other forms of primary- and secondary data. The second section involves an empirical analysis of Dutch national role conceptions, as well as role prescriptions imposed by NATO and the EU. The third section combines elements from the second section and culminates into a discussion about Dutch role performance or foreign policy behavior. The concluding chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of what has been addressed throughout this thesis, and also pinpoints at minor methodological shortcomings that could be compensated for in future research.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

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This chapter is concerned with a theoretical elaboration upon social constructivism and role theory. Although social constructivism is generally regarded as one of the overarching (meta) theories within the field of International Relations, some of its aspects will be highlighted in the following to clarify the interconnectivity between the theoretical framework (social constructivism, role theory) and methodological set-up of this thesis (qualitative analysis, semi-structured interviewing). It should be remarked that the field of International Relations was confronted by a split that occurred in the 1950s. Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) and International Politics (IP) came to dominate IR, each with their respective points of emphasis. This thesis is concerned with the FPA perspective, which allows for an analysis of state behavior rather than relations between states (Kubálková: 16).

In order to provide a comprehensive understanding of what role theory entails, we need to scrutinize its foundations that are at the roots of social constructivism. It should be stressed that social constructivism is by no means the only theoretical perspective within IR that could be used to study (Dutch) foreign- and defense policy. Yet, social constructivism has frequently been regarded as better able to explain post-Cold War phenomena than do other International Relations theories. Again, the research itself required a consistent transitioning between the theoretical framework and methodology, which is why this particular school of thought was adopted.

### **2.1 Social constructivism**

Social constructivism and role theory share numerous similarities when it comes to their respective emphasis on identity. The rationale behind social constructivism lies in its ability to address the social construction of the world without abandoning the idea of scientific explanation as it is frequently constructed in the field of International Relations (Zehfuss: 340). Social constructivism is strongly embedded in concepts such as identity, discourse,

socialization and norm-creation. The theory has gained substantial popularity among scholars in the post-Cold War era, because neo-realist and neo-liberalist scholars failed to predict the collapse of the Soviet Union. As opposed to the latter schools of thought, social constructivism starts from the assumption that actors follow a *logic of appropriateness* rather than a *logic of consequentiality* (Rittberger: 105). Neo-realist and neo-liberalist scholars thus emphasize rational choice instead of normative beliefs regarding the making of foreign policy. While social constructivism is also concerned with other themes such as the meaning of anarchy and balance of power, this thesis mainly draws upon social constructivism for its utility in understanding the relationship between the identity of the state and its respective interests. At the core of state identity resides the proposition that an intersubjective set of norms and practices is essential for explaining International Relations: *“Meaningful behavior, or action, is possible only with an intersubjective context. Actors develop their relations with, and understandings of, others through the media of norms and practices. In the absence of norms, exercises of power, or actions, would be devoid of meaning. Constitutive norms define an identity by specifying the actions that will cause Others to recognize that identity and respond to it appropriately”* (Hopf: 173). This quotation clearly provides us with a preview to the section on role theory: norms (and norm-creation for that matter) can be interpreted here as essential features of national role conceptions, while Hopf’s ‘meaningful behavior’ or ‘action’ can be regarded as synonymous to Holsti’s conceptualization of role performance.<sup>2</sup> The notion of identity imposes a certain structure or rigidity on a world that otherwise would have been characterized by chaos and unpredictability. After all, identity fulfills a role in explaining the relative position of the Self, as well as the Other<sup>3</sup>. From a particular identity, states can identify their preferences and subsequent actions (or foreign policy behavior). Whereas neo-realist scholars advocate a perspective on identity that endows states with one single, constant meaning, social constructivist scholars assert that state identity is liable to historical, cultural, political and social context (Hopf: 176). This thesis seeks to

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<sup>2</sup> Holsti’s conceptualization of role performance is further elaborated upon in section 2.2.3.

<sup>3</sup> The concepts of the ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ are based on the assumption that individuals are the product of social interaction (symbolic interactionism as coined by George H. Mead).

find itself in accordance with the social constructivist argument, and therefore does not exclude the aforementioned contextual factors from the discussion.

Social constructivism however does not only prove to be useful when analyzing endogenous features of state identity, but also when shared identity among states is concerned. Social constructivist scholars for example maintain that common identity, rather than shared threat, best explains the post-Cold War alliance patterns (Riim: 35). As a conglomeration of states, different ways to attain security and prosperity are being considered in the same international context (that is: NATO, EU in this regard). Thus, social constructivism is used in this thesis not only to prepare the ground for a role theory analysis of Dutch foreign- and defense policy, but also to analyze post-Cold War NATO and EU developments from an ideational perspective.

## **2.2 Role theory**

Role theory focuses on the reasoning of national political elites, their understanding of the political system and the perceived role of their own states within this larger system. To a large extent, role theory is based on the analogy with a theatre, in which individual actors are supposed to behave according to what their role comprises in the script. Frequently, role theory has been regarded as a bridge between Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) and social constructivism within International Relations (Beneš: 1). Kalevi Holsti first introduced role theory in 1970 in his seminal article *National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy* (Holsti, 1970). Holsti's study was considered groundbreaking in the field of role theory, because his inductive approach allowed for an exploration of how foreign policy makers themselves understood and interpreted roles. Symbolic interactionism as developed by George H. Mead (1934) has been an important source of inspiration to Holsti and contemporary role theorists alike. Holsti discovered that many states do not adhere to and play a single role but rather a variety of roles, depending on their foreign policy objectives and vision. This thesis hypothesizes that the Netherlands is one of those states that operates in the European security arena by adopting a wide range of roles. In essence, role theorists argue that by providing a sense of

purpose to the state in the international community, national role conceptions endow the state with a sense of selfhood, identity (Beneš: 3). Chafetz has argued that without identity, *“states (similar to individuals) cannot order their environments and consequently find their social behavior intolerably difficult to understand and manage (Chafetz: 664).”*

Walker has build upon the work of Holsti, and argued that role theory finds its merits in the ability to provide descriptive, organizational and explanatory value for the study of foreign policy. In descriptive terms, role theory provides a rich vocabulary for categorizing beliefs, images and identity that individuals and groups develop for themselves and others, as well as the types of processes and structures that govern their deployment in particular situations.

Organizationally, role theory allows the analyst to focus on any level of analysis commonly used in the study of foreign policy, in addition to bridging those levels through a process-orientation that joins agents and structures. Lastly, the explanatory value of role theory may derive from its own middle range theories as well as harnessing its concepts to other theoretical approaches (Thies: 2-3). Of particular importance for this thesis is the descriptive value of role theory. However, its ability to be used alongside other theories (such as social constructivism) has also been an important factor in the decision to incorporate role theory in this research.

This thesis is grounded in the firm belief that national role conceptions and role prescriptions are inseparable, and constantly influence each other. The former emerges from endogenous, domestic conceptualizations about the role of the state, and the latter from exogenous assumptions held by organizations such as NATO and the EU. Foreign policy makers learn and are socialized into playing roles through interaction within both domestic and international institutional contexts (Barnett: 275). In some cases, this may lead to role competition. Role competition occurs when actions taken to honor one expectation compete in time and resources with actions necessary to meet another expectation. In such an event, national role conceptions and role prescriptions do not coincide but rather collide. Without a doubt, interaction in the EU and NATO environments can cause foreign policy makers to adapt their national role conceptions. This

possibility is being taken into account here. Although this study considers (1) 'national role conceptions', (2) 'role prescriptions' and (3) 'role performance', its focus lies primarily on (1) and (3), due to the interesting normative nature of national role conceptions and the interaction that occurs between (1) and (2) in (3). Moreover, this thesis acknowledges Nunes' assertion that national role conceptions tend to have a more stable nature than the other two notions due to its aspirational nature (Nunes: 34). The figure below depicts the relationship between the three theoretical concepts inherent to role theory and its respective contents. It should be regarded as the core component of this thesis:

<b>Foreign Policy roles</b>	<b>Role contents</b>
Role conceptions (Holsti 1970)	Aspirational and normative orientations
Role prescriptions (Walker 1987 and Putnam 1988)	Expected policy behaviour
Role incorporation/role performance (Holsti 1987, and Aggestam 1999)	Actual foreign policy behaviour

Figure 1: three main dimensions of role theory.

### 2.2.1 National role conceptions

Holsti's conceptualization of role theory has been introduced in the previous section of this thesis, but according to Krotz there is a need to revitalize the original theoretical foundations of role theory. Krotz's updated definition of national role conceptions is the following: *"National role conceptions are domestically shared understandings regarding the proper role and purpose of one's own state as a social collectivity in the international arena. As internal reference systems, they affect national interests and foreign policies"* (Krotz: 6). National role conceptions thus emanate from the combined interaction between history, memory and socialization. Essentially, they provide foreign policy makers with a 'road map' that can be used to simplify a political reality that is often complex (Goldstein & Keohane: 3). Typical national role conceptions would be *regional defender*, with the function of protecting other states in a defined area (Holsti: 246), or what this thesis refers to as *bridge builder*, in the case of the

Netherlands. Despite the fact that national role conceptions may be contested, they often endure over time. Beneš asserts that role theory only focuses on national political elites, but Krotz instead advocates the inclusion of additional groups: *“At a minimum, national role conceptions are shared among national political and administrative elites, across a variety of public-organizational units of the state, and by the relevant foreign policy community, which encompasses advisors, researchers, and academic and journalistic observers (Krotz: 6)”*. The national role conceptions created by policymakers and other experts alike serve a wide range of purposes. They make clear both to those officials and to others who and what ‘we’ are (the Self), who and what ‘our enemies’ are (the Other), in what ways ‘we’ are threatened by ‘them’, and how ‘we’ might best deal with those ‘threats’ (Weldes: 283). This strongly relates to Barnett’s conceptualization of identity; the understanding of oneself (or one’s state) in relationship to others (Barnett: 9). In practice, state officials can give meaning to their national role conceptions in various ways. Nunes has elaborated on such processes extensively:

*“When an actor stresses through discourse its importance as an ally, its state representatives tend to underline the country’s status position. References to the country’s position of ‘founding member’ of an organization or ‘faithful ally’ of a major state are voiced domestically and internationally, in order to perpetuate specific national role conceptions, to justify the maintenance or change of foreign policy roles and to define a certain type of international rank from which result rights and responsibilities” (Nunes: 48).*

It should be stressed however that institutions such as NATO and the EU can also take up role conceptions. Kaya has elaborated on how the concept of role conceptions can be used to analyze the emergence of the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP)<sup>4</sup> of the EU. A key aspect here is that the EU has set out a variety of obligations and responsibilities that need to be addressed through its foreign and security policy (also known as CFSP). In that sense, role conceptions focus on the subjective dimension of foreign policy making. According to Kaya,

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<sup>4</sup> Successor of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP); aimed at EU policymaking in the defense, military and crisis management realms.

researching role conceptions of the EU requires that particular attention should be paid to the EU's own conception and definition of its long-term responsibilities, obligations, functions and orientations as a foreign and security policy actor (Kaya: 109). Yet others, such as Flockhart, have analyzed NATO's role conceptions. In particular, Flockhart put forward a concrete example of how NATO's first Secretary General - Lord Ismay - perceived NATO's role:

*"NATO's role is to keep the Russians out, the Americans in and the Germans down."*

As is the case with many other examples, Flockhart finds that NATO has continuously been transforming as an organization through complex 'self', 'we' and 'other' definitions and perceptions of roles and relevant functional tasks (Flockhart: 5). Thus, 'national role conceptions' is a far from rigid concept and instead is subordinate to changes emerging in the domestic and/or international political spheres. Through complex socialization processes, actors are endowed with the ability to redefine their role conceptions. Moreover, (national) role conceptions are subject to the course of time. To that extent, Ignatieff made the following assertion: *"National identity is not fixed or stable: it is a continuing exercise in the fabrication of illusion and the elaboration of convenient fables about who 'we' are"* (Ignatieff: 18). Returning to Mead's conceptualization of 'Self' and 'Other', Flockhart depicts NATO as an agent of socialization, whereby it actively seeks to promote a specific set of norms and associated behavioral practices (Flockhart: 7). For that matter, relevant questions concerning (national) role conceptions are: "Who are we?" and "How are we perceived by others?" As opposed to the concepts of role prescriptions and role performance, (national) role conceptions are processes that take place within the individual actor (also known as 'identity construction processes'<sup>5</sup>). Although this research focuses solely on the dynamics pertaining Dutch national role conceptions, Flockhart and Kaya do provide useful insights for analyzing role conceptions at the international organizational level as well. It should be stressed that this study adopts Aggenstam's depiction of foreign policy makers. That is, foreign policy makers are agents that collectively represent the state as a social actor in foreign

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to: Simpson, B., Carroll, B., (2008). 'Reviewing 'Role' in Processes of Identity Construction. Organization. Vol. 15 Issue 29.



policy, and the state is the role-beholder or ego (Aggestam, 'The Boundary Position of the Foreign Policy Maker' section). In conclusion: national role conceptions allow the researcher to bridge the gap and capture the relationship between identity (construction) and foreign policy behavior. The following paragraph will elaborate on role prescriptions, a concept that is characterized by a top-down rather than a bottom-up approach.

### **2.2.2 Role prescriptions**

The second conceptualization of role theory to be used in this thesis concerns 'role prescriptions', which can be defined as follows: *"international policy guidelines with normative or functional orientations that correspond to the behavior expected by organizations from member states and involves agreement on international role aspirations"* (Holsti: 240). Holsti's definition of 'role prescriptions' is analogous to Aggenstam's definition of 'role expectations'. In addition to the concept of role prescriptions, Holsti has also come up with the notion of 'position', which refers to a system of role prescriptions. In the next section (2.2.3), a figure will depict this particular relationship. Sarbin and Allen have elaborated on the build-up of 'position' as follows: *"Position include well defined, and usually specialized, sets of functions and are based on explicit role conceptions, often drawn in the form of rules or laws describing appropriate conduct"* (Sarbin & Allen: 497-498). Yet, this thesis largely ignores the notion of 'position' because it is rather difficult to apply this term to nation-states. Nation-states after all are multi-functional collectivities, operating within innumerable sets of bilateral and multilateral relationships in a comparatively unorganized milieu, which makes them largely incompatible with the concept of position, as it has been developed in social enquiry (Holsti: 242). Holsti therefore introduced the notion of 'status', but this term suffers more from vagueness in the international context than does 'position' in the social context. The major issue with the notion of status is that it is not necessarily related to functions of foreign policy as developed in role conceptions and role prescriptions. Moreover, the influence of status on foreign policy behavior (role performance) has been investigated little.

Nunes then argues that role prescriptions emanating from international organizations such as NATO and the EU are particularly helpful for small member states, because it enhances their international activity (Nunes: 22). This assertion will be investigated further in the chapters that are concerned with the empirical analysis of this thesis. As opposed to national role conceptions, the external environment rather than the internal environment determines role prescriptions. It includes the structure and values of the international system (in this case NATO and the EU), general legal principles, multilateral treaties, world opinion and the expectations that other governments have of the state concerned (Holsti: 243-246). In the Cold War period for instance, NATO's role prescriptions had at its source the Soviet threat. Thus, NATO's *raison d'être* was shaped by the presence of what NATO considered to be the hostility of the Soviet Union. As can be inferred from figure 2, NATO produces exceptionally strong role prescriptions vis-à-vis its current- and prospective member states, and much less towards its partners. A possible explanation for this is that NATO's partners are not confined to NATO's sphere of influence, which problematizes the ability for NATO to exert strong role prescriptions on these individual states.

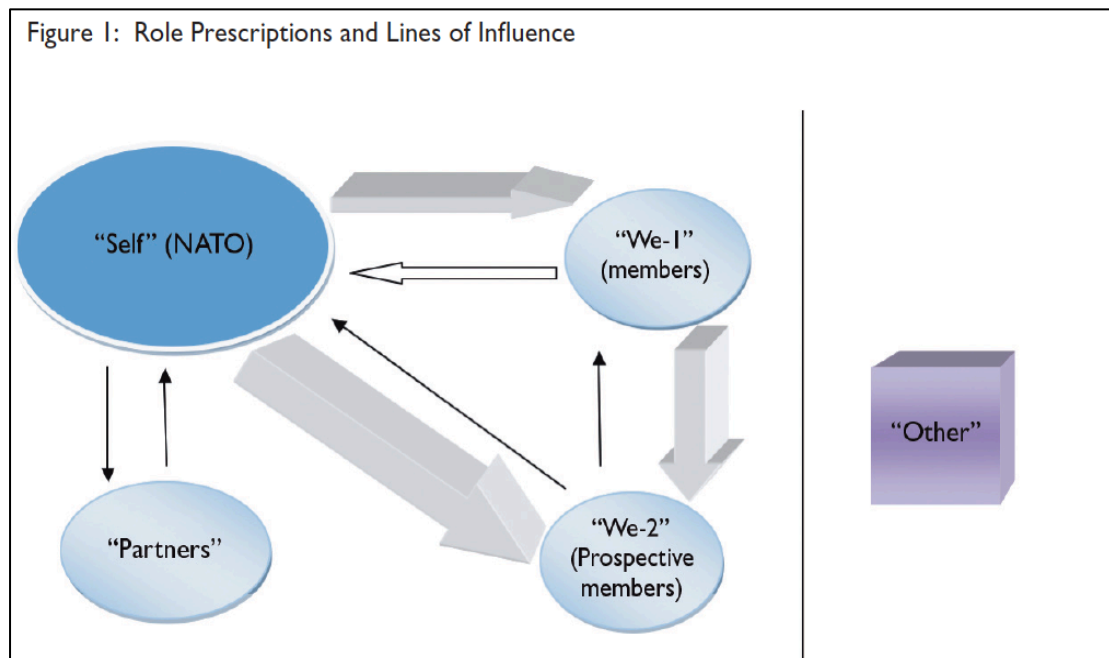
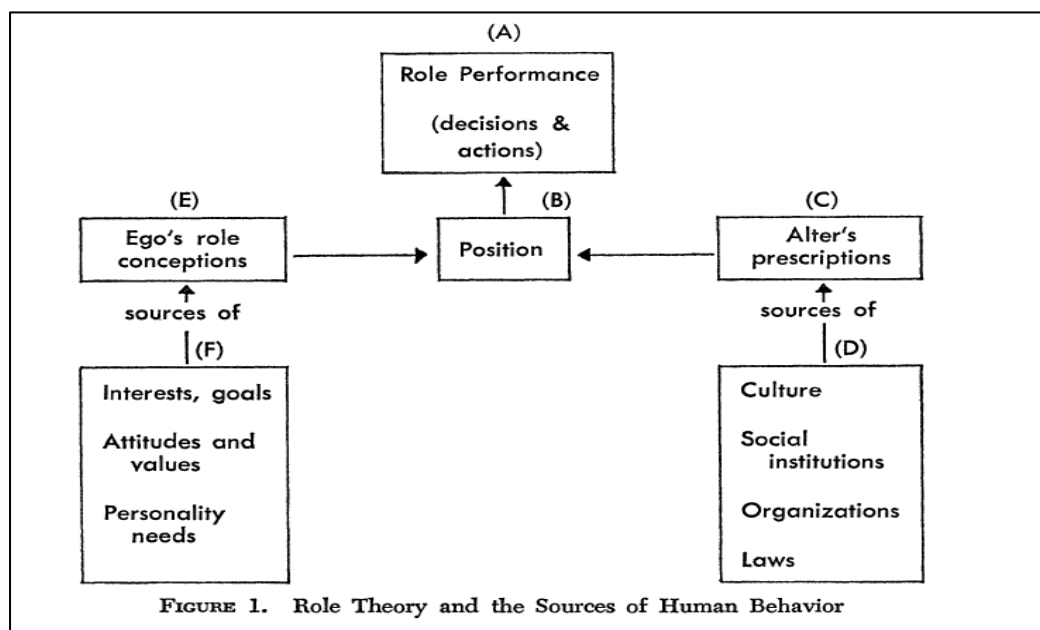


Figure 2: NATO role prescriptions and lines of influence (Flockhart: 8).

Although figure 2 also indicates that NATO's role prescriptions reach beyond the scope of current NATO member states, this thesis will only focus on how NATO prescribes particular roles to group 'We-I' (current member states). For obvious reasons, the Dutch case is paid particular attention to in this regard.

### 2.2.3 Role performance

The third and final conceptualization of role theory to be used in this thesis concerns 'role performance', or the manner in which the role is being played out in a specific situation (Holsti: 238). In specific, role performance allows the researcher to take a closer look at the decisions and actions that are being taken by foreign policy makers and other actors alike. Some scholars use the term 'role behavior' or 'role incorporation' instead of role performance. In general, then, role theory enables the researcher to investigate the interaction between role prescriptions and role performance. Of course, role conceptions provide a crucial starting point for the way in which a role will be performed. As has been discussed in the previous section, national role conceptions and role prescriptions converge in the notion of position, which culminates into actual foreign policy decisions and actions. Thus, role performance can only take place within a position. The following figure depicts the relationship between the three core elements of role theory, and shows how national role conceptions and role prescriptions come together in a particular position:



*Figure 3: Holsti's representation of role theory (Holsti: 240).*

Nunes has distinguished between internal and external operationalization of 'role performance' within foreign policy behavior. In internal political discourse, role performance is reflected in public justifications based on historical legacy, political culture and international identity. In the external environment, role performance mirrors preferential alliances and can offer an indication of change in international commitments (Nunes: 33). This thesis acknowledges and applies Nunes' conceptualization of role performance, in the sense that it seeks to investigate the reflective behavior of state actors, whenever role prescriptions are incorporated formally and informally into policy guidelines or policy behavior (Nunes: 33).

## **3. Methodology**

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This chapter outlines the methodological aspects of this thesis, and elaborates on data collection and recording (including policy documents and semi-structured interviews) and data analysis. Due to a strong reliance on interview data, this thesis is grounded in qualitative research. Although it is not claimed that semi-structured methods of interviewing necessarily yield the best results compared to other interviewing methods, it is believed that this particular format allows the interviewee to express their points of view in their own terms without being confined too much to a particular structure. On the other hand, semi-structured interviews provide the researcher with the ability to guide the course of the conversation at least to some degree. Reliance upon this particular method of interviewing therefore seemed most appropriate to answer the research question.

### **3.1 Data collection and recording**

The following two sections provide an indication of the documents used and interviews conducted, and in particular highlights the ways in which data collection and recording have taken place. Due to the fact that role theory was going to be applied to the interview data gathered (targeting policymaker's motivations and beliefs), special attention had to be paid to the phrasing of the interview questions. A copy of the interview framework (in Dutch) can be found in appendix A of this thesis.

#### **3.1.1 Policy documents**

An initial source of information that has been used for the completion of this thesis concerns official policy documents from the archives of the Dutch Second Chamber (parliament). These have carefully been selected according to their relevance in terms of subject matter, chronology and overall relevance. An overview of the selected documents can be found in the reference list and respective appendix (B) at the end of this thesis. All policy documents can be

found online, but are also available upon request<sup>6</sup>. One of the most important policy documents included in this thesis is the 'Internationale Veiligheidsstrategie' that was issued in 2013. It was considered to be the first national security strategy of the Netherlands from a foreign policy perspective (the 2010 'Strategy National Security' was aimed at identifying domestic security measures).

### **3.1.2 Semi-structured interviews**

To a considerable degree, this thesis relies on the information gathered during 9 interviews across a timespan of about one month (March 5<sup>th</sup> 2014 – April 8<sup>th</sup> 2014). Two of the interviews were group interviews, in the sense that two participants were interviewed simultaneously. Seven out of eleven participants were high-ranked military commanders and officers. Two participants were defense experts, and another two participants were parliamentary spokesman and former politician with an affiliation for foreign- and defense policy. All interviews were conducted in person, either at the participant's home or work location. Moreover, each individual participant was briefed beforehand by means of an interview invitation letter. An interview framework was used to guide the conversation. A copy can be found in appendix A of this thesis. Audio recording was used to allow for the most accurate description in this thesis of the information gathered. In case of academic concern, the audio files are available upon request.

In one instance, a logistical error prevented the possibility to record the interview. For that reason, I sent out an email to both participants on the same day to request approval of the interview summaries I had been forced to make. The general interview framework was also of good use in order to allow for a close comparison among the different interviews. It was decided to use a semi-structured interview framework because it is well suited to explore the perceptions and motivations of the respondents regarding complex foreign- and defense policy issues. Where necessary, additional questions were asked to allow for a clarification of answers.

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<sup>6</sup> Policy documents to be found at: [www.officiëlebekeendmakingen.nl](http://www.officiëlebekeendmakingen.nl).

On paper, the wording and sequence of the questions was standardized and exactly the same for each respondent. In practice however, not all questions were equally relevant to ask, due to the variety of professional backgrounds and experiences of the different respondents. Aside from asking questions to each respondent individually, statements from previous interviews were put forward to trigger opposing views across interviews. I have been as open as possible with my research goals and sought to instill trust and a common understanding about what I was hoping to achieve. For privacy reasons, the names of my respondents have not been assigned to particular quotes in this thesis. The quotes cited in this thesis are, at most, accompanied by that particular respondent's function within a particular organization. All quotations have been translated from Dutch to English, and the original excerpts can be found in appendix B.

### **3.2 Data analysis**

This thesis seeks to rely on a method of triangulation, which involves the repeated checking of different sources of information to one another (cross-verification). As indicated in the aforementioned, official policy documents, academic articles and interview data were compared to enhance the validity of the findings. The following three chapters have incorporated in them elements of both primary and secondary data. The interview data have been analyzed multiple times with the following procedure. First, all interview recordings were listened to while paying particular attention to Dutch national role conceptions. Useful quotations were written down. Role prescriptions and role performance were analyzed in a similar manner. Finally, the interview recordings were checked for useful data regarding chapter 4. In all cases, particular attention was paid to quotations that involved personal experiences of Dutch policymakers, as well as their motivations for conducting a particular foreign- and defense policy. Lastly, data gathered for chapters 4 and 5 were compared in chapter 6 in order to distil potential clashes between national role conceptions and role prescriptions in the discussion about role performance.

## 4. Defense in Europe: NATO and the EU

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### 4.1 The soft power-hard power divide

This chapter evolves around a social constructivist analysis of the development of NATO and the EU as two institutions capable of fulfilling European security and defense matters. Therefore, the focus here is on the identities and roles of both institutions, as well as threat perception and the avoidance of duplication between NATO and EU capabilities. It should be stressed however that the perspective taken in this chapter is in accordance with Meyer and Strickmann's thesis, namely that linking material and ideational factors are essential for explaining the development of both NATO and the EU's security and defense policy (Meyer & Strickmann: 61). This is because, as has been demonstrated by Flockhart in the case of NATO, the institution in question had to contend with two 'Selves': one that was based on a material 'Other' – the Soviet Union – and the 'significant we', which was conceptualized as 'the free world'. Although with different degrees of emphasis, these two identities have coexisted in the post-WWII period and show that material and ideational factors are ultimately intertwined (Flockhart: 12). Moreover, this thesis is grounded in the belief that EU has made significant steps in the ideational domain, while NATO has remained the preferred institution for the implementation of *hard power*. This however has never been at the expense of NATO's position as a global and European security provider.

In general, the social constructivist perspective purports that common identity rather than shared threat has best been able to explain post-Cold War alliance policy patterns (Riim: 35). Indeed, the NATO alliance was forced to undergo an identity transformation after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Throughout the 1990s, NATO has repeatedly published so-called Strategic Concepts to reinforce its identity and purpose. In contrast to what many realist scholars had predicted, the end of the Cold War did not cause NATO to lose its *raison d'être*. Flockhart pointed out that NATO had to engage in urgent role adaptation if it was to stay in



business (Flockhart, 13). Indeed, NATO swiftly redefined its role as a security actor in 1991:

*“The new environment does not change the purpose or security functions of the Alliance, but rather underlines their enduring validity...The risks to Allied security that remain are multi-faceted in nature and multidirectional, which makes them hard to predict and assess...Risks may arise from the serious economic, social and political difficulties, including ethnic rivalries and territorial disputes, which are faced by many countries in Central and Eastern Europe”* (Riim: 35).

Eight years later, NATO’s new Strategic Concept underlined the importance of the Alliance in consolidating and preserving the positive changes of the past by addressing the NATO intervention to stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. Over the past decade, NATO has increasingly been regarded by its (new, Eastern European) member states not just as a military alliance, but as an institution that strongly represents Western ideals and principles. Most fundamentally, and along these lines, NATO has witnessed a transformation from a defensive military alliance to some sort of peacekeeping organization and a principal exporter of Western (liberal) values.

Some scholars have observed that in recent years, and through the emergence of the EU as a security actor, NATO has been faced by a competitor that challenges its monopoly as the provider of European security. This thesis will present a view that does not agree with that proposition, let alone the statement made that the EU could indeed outperform NATO, as a consequence of which a significant reconfiguration of the structure of trans-Atlantic relations would take place. Both institutions have their unique set of features and role to play, and in accordance with the general view of Dutch policymakers, this thesis puts forward the Dutch stance that duplication of NATO capabilities by the EU should be avoided at all costs. Following Flockhart’s conceptualization of NATO as an agent of socialization, this thesis adopts that same definition for the EU as an institution. Both organizations actively promote a specific norm set and associated behavioral practices. As such, both have become socializing agents and norm

leaders that prescribe roles to their member states (Flockhart: 7). In the case of NATO, such socialization process became embedded in structures such as the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NAAC) and Partnership for Peace (PfP). In the first decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO took its role as an agent of socialization extremely seriously. Characteristic of post-Cold War NATO is that it assumed responsibility for conflict prevention and civilian crisis management.

In the years following NATO's 1999 Strategic Concept, the organization's Self-identity was repeatedly damaged by weak military cooperation between Europe and the United States in the Kosovo air campaign, followed by 9/11 and the unilateral decision of the United States to intervene in Afghanistan. For that reason, NATO had been in continuous crisis for four years in 2003 over a whole range of issues.

The post-Cold War climate meant not only for NATO but also for the EU that it could become a more independent actor in the international system. The gradual process of European integration has caused the EU to witness a simultaneous increase in its foreign activities. Through the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which was established under the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, the EU has become a more coherent institution that would allow its member states to act collectively concerning defense matters. Following Smith, this chapter investigates the institutionalization of the EU as a global security actor from a social constructivist perspective by analyzing social interaction and discourse practices (Smith: 122). Similar to the role theory-perspective taken in the next chapters, this chapter emphasizes the particular views that actors within the framework of CFSP hold of the identity of the EU as a global security actor. The argument put forward here is in congruence with the claim made by Berenskoetter and Giegerich, namely that individual member states (e.g. the Netherlands) have increasingly sought to invest in the EU as an international security institution *"because it enables states to gain (and sustain) ontological security by negotiating a shared sense of international order with friends"* (Berenskoetter & Giegerich: 410). Following several occasions in which the

United States decided to unilaterally intervene without consulting NATO allies, several large European member states (most notably Germany and France) took up initiative to strengthen the EU as a viable alternative to NATO in the security realm. This thesis argues that the proposition that investments in the CFSP were done in order to curtail U.S. hegemony in the international system, does not hold. On the contrary, most member states such as the Netherlands have advocated the strengthening of the EU as a security actor in order to enhance trans-Atlantic relations. To that extent, Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Jaap de Hoop Scheffer remarked the following back in 2003:

*'Moreover, European cooperation can strengthen the trans-Atlantic ties and this should not lead to a weakening. A more equal way of burden sharing between Europe and the United States will enhance the trans-Atlantic relationship.'* **(1)**  
(Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Vergaderjaar 2002-2003, 21 501-02, nr. 485, 18 juni 2003.)

In the remainder of that particular government document, further attention was being paid to a deepening of the cooperation and coordination between both organizations. With a European Union security framework increasingly taking shape, the question of how to avoid procedural duplication has become more imminent. Not in the least part because both NATO and the EU share an increasingly overlapping array of member states due to eastward expansion in the past twenty years. From a social constructivist perspective, an important distinction is to be observed when comparing the nature of enlargement for both institutions. Due to the existence of a European Union' *acquis communautaire*, EU enlargement can better be explained by normative considerations that evolve around concepts such as democracy and liberty. In practical terms, any nation in Europe upholding (Western) values of democracy could become part of the EU. NATO on the other hand does not possess anything like an *acquis communautaire*, because the Cold War environment did not allow such formal arrangements for enlargement. Especially for NATO as being a defense and security alliance, the East has been an important reference point for the social construction of Western Europe (Fierke & Wiener: 723).

In a globalized world characterized by a diffusion of conflicts and unconventional forms of violence, the call for a coherent European security strategy had become more concrete in the early 2000s. The European Security Strategy of 2003 emphasized the need for not only military and civil capabilities, but also a pool of sufficiently shared norms, ideas and beliefs regarding the means and ends of defense policy (Meyer: 524). Such a constructivist conceptualization has been referred to as 'strategic culture', or a reflection of common interests and views of the world (Rynning: 479).

The question of whether NATO and the EU should be considered competitors in providing security for the European continent remains a topic of debate. However, social constructivism (and role theory for that matter), were not so much incorporated in this research to present an answer to that question. Rather, both theories are being used to accentuate the particular features of both organizations; for instance NATO's focus on hard power and the EU's preference for exerting soft power. Moreover, social constructivism in particular has proven to be useful in explaining NATO's transformation from an alliance focused on collective defense to one based on a common identity. The merits of social constructivism have also been apparent in clarifying the nature of European Union expansion towards Eastern Europe (based on the *acquis communautaire*). In conclusion, this chapter has sought to set the stage for the empirical analysis that follows in the next chapters. To that extent, and in order to be able to answer the research question, the implementation of role theory-concepts is required.

## 5. Do they punch above their weight?

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This chapter addresses Dutch national role conceptions and role prescriptions by drawing upon empirical data gathered from the interviews, as well as Second Chamber documents and other policy documents relevant for discussion. Due to the fact that the section on role prescriptions is somewhat more concise, it was decided to discuss both ‘pillars’ in the same chapter. Lastly, this chapter aims to provide an integrated perspective through the combination of theoretical understandings and quotations. If possible, the reader is encouraged to read the (more accurate) Dutch translations that can be found in Appendix B.

### 5.1 The ideal sparring partner

This section on Dutch national role conceptions specifically aims to highlight the following issues: friction between Dutch trans-Atlantic traditions on the one hand, and increased participation in European Union defense initiatives on the other; the Dutch position within NATO and the EU; the interests and objectives that can be derived from Dutch national role conceptions; and lastly threats towards the stability of Dutch national role conceptions (with a particular focus on budget cuts in relation to notions such as ‘faithful ally’). The following quotation serves as an entry point to this discussion, by pinpointing at one of the most important characteristics of Dutch foreign- and defense policy in the last two decades: its drive to harmonize a trans-Atlantic orientation with an emerging interest in European Union defense matters:

*I think that in the ‘80s and ‘90s, we were more oriented towards Atlanticism than nowadays. But of course that also has to do with the fact that militarily speaking, the EU only started doing something in 2001 when the EUMS<sup>7</sup> was established. Now the Netherlands also sees a possibility to participate in a number of operations via the EU, and particularly in the field of soft treatment, the comprehensive approach. So not purely militarily, but also the entire spectrum of*

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<sup>7</sup> EUMS: European Union Military Staff.

*other options that are at our disposal. However, the effect is more difficult to measure. And I think that the Netherlands is betting more on that horse these days. But on the other hand, we are still a loyal ally - at least that is what we pretend to be - within NATO. You see that the Netherlands tries to be a bridge country in Europe apart from the Atlantic aspect. The Netherlands wants to be seen as a middle-sized country rather than a small country. That is being played out on both boards.'* (2) (Employee Ministry of Defense, International Military Cooperation (IMS), 5<sup>th</sup> March 2014).

In the aforementioned, Goldstein and Keohane's conceptualization of national role conceptions providing policy makers with a 'roadmap' is clearly visible. Throughout the 1990s, when the defense branch of the EU was still being developed, the Netherlands was given a clear indication of which 'route' to follow. In the 2000s, the emergence of European defense capabilities caused Dutch policy makers to strike a better balance between NATO and the EU. The emphasis of the European Union on soft power rather than hard power seems to appeal to Dutch politicians and military officials, and it conforms to their perceived understanding of the Dutch role within NATO and the EU. The EU's 'comprehensive approach' is a model akin the Dutch 3D-approach (to be elaborated upon), whereby different ministries produce a joint action plan to allow for encompassing and durable peacekeeping missions. Dutch policymakers have come to realize that conflicts cannot only be solved through military means, but that they also require the involvement of other fields of expertise. The following excerpt from a Second Chamber document indicates the strong relationship between Dutch identity as perceived by policymakers and the 'roadmap' emanating from this particular understanding:

*'The Dutch reference points are the following. For the Netherlands, NATO remains the cornerstone of our security and the central organization in which we have organized our security. NATO is also the preferred institution for managing more demanding peacekeeping operations. At the same time, the European Union should take more responsibility for security and stability in Europe, while maintaining the trans-Atlantic ties. It would not be beneficial if the EU started to establish large*

*military structures or would develop its own military capabilities that could then duplicate NATO capabilities. Considering the fact that the Netherlands prefers to operate in disaster-management operations within the NATO-alliance, and that if this would turn out to be impossible, the Netherlands prefers an EU-led operation that makes use of NATO capabilities, in which decisionmaking needs to take place in full transparency, it can be observed that the option of an European operation without NATO support according to the Cabinet is feasible especially in the case of small-scale operations.’ (3) (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Vergaderjaar 1999-2000, 24 128, nr. 4, 29 oktober 1999.)*

In the same document, Dutch policymakers justify their engagement in strengthening EU defense by referring to three particular non-military means that can be used to combat conflict situations. The following quotation highlights the remarkable ‘symbiosis’ that exists between Dutch and EU role conceptions in conducting what has been referred to below as ‘disaster-management’:

*‘European disaster-management operations without the use of NATO capabilities should never harm the trans-Atlantic ties. For the EU to be able to act effectively, it needs a structure and decision-making mechanism, through which it can truly lead military missions. Moreover, disaster-management also involves non-military means (political, economic, humanitarian). The strength of the EU lies precisely in this field of expertise, to which in the future military means can be added. The Netherlands therefore actively engages itself in strengthening the capacity of the EU to also deploy non-military means in disaster-management operations.’ (Ibid.) (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Vergaderjaar 1999-2000, 24 128, nr. 4, 29 oktober 1999.)*

This modest reorientation of the Netherlands towards the EU has simultaneously demanded continuous and unconditional support for NATO. As such, clear national role conceptions that can be inferred from the quote above are ‘faithful ally’ and what this thesis refers to as ‘bridge builder’. Essentially, these notions have barely been contested throughout (roughly) the past 25 years and continue to bear strong presence within Dutch foreign- and defense policy. The Second

Chamber document below indicates that, although significant improvements were made regarding the cooperation between NATO and the EU since 1999, widespread political will was considered essential for further progress. Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, saw an opportunity for the Netherlands to portray the Netherlands as a 'faithful ally' and 'credible partner' that would be actively engaged in strengthening the EU. Thus, an environment was apparent in which Dutch national role conceptions could flourish extensively:

*'The Dutch government has actively contributed to the development of the Berlin-plus arrangement<sup>8</sup>. Partially because of the EU-NATO arrangement, the Common Security and Defense Policy has become fully operational. The EU has successfully initiated the first military peacekeeping operation in Macedonia, and good arrangements were made concerning the cooperation between the EU and NATO. Furthermore it should be noted that the success of the CSDP does not only depend on the right institutional arrangements. At least as important, if not more important, is that political will needs to be created between the different member states to create agreement. The Netherlands regards the trans-Atlantic alliance, embodied in the various forums of EU-U.S. consultation and particularly focused on security issues, as a tool to work according to a common agenda.'* **(4)** (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Vergaderjaar 2002-2003, 21 501-02, nr. 485, 18 juni 2003).

However, the debate of how changing NATO-EU dynamics influences Dutch national role conceptions and vice versa is not the only issue at hand. Another interesting trait of Dutch national role conceptions concerns the perceived understanding of Dutch policymakers about the position of the Netherlands within NATO and the EU. In particular, the question of whether the Netherlands should consider itself to be the smallest of the largest (states), or the largest of the smallest (states), continues to be a vibrant topic of discussion:

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<sup>8</sup> The Berlin-Plus Agreement refers to a comprehensive package of arrangements finalized in 2003 between NATO and the EU that allows the EU to make use of NATO assets and capabilities for EU-led crisis management operations (EEAS, 2014).



*'The Netherlands is a small country, but it is the largest of the smallest. Or the smallest of the largest. If you want to participate with the large ones, then you are not quite participating or you have to make an enormous contribution. In the age of Uruzgan we fully participated. We were part of the top-team. Regularly it was being remarked that we were performing in the Champions League, and that was true indeed. You get the information, and you were taken more seriously. With that you also get power. Political power, and that somehow that will eventually translate into economic power and economic profit. Those are important events at play. The same holds when now you are the larger one of the smallest, then you can try to guide the smaller ones, but you can also say I am going to sit on that bridge. Right in the middle. If you do that, you are a guiding country for the smaller ones, and a bridge country for the larger ones. That is a very interesting position, one that is very profitable to exploit. Some would call it opportunistic, others refer to it as Dutch merchant trade. It is a very good position. And at the same time we of course want to remain a fully trustworthy ally. That middle ground is a wonderful position to be in.'* **(5)** (Employee Ministry of Defense, International Military Cooperation (IMS), 5<sup>th</sup> March 2014).

Clearly, Dutch policy makers are hesitant towards deciding between either one or the other extreme, and as such prefer to speak of 'sitting on the bridge'. The ability to economically and politically profit from a position in the middle is something that is close to what best defines Dutch national role conceptions. Although over the past 25 years some disruptions have taken place with regard to Dutch prominence within (most notably) NATO and the EU, that middle ground position has been solidly engrained in the minds of policymakers and remained fairly stable over time. In specific, the Dutch retreat from Afghanistan in 2010 heavily affected the perspective of allied member states on the role of the Netherlands. The Netherlands has always voiced its position as a 'faithful ally' both domestically and internationally, and for that reason other Western countries could no longer relate Dutch role performance to Dutch national role conceptions. For reasons that will be elaborated upon later in this section, the

Netherlands lately seems to have emerged as a regional leader within Europe concerning defense:

*'The Netherlands as a guiding country and bridge country, that is definitely something that has become quite important over the past ten years.'* **(6)**

(Employee Ministry of Defense, International Military Cooperation (IMS), 5<sup>th</sup> March 2014).

The core foundations of such national role conceptions ('guiding country', 'bridge country') are - among others - personal relations and content. For Dutch policymakers, their perceived understanding of the Netherlands being a guiding country and bridge country could only be sustained through the maintainance of these two foundations. In the case of Afghanistan, the Dutch clearly undermined this first core foundation by announcing their military retreat in 2009. In general however, the Netherlands has been keen to preserve relations with other states and prioritize substantive discussions. Although alterations in content matter can influence personal relations with other states and international organizations, the Dutch case proves that stability should be considered the main paradigm:

*'Personal relations and content: when you have that, then you can mean a whole lot (to the EU). And the Netherlands is simply good at that.'* **(7)** (High-ranking military commander, Ministry of Defense, March 9<sup>th</sup> 2014).

Later on in that same interview, another national role conception was added to the discussion, namely that of 'partner for dialogue':

*'By a majority of the countries, the Netherlands is being experienced as a good and rational partner for dialogue. In that sense I experienced few bad things. We could always join discussions and meetings. They always wanted to listen to us.'* **(8)** (High-ranking military commander, Ministry of Defense, March 9<sup>th</sup> 2014).

Of course, personal relations are vital for a country the size of the Netherlands to be able to exert influence in international organizations such as NATO and the EU. After all, as has been indicated by means of the previous quotation, being able to join discussions means having a say over which political and military strategies to pursue.

In the theoretical framework, Krotz posited that national role conceptions should be understood as “*domestically shared understandings regarding the proper role and purpose of one’s own state as a social collectivity in the international arena*” (Krotz: 6). The next quote exemplifies precisely why Dutch national role conceptions increasingly have been contested over the past decade. Specifically, there is a split to be recognized between the perceived role of the Netherlands from the perspective of policy makers, and that of the Dutch public. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have fuelled public disagreement with Dutch involvement in these wars, and increasingly Dutch society is disentangling itself from the foreign policy debate. Dutch national role conceptions from the perspective of policy makers are therefore bound to be reinforced, because public disinterest increasingly allows policy makers to have a free hand in deciding the course of Dutch foreign and defense policy:

*‘The Netherlands simply tries to be a smart player. The merchant that operates in the EU and NATO and sees where it can get its share. That has to do with that role. A few smaller countries do look up towards the Netherlands, and the larger countries may look down upon the Netherlands. You can make good use of that. Then however you need to have a policy as being the Netherlands about how to go make use of that. However in the Netherlands, and especially among the general public, foreign policy is not a very popular topic. Society does not really care, and because of that the government largely has a free hand in deciding how they want to cope with that.’ (9)* (High-ranking military commander, Ministry of Defense, March 9<sup>th</sup> 2014).

The aforementioned national role conceptions should however by no means be regarded as novel to the practice of Dutch foreign and defense policy. On the contrary, they have been present for centuries already:

*'I would say myself that that is a role that we have been playing for centuries already. Just by finding the middle ground. It also has something to do with our way of working. We have always been merchants, and we are a small country, so we know how to play the diplomatic game. Even if it were just to remain standing. Just by making sure that we have that function at our disposal, we take care of our own independence.'* **(10)** (Parliamentary spokesman for Defense, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2014).

This thesis furthermore asserts that the national role conception of the Netherlands as a 'guiding country' has gained more prominence in the past decade due to pan-European budget cuts on defense spending. In recent years, the Netherlands has taken up a prominent position in the field of multilateral cooperation between smaller NATO and EU member states. The European Air Transport Command (EATC) initiative in Eindhoven for instance, has actively contributed towards supporting the French intervention in Mali:

*'Air-to-air refueling (AAR) at the European Air Transport Command in Eindhoven is a Dutch initiative, together with a few other countries. And that is being regarded as a model that we should apply to more issues.'* **(11)** (EU-delegate Ministry of Defense, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2014).

Dutch policy makers frequently seem to emphasize Dutch military superiority in terms of capabilities and effectiveness compared to its neighbouring (particularly Benelux) countries. This thesis observes that there is a possible interaction between how Dutch policymakers have coped with budget cuts on defense vis-à-vis other member states, and their perception of superiority and pre-supposed duty to guide the small(er) countries. Of course, Dutch policymakers themselves are keen to refer to statistical research to prove their point:

*'The rounds of budget cuts of the past few years have caused an enormous efficiency accomplishment, but also in terms of effectiveness. Our armed forces are one of the most efficient armies in the world. Research by McKinsey has shown that a few years ago.'* **(12)** (Parliamentary spokesman for Defense, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2014)

When national role conceptions are concerned, Dutch policymakers do not only like to highlight the fact that the Netherlands has relatively solidly been coping with budget cuts, but also their ability to connect different countries through speaking other European languages. As such, the ability to speak multiple languages is considered indispensable for the creation of particular Dutch national role conceptions, and most notably that of 'bridge builder':

*'We have always been oriented towards the rest of the world. Therefore, we Dutchmen should very well understand that our role could be that we can connect other countries with one another. Already by means of speaking our languages.'* **(13)** (High-ranking military commander, Ministry of Defense, March 9<sup>th</sup> 2014).

As we have seen, next to national role conceptions such as 'faithful ally' and 'bridge country', Dutch policymakers frequently like to refer to the Netherlands as a 'credible partner' that welcomes dialogue and diplomacy. Deeply engrained in their internal reference systems is the idea that despite being a small country, the Netherlands should not act as a free rider within NATO and the EU. This is important, because avoiding free-ridership will ensure territorial integrity of the Netherlands through collective approaches of securing allied territory within NATO. Therefore, with rights come responsibilities:

*'The Netherlands was very much aware of the fact that after WWII we made the decision to approach our security in a collective manner. As a small country, we cannot face all threats by ourselves. We can only do that in the form of alliances. Then you contribute to a larger family. You also pay your contribution. Together you act in order to ensure safety in this part of the world as well. For the Netherlands it is essential to be seen as a credible partner within that international*

*family, which does not act as a free rider. You will also have to be prepared to take part in more risky operations. And especially when you are a small but very rich country. With wealth also comes taking responsibility.'* **(14)** (High-ranking military commander, Ministry of Defense, March 12<sup>th</sup> 2014).

The following excerpt from a Second Chamber document shows how national role conceptions define particular interests (e.g. ensuring territorial integrity), which subsequently allows the Netherlands to reinforce these national role conceptions by committing Dutch troops to international organizations such as NATO and the EU (in the form of EU Battle Groups):

*'NATO safeguards the territorial integrity of the Netherlands. Also the WEU-Treaty contains a clause for military assistance. The close cooperation with the United States and Canada remains the cornerstone of Dutch security policy. The majority of the Dutch armed forces are part of the integrated military structure of NATO. The Netherlands will actively seek possibilities for improving the European dimension of Defense Capability Initiative (DCI).'* **(15)** (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Vergaderjaar 1999-2000, 26 900, nr. 2.).

However, the picture painted that was previously explained is unfortunately not as bright as Dutch policymakers would like the general public to believe. The Netherlands has found itself less willing to invest in security for the following reasons: a lack of existential threats (after the collapse of the Soviet Union), a 67-year history of peace within Dutch borders, and an apparent familiarization with the idea that NATO allies will help out to rescue 'us' in case of emergency (Drent: 54). While military officials have tended to stress the need for collective defense and territorial integrity in constructing their national role conceptions, politicians on the other hand put more emphasis on the 'hard' facts concerning wealth generation and subsequently link that to the appropriate means to defend such wealth:

*'In my perception I would prefer the armed forces to be able to possess a budget of 2% of the GNP. Not only because the armed forces need it, but also because you*

*show that internationally speaking you contribute. That you are ready to pay the price for security, just as the insurance fee for our wealth. We live with nearly 17 million people on 40.000 square kilometers of land. We have 3.8 trillion worth of property, with which we generate 610 billion euros of turnover. That is quite a lot. There are hijackers out there and you need to prevent that with severe diplomatic efforts, but also with possible methods of punishment. When you have that stick, then usually you don't need to use it. When people know you are able to, they will refrain from attacking you. Therefore I think that with such a list of figures, an appropriate and capable combination of armed forces is obligatory.'* **(16)**  
(Parliamentary spokesman for Defense, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2014).

Yet, not only domestic factors concerning budget cuts and the need to protect the territorial integrity of the Netherlands have had a defining impact on the construction of Dutch national role conceptions. Since the end of the Cold War, the Netherlands has participated in various peacekeeping- and peace enforcing missions. In particular, the disastrous sequence of events following Dutch involvement in protecting the UN *safe haven* in Srebrenica (1995) would mark foreign- and defense policy for years to come. Under the watchful eye of Dutch UN peacekeeping forces, the Bosnian-Serb army massacred thousands of unarmed Muslim men. It was considered a Dutch national trauma and even caused the Dutch cabinet to resign when the critical NIOD<sup>9</sup> report on Srebrenica was published. Subsequently, a *'toetsingskader'* or framework of criteria to prevent future peacekeeping disasters similar to Srebrenica was established. Although this thesis presupposed that Srebrenica has had a tremendous impact on Dutch national role conceptions, one of the interviewees remarked that a divide should be made concerning this issue between the understandings of the military and the political collective:

*'I think that especially the Srebrenica trauma has been more impactful for the political world rather than the military. Since Srebrenica we have already operated in so many missions that were characterized by severe violence, that we have managed to show that we are able to handle such missions. That we were able to*

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<sup>9</sup> NIOD: Netherlands Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

*cope with the aftermath of the Srebrenica trauma. Only after Srebrenica we have become more mature. Before that we participated in peacekeeping missions, but with a strong emphasis on 'constructing safety measures', to make sure we would not be faced with many casualties. We have only become more aware of the dangers in Iraq. That is where we were faced with the first lethal victims of hostile violence. In Afghanistan we have thoroughly shown that we are able to finish the job properly. We were getting unconditional support from the political collective in the Netherlands.'* (17) (EU-delegate Ministry of Defense, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2014).

This section has sought to indicate how Dutch national role conceptions have been defined and redefined since 1990. Although role theory suggests that national role conceptions remain fairly stable over time, previous quotations have shown that external forces exert pressure on these national role conceptions, which then cause Dutch policymakers to reinterpret previous understandings of what the Dutch role within NATO and the EU entails. In order to identify the exact nature of such forces, we need to take a closer look at role prescriptions issued by NATO and the EU.

## **5.2 Two European heavyweight divisions?**

As opposed to national role conceptions, role prescriptions are more difficult to concretize due to the fact that it concerns international policy guidelines that, although emanating from NATO and the EU, have been established collectively by the member states themselves. Exogenous forces influencing the making of foreign and defense policy are more apparent in the case of role prescriptions. As indicated in the theoretical framework, role prescriptions involve international rules or laws describing appropriate rules of conduct. Both for NATO and the EU, this means in practice that guidelines are established regarding the expected contributions of member states towards these organizations. Clearly, two 'laws of conduct' dominate within NATO and the EU, namely those of 'pooling' and 'sharing'.



As has been discussed in previous sections, national budget cuts on defense have threatened the collective defense capabilities of both NATO and the EU. Pooling and sharing essentially rely on three components, and have been defined by Faleg and Giovannini as follows: “pooling of procurement of weapons and services, or joint research facilities; sharing through the partial or total integration of force structures such as training facilities, or setting up joint units; and specialization” (Faleg & Giovannini: 2). In none of the interviews any indication could be observed that the Netherlands has been prescribed a role considerably distinct from other member states within NATO and the EU. On the contrary, NATO and the EU assess the individual capabilities of each member state, and then match current and future needs with the means at their disposal:

*‘All allied member states are being told: we are going to set up this mission, what can you contribute to it? When it comes to the means that NATO wants to possess collectively, and in which there are certainly capability-gaps, that’s where NATO has the so-called NATO Defense Planning Process (NDPP). By means of that they inspect: which means do we need, which means do we have, and which countries need to purchase which means? They ask to specific countries, we expect you to take up this particular job. Whether a country follows that order is a different story. Between the lines countries look at one another’s activities, something may be expected of everybody. What are we then talking about? That involves burden-sharing, do you contribute to missions in a realistic manner? And risk-sharing, are you the free rider or are you prepared to suffer losses and pain as a country? That is essential for the perception that others have of you. At this moment we are definitely not good at that. We went out of Uruzgan because of which we had to take up various additional measures. We are participating well in missions such as Ocean Shield<sup>10</sup>. But the risk-sharing; that clock keeps ticking. In the sense that, why are you no longer present at a particular place?’ (18) (Employee Ministry of Defense, International Military Cooperation (IMS), 5<sup>th</sup> March 2014).*

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<sup>10</sup> Operation Ocean Shield: NATO’s counter piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden and off the Horn of Africa.

Clearly, a lack of participation in one NATO or EU mission forces a member state to compensate in one way or another. The pullout of Afghanistan had considerable consequences for the role that was initially prescribed to the Netherlands within these institutions. From being one of the lead-nations in Afghanistan, the Netherlands was degraded to an average partner for dialogue that no longer distinguished itself through displaying full commitment to the operation:

*'In the initial stage, a ranking is being established that tells which country can speak at which point in time. When it was about Afghanistan, or about Pakistan or whatever, then the Netherlands was always one of the first five, or six to speak. Because everybody had respect for what we did in Afghanistan. We had announced that we were leaving Uruzgan, we had not even decided yet, and when it concerns Afghanistan our Minister and Prime-Minister can speak as number twenty or twenty-one. You are leaving? Fine, lower in the ranking.'* **(19)** (High-ranking military commander, Ministry of Defense, March 9<sup>th</sup> 2014).

Apart from this temporary disruption in the way other governments and institutions such as NATO and the EU view the Netherlands, the general experiences of policymakers appear to show a relatively high degree of appreciation among external actors concerning the Dutch role and the way the Netherlands fulfills that role:

*'In those two communities, the Netherlands is being regarded as a critical but high quality partner for dialogue. The Netherlands has a relatively pragmatic approach. We are not really idealists. We play the country that always points fingers, but at the end of the day, then there is pragmatism at play. That is the merchant that thrives in us. And countries do appreciate that, because you can do business with such countries. You can have diplomatic communication with such countries. The Dutch are also creative concerning their solutions. That is how external actors view the Netherlands. As a critical member, but also one that comes up with good ideas.'* **(20)** (High-ranking military commander, Ministry of Defense, March 9<sup>th</sup> 2014).

And indeed, the Netherlands has been considered by various NATO (and EU) member states as an innovative partner. The 3D-concept of 'diplomacy', 'defense' and 'development', for instance, was considered successful and originated as a Dutch-Canadian initiative. 3D was aimed at providing an encompassing strategy for tackling the security dilemmas in Afghanistan by calling upon different ministerial agencies, ranging from justice to development cooperation. Yet, NATO as an overarching institution has had limited impact on the roles that individual member states were playing in their respective provinces in Afghanistan:

*'NATO did not succeed in establishing a NATO 3D-concept. The NATO-commander used to complain about the fact that he could never issue general guidelines in order for all member states to follow the same instructions. What all those countries (USA, Canada, UK, Netherlands) did as lead-nations in their province was useful, but it was annoying nonetheless that we all imposed our national perspectives upon each of the different provinces. That has caused a lot of confusion among the Afghan population, because each province was being treated in a different way.'* **(21)** (High-ranking military commander, EU-representative, Ministry of Defense, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2014).

Although more concise concerning content, this section has demonstrated the emphasis on 'pooling' and 'sharing' in NATO and EU role prescriptions. While individual role prescriptions are not being assigned, both organizations do compare the capabilities of individual member states vis-à-vis the requirements to successfully complete operations. Except for a few temporary disruptions in how NATO and EU partners viewed the role of the Netherlands (as was the case with the pullout of Afghanistan), the Dutch have generally been regarded as valuable partners in consultation through NATO and the EU. Lastly, through the example of 3D, it was shown that NATO's general role prescriptions on individual member states (including the Netherlands) have not always had the desired effect. Moreover, individual member states felt constrained by NATO role prescriptions in successfully completing their operations in Afghanistan.

## 6. Discussion

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### 6.1 Eating the cake and having it too?

The combination of national role conceptions and role prescriptions allows for the synthesis of both concepts into one: role performance. It is possible for national role conceptions and role prescriptions to clash, in the case of which role competition occurs. As can be inferred from figure 3 on page 18, role performance encompasses the decisions and actions taken by a particular state. In the context of this thesis, role performance entails the foreign- and defense policy behavior of the Netherlands since the end of the Cold War. In an era of Dutch foreign- and defense policy where national role conceptions frequently clash with role prescriptions, it probably does not come as a surprise that role competition is an important topic of debate in this chapter. Foremost, national role conceptions and role prescriptions have clashed in the realm of defense spending over the past 25 years. While many interviewees were rather rapid in employing notions such as ‘faithful ally’ when describing national role conceptions, one particular respondent pointed at a painful observation: Dutch policymakers prefer to reinforce their image about the ‘Self’ as being founded upon noble concepts such as ‘faithful ally’ and ‘credible partner’, yet national budget cuts have caused reality to appear rather different. In their role performance however, the Dutch policymakers have cleverly managed to neutralize this persistent and uncomfortable example of role competition:

*Jan: ‘Then terms such as bridge country, guiding country are being discussed. How do you look at that? Interviewee: Those are nice descriptions, but I wouldn’t use them in this particular context. The Netherlands is a faithful ally of NATO, but for years we haven’t spent on Defense what we are supposed to do. That two-percent threshold of NATO is something we haven’t been able to keep up with for years now.<sup>11</sup> For a long period of time we have managed to hide that from inspection.*

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<sup>11</sup> This statement appears to be in accordance with a recent remark made by current Commander of the Armed Forces Tom Middendorp, who asserted that too little

*Why? Because the Netherlands was one of the first countries to transform its armed forces into an expeditionary force. And that means that despite a marginal contribution to NATO, we were still able to participate in numerous operations. Now we still have a marginal contribution, but we also lost the capacity to take part in these operations. And then you quickly lose your position in the international arena. Our influence and position internationally in that regard can absolutely no longer be defined through a concept such as guiding country.'* **(22)** (High-ranking military commander, Ministry of Defense, March 12<sup>th</sup> 2014).

Thus, a new dynamic can be observed in Dutch foreign- and defense policy in which traditional national role conceptions are being upheld by employing different means. The Netherlands wishes to continue to be seen as a 'faithful ally', but now does so by investing in becoming a lead-nation in multilateral defense cooperation within NATO and the EU. The European Air Transport Command is a good example of the Dutch capacity to lead despite budget cuts on defense. Yet, it is not only a Dutch responsibility to uphold these national role conceptions; much of Dutch role performance can also be explained by means of pragmatism. After all, the Dutch are forced to cooperate with other member states not only due to budget cuts, but also because of an absence of national defense industry:

*'The Dutch definitely do have a role to play. The only problem for us is that we do not have a considerable defense industry. The Netherlands is therefore forced to cooperate. We investigate in which areas we can cooperate and with which countries, and we look dopey because of it. We want to cooperate with everybody. That is where the Netherlands has an enormous strategic dilemma.'* **(23)** (EU-delegate Ministry of Defense, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2014).

The strengthening of the EU's military component has been a constant factor in what this thesis conceptualizes as Dutch role performance. Clearly, the ability to

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investment is being done to guarantee security, and that the Netherlands wants to 'have its cake and eat it too' (Dutch: 'voor een dubbeltje op de eerste rang zitten'). Source: NRC, (2014): <http://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2014/05/17/hogste-militair-tom-middendorp-bezorgd-om-slagkracht-leger/>.

stand on one's own feet was an important motivation for Dutch involvement in strengthening EU capabilities:

*'At a certain point in time you see that policy is changing. Without weakening NATO, we also have to develop the military component of the EU. I have been looking for a model in which a strengthening of the EU also leads to a strengthening of NATO. That is possible when you retain the ownership to countries. We need to be able to stand on our own feet when it comes to solving regional conflicts.'* **(24)** (High-ranking military commander, EU-representative, Ministry of Defense, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2014).

Indeed, Dutch role performance is grounded in the belief among Dutch policymakers that organizations such as NATO and the EU can only be strengthened if individual member states retain sovereignty over their foreign- and defense policy. Currently, sovereignty is still in the hands of individual member states, and consequently the Netherlands has found itself in the position to distinguish itself from other NATO and EU member states. It is precisely the sovereignty-aspect that has allowed the Netherlands to provide high-quality armed forces despite its marginal size:

*'It is a nice position that the Netherlands can take up, to be a reliable partner that delivers capacity within NATO, but also within the EU. Why is the Netherlands being regarded as an interesting partner? We deliver, and we deliver quality. It is not large-scale, but what we deliver is being regarded as a contribution. It is a contribution that enables you to serve EU and NATO partners.'* **(25)** (Military officer, Ministry of Defense, April 4<sup>th</sup> 2014).

In 2013, the Dutch Cabinet published the first national security strategy of the Netherlands from a foreign policy perspective (the 2010 'Strategy National Security' was aimed at identifying domestic security measures). The new document focuses on the changing geopolitical balance of power, and identifies several threats to Dutch interests both at home and abroad. Of particular interest to this thesis are three strategic interests as developed by Dutch policymakers,

as well as several accents to be pursued in the foreign and defense policy of the Netherlands. These are:

***Strategic interests:***

- *Defense of Dutch and allied territory*
- *A well-functioning international rule of law*
- *Economic security*

***Accents in Dutch foreign and defense policy:***

- *More European responsibility*
- *More emphasis on fragile regions in Europe's vicinity*
- *Prevention*
- *Disarmament and arms control*
- *Integrated approach*
- *Cooperation with the private sector*

(‘Internationale Veiligheidsstrategie’: 19-20)

The first strategic interest, that of defending Dutch and allied territory, may seem superfluous when considering the probability of a conventional military attack on Dutch and allied territory, but new developments pose a realistic threat in this regard. States such as Iran and North Korea can potentially reach NATO-territory by means of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (IBMs). For that reason, the Netherlands has contributed to NATO air defense capabilities by providing innovative radartechnology on frigates and Patriot weapon systems on land. Particularly interesting here is that Cold War rhetoric (collective defense) is being used to redefine Dutch and NATO role conceptions, to ensure their relevance and justify particular forms of role performance.

A clear and relatively stable example of how national role conceptions, role prescriptions and role performance fuse in the case of the Netherlands, is the

interaction between the upholding of international rule of law and multilateral cooperation. The first factor is a defining feature of how Dutch policymakers view the role of the Netherlands, and from that stems a resolute policy objective to incorporate as many states as possible in the multilateral system. This dynamic has been a constant factor in Dutch foreign and defense policy and has not changed dramatically since the 1990s.

It is evident that the Netherlands will continue to invest in strengthening the trans-Atlantic ties, with NATO as the crucial pillar of Dutch defense policy. In line with the responses from many interviewees, the Netherlands seeks to retain its status as a 'faithful ally'. Yet, official policy documents such as the 2013 international security appear to omit factors such as non-conformity to NATO expenditure (2% of GNP) standards. Instead, they tend to emphasize factual military contributions to NATO and the EU. Moreover, the Netherlands will continue to invest in NATO and the CSDP according to its economic weight, in order to deepen cooperation between European member states. A more prominent position of the EU within the international system is consistently being supported, and the aim is to consult other states more intensively to reach that objective.

Rood has indicated that a remarkable shift in the ambitions of Dutch foreign- and defense policy occurred with the transition from Cabinet Balkenende to Cabinet Rutte in 2010 (Rood: 410). Indeed, traditional national role conceptions (such as 'faithful ally') seem to have had a considerable impact on role performance during the Balkenende Cabinets (2002-2010): loyal support to the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan are clear examples of this. With the shift to Cabinet Rutte however, an active Dutch stance towards international organizations such as NATO and the EU was now approached with modesty. Fragile domestic support for Dutch foreign- and defense policy and an anti-EU party (PVV) that technically legitimized the government caused the Netherlands to readjust its ambitions. The following figure aims to depict the interaction between Dutch national role conceptions, role prescriptions and role performance since 1990:



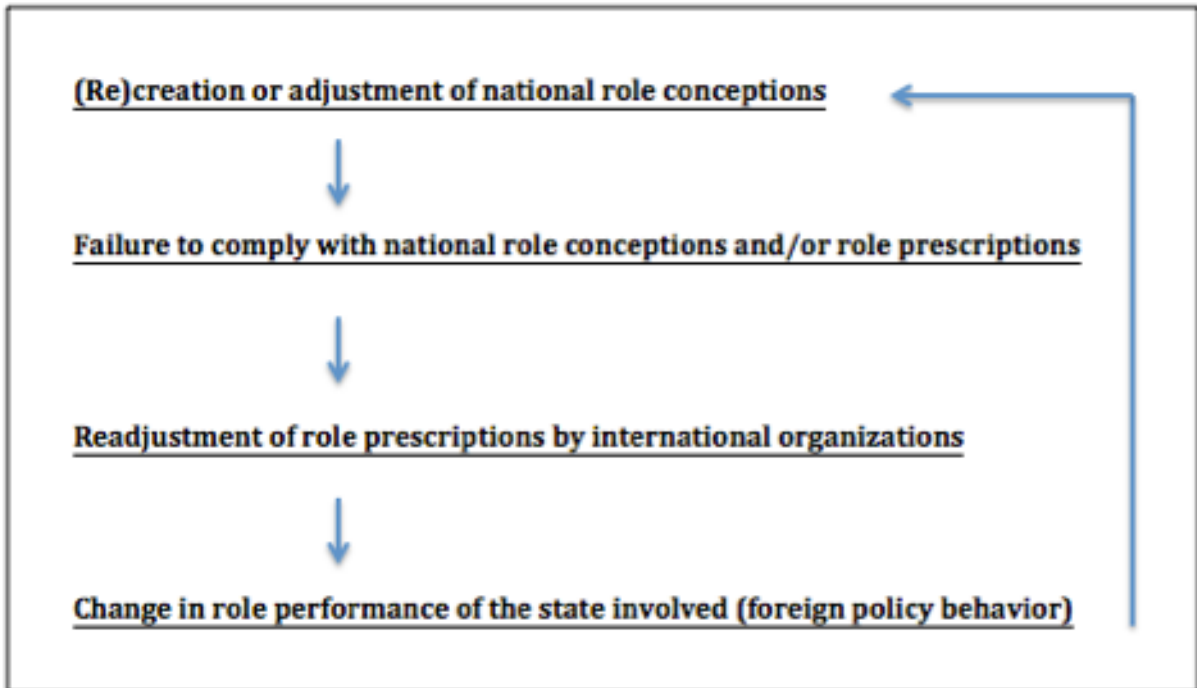


Figure 4: interaction between three dimensions of role theory, as put forward by this thesis.

Despite continuing efforts by the Netherlands to make a contribution to the strengthening of the EU, the cornerstone of Dutch foreign- and defense policy will continue to be NATO. The ‘Internationale Veiligheidsstrategie’ of 2013 has indicated that NATO’s Article 5 will remain essential for the protection of Dutch territorial integrity. Moreover, NATO’s unique capabilities in exerting hard power are considered indispensable. Even though financial shortages have had a significant impact on the Dutch armed forces, there remains a strong determination to continue to live up to Dutch national role conceptions and provide military means to NATO:

*‘The unique capabilities of the Alliance justify the expectation that NATO will continue to play an essential role in preventing conflicts, intervention, crisis management and stabilization in areas where the security interests of the Alliance are being touched upon. The Netherlands will also have to contribute to this, including in the realm of hard power. Security has its price tag, also in financially difficult times. The Dutch armed forces therefore should retain the possibility to be able to participate in different kinds of interventions. As a good and reliable*

*partner, the Netherlands should also be able to help out other countries when they demand it. In this regard, the Netherlands makes a contribution towards the NATO-patrol mission in the airspace of the Baltic states in 2017 (Baltic Air Policing). Furthermore, Dutch Patriots are being deployed in Turkey at the moment to protect Turkish territory and the Turkish people against missile attacks from Syria.'* **(26)**(Internationale Veiligheidsstrategie': 11).

## 7. Conclusions

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The continuous interaction between national role conceptions, role prescriptions and role performance in the Dutch case has become more apparent over the past twenty-five years. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the emergence of new irregular threats such as terrorism, both international organizations and individual member member states were forced to redefine their security agenda. The Netherlands and NATO in particular were no exception to this. The rise of a new security actor in Europe in the 1990s, namely that of the EU, has complicated matters in Dutch foreign- and defense policy. Traditional trans-Atlantic ties seemingly hampered the ability of the Dutch to contribute to European defense outside of NATO. Through persistent negotiation and active participation in various missions however, the rebalancing appears to be close to its finalization.

Surely, the emergence of the EU as a proponent of soft power has triggered Dutch foreign- and defense policy to become more multi-faceted and increasingly incorporate non-military means into its toolbox. The 3D-approach that was used in Afghanistan is a fine example of what Dutch policymakers like to refer to as their piece of innovation. Dutch foreign- and defense policy has increasingly been characterized by a drive towards multitasking. Dutch national role conceptions incite a particular form of role performance that is not necessarily commensurable with realistic objectives. This subsequently creates discrepancies between what NATO and the EU expect (role prescriptions), and what the Netherlands is able to contribute (role performance). Clearly, the Dutch are highly active when it concerns their role performance, yet a critical reconsideration of its national role conceptions and role prescriptions could undo the hole that currently exists amid a wide range of foreign- and defense policies.

Lastly, this thesis does not seek to claim that its findings can be generalized to provide a definite answer to the question of how Dutch foreign- and defense

policy has evolved in the post-Cold War era. On the contrary, its aim was to provide practical insights into the minds of Dutch policymakers and subsequently create a better understanding of how NATO and the EU have been intertwined with Dutch foreign- and defense policy since 1990. Considering its emphasis on identity, norms and values, social constructivism was considered to be a natural theoretical tool for this research. By no means this implies that other theories (e.g. realism, liberalism) should be disregarded when analyzing this subject matter. Although this thesis was grounded in social constructivist thought, a more thorough emphasis on material factors might lead to findings complementary to the results presented here. Yet, role theory proved to be useful in conceptualizing Dutch national role conceptions, and its influence on role performance has been demonstrated on various occasions. In this regard, no metaphor can be found that better describes Dutch foreign- and defense policy than the one invented by Yvonne Kleistra, who asserted that Dutch role performance could be compared to a donut: the Netherlands is active in a wide range of foreign- and defense policy initiatives, yet the core of their mission is absent more often than not. Thus, if the Netherlands truly were to punch above its weight, then a pair of fitting boxing gloves would come in handy.

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## **8.3 Interviews**

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7<sup>th</sup> March 2014, (Former employee Ministry of Defense). Interview recorded.

9<sup>th</sup> March 2014, (High-ranking military commander, Ministry of Defense) Interview recorded.

12<sup>th</sup> March 2014, (High-ranking military commander, Ministry of Defense) Interview recorded.

12<sup>th</sup> March 2014, (Parliamentary spokesman for Defense affairs). Interview



recorded.

28<sup>th</sup> March 2014, (EU-delegate Ministry of Defense). Interview recorded.

29<sup>th</sup> March 2014, (High-ranking military commander, EU-representative, Ministry of Defense). Interview recorded.

4<sup>th</sup> April 2014, (Military officer, Ministry of Defense). Interview recorded.

8<sup>th</sup> April 2014, (Defense expert (3x)). Interview not recorded.

## Appendix A (Interview framework)

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### NATO, EU and Dutch foreign- and defense policy

*'Concerning national role conceptions, role prescriptions and role performance in Dutch foreign and defense policy throughout the period 1990-2010'*

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#### Structuur van het interview:

- I. Voorstellen
- II. Gespreksdoel
- III. Opbouw
- IV. Geschatte duur
- V. Waardering deelname
- VI. Belang van informatie
- VII. Wat gebeurt er met informatie

#### Topic list:

- NAVO-missies en EU-missies
  - NATO Rapid Reaction Force & EU Battle Groups
  - Bezuinigingsmaatregelen Defensie
  - Trans-Atlantische verhoudingen
- 

#### Inleidende vragen

- **Wat is uw belangrijkste functie geweest in de periode 1990-2010 op het gebied van Nederlands buitenlands- en defensiebeleid?**
  - **Heeft u, door middel van de functies die u heeft uitgeoefend gedurende de periode 1990-2010, op enigerlei wijze invloed gehad op de besluitvorming voor wat betreft Nederlands buitenlands- en/of defensiebeleid? Zo ja, op welke manier(en)?**
- 

#### Factor 1:

##### Persoonlijke visie op het Nederlandse buitenlands- en defensie beleid

1. **Wat is er volgens u het meest verandert in het Nederlandse buitenland- en defensiebeleid (vergelijk nu met begin jaren '90), en**

**wat zijn volgens u de belangrijkste Nederlandse doelen op het internationale toneel (binnen de NAVO en de EU)? Voorbeelden?**

- 2. Hoe zou u de rol van Nederland als lidstaat binnen de NAVO en de EU willen omschrijven? Verschillen deze rollen, en kunt u concrete voorbeelden geven die deze rollen verduidelijken? Wat voor een betekenis speelt de NAVO nog nu de Verenigde Staten steeds vaker hun handen afhouden van Europese veiligheidskwesties?**
- 3. Denkt u dat de rollen die Nederland aspireert binnen de NAVO en de EU zo nu en dan conflicteren? Waarom wel of niet? In hoeverre heeft partijpolitiek volgens u een invloed op de visie van beleidsmakers op het Nederlandse buitenland- en defensiebeleid?**

**Factor 2:**

**Verwachtingspatronen NAVO en EU betreffende de rol van Nederland**

*De oorlogen in Joegoslavië, Afghanistan en Irak hebben een grote impact gehad op het Nederlands buitenlands- en defensiebeleid gedurende de periode 1990-2010.*

- 1. Zijn deze gebeurtenissen op enigerlei wijze van invloed geweest op de manier waarop Nederland volgens de NAVO invulling dient te geven aan haar rol als lidstaat? Hoe beoordeelt u de impact van deze gebeurtenissen afzonderlijk, alsmede die van Srebrenica, op het Nederlandse buitenland- en defensiebeleid?**
- 2. Heeft de transformatie van de NAVO na 1990 veranderde verwachtingspatronen met zich meegebracht? Zo ja, op welke manier(en)?**
- 3. Hoe heeft de EU, middels het EVDB, volgens u haar stempel gedrukt op de rolverwezenlijking van het Nederlandse buitenland- en defensiebeleid in de periode 1990-2010? Hoe heeft het EVDB invloed gehad op de Nederlandse trans-Atlantische betrekkingen?**

**Factor 3:**

**Daadwerkelijke resultaten in het Nederlandse buitenlands- en defensie beleid**

- 1. Hoe zou u de Nederlandse politiek-militaire bijdrage aan de NAVO gedurende de periode 1990-2010 willen omschrijven? Wat kenmerkt de rol van Nederland hierin vooral?**
- 2. Hoe zou u de Nederlandse politiek-militaire bijdrage aan het Europees veiligheids- en defensiebeleid gedurende de periode 1990-2010 willen omschrijven? Wat kenmerkt de rol van Nederland hierin vooral? (Zie Policy Document 7 voor Nederlandse rol!)**

3. In hoeverre is er volgens u sprake van continuïteit voor wat betreft de rol van Nederland binnen de NAVO en de EU? Anders gezegd, zijn er volgens u duidelijke veranderingen waarneembaar in de rolevulling van Nederland vis-à-vis de NAVO en de EU?
- 

'Overige gespreksonderwerpen?'

- Zijn er nog relevante gespreksonderwerpen die volgens u onderbelicht bleven in dit interview en die wellicht nog van nadere uitleg voorzien dienen te worden?

SAMENVATTING INTERVIEW

Bijzonder bedankt voor uw deelname aan en openhartigheid in dit interview!

## Appendix B (Quotations in Dutch)

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- 1) *“Verder kan Europese samenwerking de trans-Atlantische band versterken en dit mag niet tot een verzwakking leiden. Een evenwichtiger lastenverdeling tussen Europa en de Verenigde Staten zal de trans-Atlantische relatie ten goede komen.”*
  
- 2) *“Ik denk dat in jaren ‘80, ‘90, waren wij nog meer Atlantisch gericht dan tegenwoordig. Maar dat komt natuurlijk ook omdat militair gezien, de EU pas wat ging doen in 2001 toen de EUMS werd opgericht. Nu ziet Nederland ook een mogelijkheid om via de EU aan een aantal acties mee te doen, en dat is met name de zachte aanpak, de ‘comprehensive approach’. Dus niet puur militair, maar ook het hele pallet van andere maatregelen die er zijn. En nu zien wij dat dat ook effect kan hebben. Alleen is het effect vaak wat minder goed meetbaar. En ik denk ook dat Nederland nu wat meer op dat paard wedt. Maar aan de andere kant zijn we nog steeds een trouwe bondgenoot - althans dat pretenderen wij te zijn - binnen de NAVO. Je ziet dat Nederland probeert om zeg maar naast het Atlantische aspect ook een brugland te zijn binnen Europa. Nederland wil zich graag zien als middelgroot land en niet als klein land. Op beide borden wordt dat uitgespeeld.”*
  
- 3) *“De Nederlandse uitgangspunten zijn de volgende. Voor Nederland blijft de NAVO hoeksteen van onze veiligheid en de centrale organisatie waarin we onze veiligheid hebben georganiseerd. Ze is ook het meest geschikte instrument voor zwaardere crisisbeheersingsoperaties. Tegelijk moet de Europese Unie een grotere verantwoordelijkheid op zich nemen voor de veiligheid en stabiliteit in Europa, met behoud van de trans-Atlantische band. Het zou niet wenselijk zijn wanneer de EU op grote schaal eigen militaire structuren zou opzetten of militaire middelen zou gaan ontwikkelen die die van de NAVO dupliceren. Gegeven het feit dat Nederland in het geval van crisisbeheersingsoperaties de voorkeur geeft aan optreden in NAVO-verband en dat, indien zulks niet mogelijk blijkt, de Nederlandse voorkeur uitgaat naar EU-geleide operaties met gebruikmaking van NAVO-middelen, waarbij de besluitvorming in alle transparantie dient te geschieden, kan worden geconstateerd dat de optie van een Europese operatie zonder NAVO-ondersteuning*

*naar de mening van de Regering in het bijzonder in aanmerking komt voor kleinschalige operaties. Europese crisisbeheersingsoperaties zonder gebruik van NAVO-middelen mogen de trans-Atlantische band niet schaden. Om als EU effectief te kunnen optreden is een structuur en besluitvormingsprocedure nodig, waardoor zij daadwerkelijk leiding kan geven aan militaire operaties. Overigens, crisisbeheersing omvat ook niet-militaire middelen (politieke, economische, humanitaire). De kracht van de EU ligt juist ook op dit vlak, waaraan in de toekomst militaire middelen kunnen worden toegevoegd. Nederland spant zich dan ook actief in voor een versterking van het vermogen van de EU ook niet-militaire middelen tot crisisbeheersing in te zetten.”*

**4)** *“De Nederlandse regering heeft zich de afgelopen jaren sterk ingezet voor de Berlijn-plus regeling. Mede als gevolg van de EU-NAVO regeling, is het EVDB inmiddels daadwerkelijk operationeel geworden. De EU heeft begin dit jaar met succes de eerste militaire vredesoperatie gestart in Macedonië, waarbij goede afspraken zijn gemaakt over de samenwerking tussen de EU en de NAVO. Het is verder zo dat het welslagen van het EVDB niet alleen afhankelijk is van de juiste institutionele ordening. Zeker zo belangrijk, zo niet belangrijker, is dat er politieke wil tussen de lidstaten bestaat om tot overeenstemming te komen. Nederland ziet de trans-Atlantische samenwerking, vormgegeven in de diverse fora van EU-VS overleg en met name toegespitst op veiligheidsvraagstukken, als middel tot het voeren van een gemeenschappelijke agenda.”*

**5)** *“Nederland is een klein land, maar het grootste van de kleinen. De kleinste van de grootsten. Als je mee wil doen met de groten, dan doe je net niet mee of je moet een hele grote inspanning leveren. Ten tijde van Uruzgan deden we vol mee. Zaten we ineens bij het top-clubje. Er werd ook regelmatig gezegd we zijn nu bezig met Champions League, en dat klopt ook wel. Je krijgt de info, je werd serieuzer genomen. Je krijgt daarmee dus ook macht. Politieke macht, en die vertaalt zich altijd op een of andere manier terug in economische macht en economisch gewin. Dus dat zijn wel belangrijke zaken die spelen. Hetzelfde geldt als je nu meer de grote bent van de kleinen, dan kun je proberen de leiding te nemen in de kleintjes, maar je kunt ook zeggen ik ga op die brug zitten. Er precies tussenin. Als je dat doet*

*dan ben je een gidsland voor de kleintjes, en een brugland voor de groten. Dat is een hele interessante positie, eentje die je heel goed kunt uitbuiten en te gelde kunt maken. Sommigen zouden het misschien opportunistisch noemen, anderen noemen het de Nederlandse koopmanshandel, het is een hele goede plek. En tegelijkertijd willen we natuurlijk wel een volledig betrouwbare bondgenoot blijven. Die middenpositie is een heerlijke positie.”*

**6)** *“Nederland als gidsland en brugland, dat is wel iets wat de laatste tien jaar best belangrijk is geworden.”*

**7)** *“Persoonlijke relaties en inhoud; als je dat hebt, dan kun je heel veel voor dat geheel (EU ed.) betekenen. En daar is Nederland gewoon goed in.”*

**8)** *“Nederland wordt door het gros van de landen wel als een goede en rationele gesprekspartner ervaren. Wat dat betreft heb ik weinig slechte dingen meegemaakt. We konden altijd aanschuiven. Ze wilden altijd onze mening horen.”*

**9)** *“Nederland probeert gewoon een handige speler te zijn. De koopman die door de EU en de NAVO heengaat en kijkt waar kan ik wat meepikken. Dat heeft te maken met die rol. Een aantal kleinere landen kijken toch naar Nederland, en de grotere landen kijken misschien van bovenaf naar Nederland. Daar kun je handig gebruik van maken. Dan moet je ook wel zelf een beleid hebben als Nederland over hoe je daarmee wil omgaan. Alleen in Nederland, en zeker onder de bevolking, leeft het buitenland gewoon niet. De maatschappij maakt het weinig uit, en daardoor heeft de regering grotendeels een vrije hand in hoe ze daar mee om willen gaan.”*

**10)** *“Ik zou zelf zeggen dat dat een rol is die wij al eeuwen lang vervullen. Gewoon door er tussen te gaan zitten. Het heeft ook iets te maken met onze manier van werken. Wij zijn altijd kooplui geweest, en we zijn een klein land, dus we weten hoe we het diplomatieke spel moeten spelen. Al was het maar om zelf overeind te blijven. Gewoon doordat we zorgen dat we die functie hebben, zorgen we ook voor onze eigen zelfstandigheid.”*

**11)** *“Air-to-air refuelling op het European Air Transport Command (EATC) in Eindhoven is een Nederlands initiatief, met een paar andere landen. En dat wordt gezien als een model wat we voor meerdere dingen moeten gaan toepassen.”*

**12)** *“De bezuinigingsrondes van de afgelopen jaren hebben een enorme efficiency-slag opgeleverd, maar ook qua effectiviteit. Onze krijgsmacht is een van de efficiëntste legers ter wereld. Onderzoek van McKinsey een aantal jaren geleden heeft dat uitgewezen.”*

**13)** *“Wij zijn altijd op het buitenland gericht geweest. Dus wij Nederlanders zouden heel goed begrijpen dat onze rol dus ook kan zijn dat we met al die landen kunnen verbinden. Alleen al door onze talen te spreken.”*

**14)** *“Nederland beseft zich heel goed dat we na de Tweede Wereldoorlog het besluit hebben genomen om onze veiligheid in gezamenlijkheid te benaderen. Als klein land kunnen we niet alle bedreigingen in ons eentje aan. Dat kunnen we alleen maar doen in coalitieverband. Dan draag je bij aan een grote familie. Je betaalt daar ook je contributie aan. Gezamenlijk doe je dingen om de veiligheid ook in dit deel van de wereld te waarborgen. Het is voor Nederland van belang om gezien te worden in die internationale familie als een geloofwaardige partner, die er niet alleen is voor de lusten maar ook voor de lasten. Je zult ook bereid moeten zijn om aan risicovollere missies deel te nemen. En zeker als je een klein maar wel heel rijk land bent. Met rijkdom komt ook verantwoordelijkheid nemen.”*

**15)** *“De NAVO waarborgt de territoriale integriteit van Nederland. Ook het WEU-verdrag bevat een clause voor militaire bijstand. De nauwe verbondenheid met de Verenigde Staten en Canada blijft een uitgangspunt van het Nederlandse veiligheidsbeleid. Het overgrote deel van de Nederlandse strijdkrachten maakt deel uit van de geïntegreerde militaire structuur van de NAVO. Nederland zal actief naar mogelijkheden zoeken om de Europese dimensie van DCI te versterken.”*



**16)** *“Vanuit mijn eigen opvattingen zou ik het liefst zien dat de krijgsmacht kan beschikken over een budget van 2% van het BNP. Niet alleen omdat de krijgsmacht het nodig heeft, maar ook omdat je internationaal daarmee laat zien dat je meedoet. Dat je bereid bent om de prijs voor veiligheid te betalen, evenals de ‘verzekeringspremie’ voor onze welvaart. Wij wonen met bijna zeventien miljoen mensen op veertigduizend vierkante kilometer grond. Wij hebben 3,8 biljoen aan bezittingen waarmee we 610 miljard aan omzet genereren. Dat is nogal wat. Daar zijn kapers op de kust en je moet bereid zijn om dat met stevige diplomatieke middelen te voorkomen, maar je moet ook laten zien dat je eventueel bereid bent om de stok te hanteren. Als je die stok hebt, dan hoef je hem meestal niet te gebruiken. Als mensen weten dat je het kan, dan blijven ze ook van je af. Dus ik vind dat bij dit rijtje van cijfers een fatsoenlijke krijgsmacht hoort.”*

**17)** *“Ik denk dat met name het Srebrenica trauma wat meer aan de politieke kant zit dan aan de militaire kant. Sinds Srebrenica hebben wij al zoveel missies gedraaid die in een hoog geweldsspectrum hebben gezeten, waarin wij hebben kunnen bewijzen dat we het wel kunnen. Dat wij militair allang van dat trauma af zijn. Wij zijn pas na Srebrenica volwassen geworden. Daarvoor deden we vredesmissies, maar wel heel erg met de nadruk op ‘heel veel zekerheidjes inbouwen’, om te zorgen dat het zeker niet ging leiden tot verliezen. We zijn ons pas echt bewust geworden van de gevaren in Irak. Daar liepen we de eerste doden op door vijandelijk geweld. In Afghanistan hebben we keihard bewezen dat we het kunnen. We kregen onvoorwaardelijke steun van de politiek.”*

**18)** *“Er wordt tegen alle bondgenoten gezegd: we gaan deze operatie optuigen, wat kun je aandragen? Als het gaat om de middelen die de NAVO collectief wil hebben, en waar er echt nog wel capability-gaps zijn, daar heeft de NAVO het zogenaamde NATO Defense Planning Process (NDPP). Daarin wordt gekeken naar: welke middelen hebben we nodig, welke middelen hebben we, en welke landen moeten welke middelen aankopen? Die vragen dus aan specifieke landen, we verwachten van jullie dat je dat gaat oppakken. Of een land daar gevolg aan geeft is een tweede. Tussen de regels door wordt er natuurlijk wel gekeken naar landen, er mag wat van je verwacht worden. Waar praten we dan over? Dat zijn burden-*

*sharing, draag je op een realistische wijze bij aan missies? En risk-sharing, ben je de free-rider of ben je bereid om ook in de core verliezen op te lopen en pijn te lijden als land? Dat is essentieel voor hoe er naar je wordt gekeken. Op dit moment staan wij daar zeker niet goed in. We zijn uit Uruzgan weggegaan waardoor allerlei kunstgrepen moesten worden opgepakt. We doen leuk mee met missies als Ocean Shield. Maar dan gaat de risk-sharing, die tikt toch wel vaak door. Zo van, waarom zit je daar nu niet meer?"*

**19)** *"Er wordt van tevoren een pikorde opgesteld van wie mag op welk nummer spreken. Als het over Afghanistan ging, of over Pakistan of wat dan ook, dan mocht Nederland altijd als een van de eerste vijf, zes spreken. Want iedereen had respect voor wat wij in Afghanistan deden. Wij hadden besloten dat wij uit Uruzgan weg zouden gaan, we waren nog niet weg, en bij Afghanistan mogen onze Minister en Minister-President als nummer twintig of tweeëntwintig spreken. Jullie gaan weg? Prima, lager in de pikorde."*

**20)** *"In die twee gemeenschappen, kijkt men naar Nederland als een kritische, hoogkwalitatieve gesprekspartner. Nederland heeft een vrij pragmatische insteek. Wij zijn niet zo van die idealisten. Wij spelen een land dat met het vingertje zwaait, maar als het puntje bij het paaltje komt, dan is er sprake van pragmatisme. Dat is die koopman in ons die dan weer naar boven komt. En daar kunnen landen wel wat mee, want daar kun je zaken mee doen. Daar kun je diplomatiek verkeer mee hebben. Nederlanders zijn ook creatief in hun oplossingen. Zo kijkt men naar Nederland. Als een kritisch lid, maar wel eentje die met goede ideeën komt."*

**21)** *"Het is NATO niet gelukt om een NATO 3D-concept op te richten. De NATO-commandant klaagde er altijd over dat hij nooit in heel Afghanistan richtlijnen kon geven dat we het allemaal op dezelfde manier deden. Wat al die landen (USA, Canada, UK, Nederland) als lead-nation in hun provincie hebben gedaan is nuttig geweest, maar het is toch vervelend dat we allemaal onze nationale denkbeelden in elke provincie hebben neergelegd. Dat heeft geleid tot heel veel verwarring bij de Afghanen, omdat elke provincie het anders deed."*

**22)** Jan: *“Dan komen dus termen als brugland, gidsland aan de orde. Hoe kijkt u daar naar? Respondent: “Dat zijn mooie kreten, maar in deze context zou ik ze niet zo snel bezigen. Nederland is een trouwe bondgenoot van de NAVO, maar wij hebben al jarenlang niet aan Defensie besteed wat we zouden moeten besteden. Die twee-procent norm van de NAVO halen wij al jaren niet meer. Dat hebben we eigenlijk een hele tijd kunnen verdoezelen. Waarom? Omdat Nederland een van de eerste landen was die zijn Defensie organisatie heeft omgeturnd tot een expeditionaire krijgsmacht. En dat betekent dat we ondanks de geringere bijdrage aan de NAVO toch aan heel veel operaties steeds deelnamen. Nu hebben we nog steeds een geringe bijdrage, maar ook niet meer de capaciteit om aan die operaties deel te nemen. En dan verlies je internationaal heel snel je positie. Onze invloed en positie op dat gebied is internationaal absoluut geen gidsland meer te noemen.”*

**23)** *“Die Nederlanders hebben dus wel degelijk een rol. Het enige wat ons altijd opbreekt is dat wij geen eigen serieuze defensie-industrie hebben. Nederland wordt daardoor gedwongen om samen te werken. We kijken waar we kunnen samenwerken en met welke landen, en we kijken ons helemaal suf. We willen met iedereen samenwerken. Daar zit Nederland met een enorm strategisch dilemma.”*

**24)** *“Op een gegeven moment zie je het beleid buigen. Zonder de NAVO af te zwakken moeten we ook de militaire component binnen de EU ontwikkelen. Ik heb gezocht naar een model waarbij als je de EU versterkt, je direct ook NATO versterkt. Dat kan als je het eigendom houdt bij de landen. Wij moeten voor het oplossen van regionale conflicten op onze eigen benen kunnen staan.”*

**25)** *“Het is een mooie positie die Nederland kan innemen, om een betrouwbare partner te zijn die capaciteiten levert binnen de NAVO, maar ook binnen de EU. Waarom wordt Nederland met zijn relatief kleine krijgsmacht gezien als een interessante partner? Wij leveren, en wij leveren kwaliteit. Het is niet grootschalig, maar wat we leveren wordt toch wel gezien als een bijdrage. Het is een bijdrage waarmee je je Europese partners en je NAVO partners kunt bedienen.”*

**26)** *“De unieke eigenschappen van het bondgenootschap rechtvaardigen de*

*verwachting dat NAVO een essentiële rol blijft spelen op het terrein van conflictpreventie, interventie, beheersing en stabilisatie in gebieden waar de veiligheidsbelangen van het bondgenootschap worden geraakt. Hieraan zal ook Nederland zijn bijdrage moeten leveren, inclusief op het gebied van hard power. Veiligheid heeft zijn prijs, ook in tijden van financiële krapte. De Nederlandse krijgsmacht moet daarom ook in de toekomst de mogelijkheid behouden om aan de verschillende soorten interventies te kunnen bijdragen. Als goede en betrouwbare partner moet Nederland ook anderen van dienst zijn als ze een beroep op ons doen. Nederland levert in dit verband bijvoorbeeld in 2017 weer een bijdrage aan de NAVO-patrouillering boven de Baltische staten (Baltic Air Policing). Verder worden momenteel Nederlandse Patriots ingezet in Turkije voor de verdediging van het Turkse grondgebied en de bevolking tegen de dreiging van raketten vanuit Syrië.”*