

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Towards a (militarily) stronger and more self-reliant Europe

Disclaimer: *This report was prepared by M2S BV as a contribution to a brainstorm exercise by the Dutch Ministry of Defense. The opinions and suggestions developed in this report are those of the authors and in no way reflect the views or official policies of the Dutch Ministry of Defense or the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. For further inquiries contact: info@macro-strats.com*

A Brainstorm Paper
December 2021

Why this brainstorm paper?

Starting Point

- The Netherlands wants to play a leading role in making the EU stronger, more self-reliant and better enabled to set a more autonomous policy vis-à-vis Russia, China as well as the United States.
- For that to happen, the EU will need to develop a bigger military clout.
- The incoming Dutch cabinet should capitalize on the current positive outlook for stronger European defense arrangements and contribute where it can to new (and old) initiatives and structures.

Purpose

The aim of this brainstorm paper is to frame a discussion around concrete objectives and steps the Netherlands could take in 2022-2026 that could foster a militarily strong, more self-reliant EU that is able to re-assert itself internationally.

Structure

To this end, the paper provides:

- 1) A concise overview of upcoming milestones and the wider context for European defense over the period 2022-2026.
- 2) An overview of five potential priority areas, together with possible policy objectives and potential steps the Netherlands could undertake to foster the goal of a more militarily capable EU.

The European Defense Context 2022 – 2026



NATO AGENDA 2022: US-EU dialogue on security and defense; third Joint EU-NATO Declaration; NATO’s revised Strategic Concept; NL preparations for VJTF in 2023; “deadline” of 2% of GDP spending on defense by 2024 and possible (unpredictable) change in US leadership.

MULTILATERAL AGENDA: US-Russian discussions on replacing New START nuclear arms reduction treaty (set to expire in 2026), 2022 NPT Review Conference, JCPOA, ATT, ongoing discussions on global cybersecurity norms and the military use of outer space.

NL Positions and Priorities on European Defense

Strengthening European Defense: Suggested NL Priority Areas 2022-2026

- **Leadership on Cyber Deterrence, Cyber Enablers and Digital Interoperability**
- **Ensuring a Successful EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC)**
- **Putting (Coordinated) Specialization Successfully Back on the Agenda**
- **Building Concrete Tools for Preventing Conflict and Managing Destabilization**
- **Stimulating EU-Transatlantic Cooperation**

Traditional Dutch Policy Priorities

Improving existing structures before inventing new ones.



This includes utilizing the EU Battlegroups to build a Rapid Deployment Capacity and unlocking remaining possibilities offered by the EU Treaties, such as unpacking Article 42 (7) TEU, Article 44 TEU, Article 222 TFEU.

**A stronger Europe
=
A stronger NATO.**



As a historically more pro-Atlanticist country, the Netherlands is unwilling to compromise NATO-relations to advance EU defense cooperation. A division of labor between collective defense and crisis management is, for now, the preferred path.

Unanimity when possible, flexibility when needed.



EU structures and initiatives should remain open to possible contributions and participation from non-EU partners, while the Netherlands is also fine with booking progress through ad hoc coalitions, such as the European Intervention Initiative (EI2).

Balancing and bridging between Germany, France and the UK.



While the focus has long been on following German and British leads, alignment with French initiatives has grown. Despite a troubled Brexit, the Dutch prefer to keep the United Kingdom as closely involved in defense matters as possible.

A strong EU defense industry that protects smaller companies.



The Dutch see the value of scaling strategic industries and capability development within Europe and building a strong European defense market. However, it wants to keep a place for its own SMEs and is currently still quite focused on the US market.

Overview Suggested Policy Objectives 2026

	CYBER	RAPID	SPECIAL	PREVENT	T-ATLANTIC
SHAPE INSTITUTIONS	Take a leading role in developing EU cybersecurity policies and strategy, with a focus on building EU deterrence and response capacities against large-scale cyber attacks.	Be fully integrated in an EU Rapid Deployment Capacity and play an active role in its success, including by putting in place adequate decision-making processes.	Build on trusted defense cooperation relationships and push institutionalized cooperation, integration and where possible specialization to a next level, including in new domains.	Promote a larger role for the EU institutions and programming focused on conflict anticipation, prevention and countering destabilization; further develop understanding of the potential role of the military in pre-escalation conflict stages.	Establish a clear and convincing vision on the complementarity of the EU and NATO in defense matters and reflect this in national planning and procurement processes, training and strategies.
DEVELOP CAPABILITIES	Contribute significantly to developing cyber enablers and capabilities for credible deterrence, including those leading to technical, political, and possibly legal attribution.	Solve the shortages in combat and combat (service) support and optimize the readiness of multidomain units for the own participating share in the Rapid Deployment Capacity.	Use existing EU-wide capability reviews and tools such as CARD and PESCO to encourage bottom-up and coordinated specialization between different (clusters) of countries based on identified capability shortfalls and priorities.	Invest in the necessary human capital for conflict anticipation and prevention, as well as in the ability to use and develop “new” technologies and applications, including remote sensing, satellite imagery and drone technologies.	Address priority capability shortfalls for both organizations in a coordinate manner and encourage joint efforts in areas where duplication is purely wasting resources.
CHANGE (PRE)CONDITIONS	Setting up structures to (jointly) train cyber talent and push for ethical-legal frameworks that are enabling a stronger Europe in the cyber domain but remain in line with EU principles.	Engage closely with France and Germany on the RDC on a bilateral level in order to be able to be involved early on and play a bridge function between key players.	Establish a new appealing narrative on defense-related specialization, promoting acceptable concepts and proposals in order to overcome the current negative connotations.	Raise the level of urgency for conflict prevention and countering destabilization, both at the EU and the national level and both within the government as well as with the broader public (including parliament).	Invest efforts in making EU-NATO cooperation a win-win situation and try to win over traditionally more Atlanticist countries that remain skeptical to EU defense issues.

Pioneering in Cyber Deterrence, Cyber Enablers and Digital Interoperability

SHAPE INSTITUTIONS

- Actively input in the potential set up of an EU Joint Cyber Unit, ensuring deterrence of large-scale cyber incidents by state-actors or their proxies and minimizing overlap with other entities.
- Increase representation and weight in relevant EU-level organizations, platforms and working groups.
- Strengthen the thought leadership position of the Netherlands in (military and civil-military) cyber-related strategic and policy issues.
- Enhance foresight capacity in the area of cyber defense; map consequences and future tasks for the defense organization.

DEVELOP CAPABILITIES

- Push for cyber capabilities to be part of a cross-domain deterrence that plays into EU strengths.
- Push for strengthening the digital component of military mobility.
- Push for increased digital interoperability, data and knowledge sharing.
- Offer digital interoperability and cyber capacity building efforts to other EU Member States.
- Strengthen the international position of Dutch (dual-use) cyber capabilities industry.
- Take up an (in)formal role as “CARD capability cluster lead” on cyber capabilities.

CHANGE (PRE)CONDITIONS

- Scale cyber training efforts at the European level and promote links to business.
- Integrate cyber defense training better into multidomain exercises and forces certification processes.
- Raise high-level and public awareness and understanding of cyber threats and dilemmas.
- Play a proactive role in developing the necessary ethical-juridical frameworks, including around cyber arms controls, rules of engagement, dual use export control regimes.

Ensuring Successful EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC)

SHAPE INSTITUTIONS

- Prepare the MPCC for growing responsibilities.
- With like-minded partners, take the initiative for a transformation proposal from EU Battle Groups to ‘Rapid Deployment Capacity’.
- Play an active role in developing some of the 20 Strategic Operational Cases (SOCs) for the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity.
- Accelerate decision making at the EU level by making better use of the opportunities generated by Article 44.
- Together with parliament, explore AN acceleration of decision making for rapid deployments, without eroding scrutiny.

DEVELOP CAPABILITIES

- Solve national ‘combat (service) support’ shortages initially based on filling gaps at the EU level, starting with the needs for an RDC.
- Propose, either as stand-alone country or together with like-minded member states a significantly large multidomain force building-block to the EU RDC.
- Use the setup of a more multidomain RDC at the EU level to push for further institutionalization of multidomain thinking and doing in the own defense organization.
- Propose a pool of “European” reserve officers to scale missions and operations quickly at the EU level (through a military “Erasmus” type program”).

CHANGE (PRE)CONDITIONS

- Improve the necessary willingness for organizational change and a more EU-minded military.
- Improve information and influencing position in relevant European capitals through more secondments and intra-government human resource exchanges.
- Improve the use of strong and continuous analysis of defense debates taking place within the military and policy circles in the relevant EU capitals (e.g. coordinated by a government-wide “Scientific Bureau for Security and Defense” or a strategic analysis unit as part of a National Security Council).

Putting (Coordinated) Specialization Successfully Back on the EU Agenda

POTENTIAL POLICY STEPS

SHAPE INSTITUTIONS

- Encourage (new/ad hoc/implicit) forms of specialization during the implementation phase of the EU Strategic Compass and its flagship proposals.
- Build on the bilateral defense cooperation relationship with Belgium and push cooperation, integration and where possible specialization to a next level (e.g. air domain).
- Build on the bilateral defense cooperation relationship with Germany and push cooperation, integration and where possible specialization to a next level.
- Use the cooperation in smaller, non-EU multilateral defense settings as small microcosms for specialization.

DEVELOP CAPABILITIES

- Push for a division of labor in tackling the outcome of the CARD processes with (clusters of) MS taking the lead in resolving shortages; take into consideration the indicated 55 collaborative opportunities.
- Explore specialization in new domains and emerging areas of warfare where capabilities still need to be developed by most partners (e.g. cyber, space, hybrid)
- NL currently only leads one PESCO project and participates in 13. It could consider taking the lead in more PESCO projects that fall within desired areas of specialization.
- Duplicate the success of the Multinational Multirole Tanker and Transport Fleet by exploring other specialized shared capabilities with small groups of partners.

CHANGE (PRE)CONDITIONS

- Bolster the narrative around the rationale of coordinated defense specialization, steering it away from existing negative connotations.
- Have a continuous, open dialogue around related topics, providing a range of internal and external perspectives
- Build necessary trust between (clusters of) MS Stress the weight and status of Article 42.7 TEU (mutual defense clause) and Article 222 TFEU (Solidarity clause).
- Ensure that the binding clauses of PESCO are perceived as “binding”, including the necessary monitoring. This could be done through the proposal around “*more precise objectives*”

Building Concrete Tools for Preventing Conflict and Managing Destabilization

POTENTIAL POLICY STEPS

SHAPE INSTITUTIONS

- Start pre-preparations for a potential EU *civil-military* HQ.
- Better inclusion of military presence and military activities in conflict and destabilization prevention in specific regions of interest.
- Further integrate conflict anticipation and prevention in NL security strategy(ies) and urge other EU members do the same.
- Build a stronger interdepartmental EWEA function with links to likeminded partners.
- Support the delivery of the EU Civilian CSDP Compact and proactively assist in developing a vision for the Civilian Compact beyond 2023.

DEVELOP CAPABILITIES

- Make more use of EU dual-use space capabilities, drone technology and phone applications for monitoring of potential conflict areas.
- Increase the level of knowledge within government of geographical areas expected to be prone to future conflict in which EU (and Dutch) interests will be compromised.
- Work more closely with trusted external knowledge partners that can provide both public and private analysis on MENA, Balkan, Turkey, Caribbean.

CHANGE (PRE)CONDITIONS

- Elevate the level of importance (and thus perception) given within the conflict anticipation, prevention and managing destabilization space to the armed forces.
- Elevate the level of importance of conflict anticipation, prevention and countering destabilization (for example regarding undermining, state capture) within the defense organization itself; including the costs (financial, human) that can be avoided by early action.
- Explore the potential need for specific legal frameworks necessary for conflict anticipation and prevention activities in other countries.

Stimulate EU-Transatlantic Cooperation

SHAPE INSTITUTIONS

- Ensure complementarity and alignment between various proposals and initiatives around Rapid Deployment Capacity in EU and NATO context (Strategic Compass, Strategic Concept).
- Advocate texts in the Strategic Compass, Strategic Concept and EU-NATO Cooperation Agreement on a (non-institutionalized) sense of division of labor.
- Be a proactive and strategic operator in the new EU-US security and defense dialogue; play a connecting role between Germany, France, the UK and the US.

DEVELOP CAPABILITIES

- Further increase the linkages between the European Capability Plan and the NDPP, as well as procuring bodies, to address priority capability shortfalls for both organizations, as well as supply chain risks.
- Use (Enhanced) Military Mobility as an evolving example of successfully institutionalizing stronger EU-NATO cooperation.
- Advocate mergers of EU-NATO initiatives in areas in which doubling is a waste of scarce resources (research on climate & security, Women, Peace and Security agenda, double innovation hubs, assessments of impact of EDTs).

CHANGE (PRE)CONDITIONS

- Proactive diplomacy towards NATO allies “skeptical” of stronger European defense cooperation.
- Change the fact that national defense planners tend to view EU requirements as a distant third behind national capability priorities and NATO planning requirements.
- Create a more EU-minded military by introducing recruits from the start, and throughout their career, with the “EU and NATO” approach.
- Be mindful of filling leadership positions within the defense organization with human capital that has a strong understanding of both EU and NATO.

Concluding Remarks

It might be necessary, but it will not be easy

- Having Europe step up the game is easier said than done. It will take a considerable amount of time, it will take a lot of money and most importantly, it will take European leaders willing to make a change, in mindset and in deeds.
- If the Netherlands really wants to achieve a stronger, more self-reliant EU in defense matters, it needs to be and be seen as committed, politically and financially. Having a steady, long-term vision on what the EU should become, both relative to the member states as well as relative to other global powers, is a must.
- Spending the allocated budget by the new Dutch coalition should be matched with a clear plan for the future of the Dutch armed forces. If a stronger and more self-reliant EU is part of that future, it should be used to ensure that such (future) armed forces can contribute as much as possible to that goal.
- Drafting a new Defense White Paper is a first significant opportunity for the new Dutch government to do so.

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About MacroScope Strategies (M2S)

M2S is a boutique consultancy that helps companies, governments, diplomatic missions, and international organizations navigate the new world of diplomacy and government affairs. Our approach unites academic excellence, the application of new technologies, an intimate understanding of the jurisdictions and sectors we cover, and hands-on experiences working in government, diplomacy, and business.

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