Big Ambitions on Small Budgets: Why Small States Defect from Multilateral Military Coalitions

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Abstract

This study addresses the lamentably under researched topic of small state coalition defection. Extant defection literature understands coalition defection to be mainly a political undertaking. Whereas small state scholarship argues that small states face myriad political incentives to become and remain involved in multilateral military coalitions but lack the military capacity to act upon their political ambitions. Upon three process-tracing case studies of the contributions to and defections from the US-led Global Coalition Against ISIL (GC) by three small states – i.e., Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands, this study concludes that small state coalition defection is indeed primarily the result of military capacity limitations. Although such defections did not constitute a wholesale exit from the GC by these small states. Instead, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands remained involved in the GC in a lower capacity to guarantee their security and foreign policy, which prompted their contribution to the GC in the first place.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Multinational military coalitions, defined as goal-oriented groupings of states with ultimately different interests "choosing to collaboratively prosecute a military mission" (McInnis, 2020, p.38), are traditionally regarded as the domain of major powers in international relations (IR) literature. However, while such coalitions are indeed typically led by a major power, such as the US or Russia, they furthermore consist of a diverse supporting cast of smaller states. Without these smaller states, there would be no coalition for the major power to lead into battle. Then, as Olivier Schmitt (2019) asserts, by contributing towards a coalition and integrating with the leading power, small states provide that coalition with both the means and the legitimacy to achieve its goals.

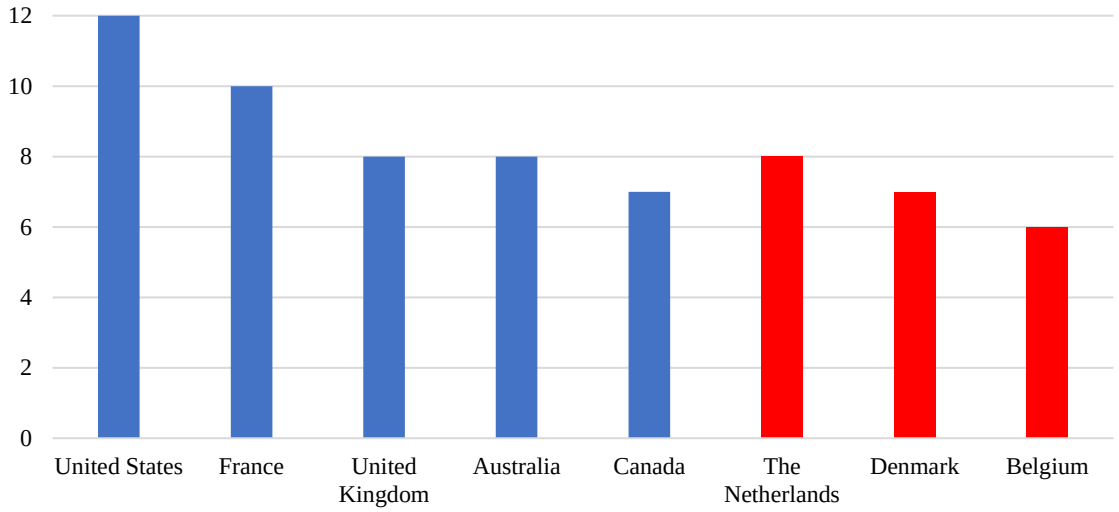
Consequently, most post-Cold War military coalitions included at least a few small states. For example, the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, codenamed Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), was supported by the Netherlands during the invasion and by a myriad of other small states thereafter – e.g., Albania, Denmark, and El Salvador (Carney, 2011); the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya received combat support from small states Belgium, Denmark, Jordan, the Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, and Sweden (Engelbrekt, Mohlin & Wagnsson, 2014); and the 2015 Saudi-led interventions in Yemen included small states Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar, and Kuwait (Blumi, 2018).

Hence, small states are essential to coalition warfare. However, this importance of small states to coalition warfare has yet to be reflected in the academic literature (Veenendaal & Corbett, 2015). Moreover, existing scholarship on small state coalition behavior is rather one-note. It mainly investigates the interests that compel small states to, despite their limited military capacities, forego lower-risk strategies like neutrality and free-riding for making costly contributions to major power-led coalitions, while overlooking those circumstances that shift such interests from contribution towards coalition defection instead, which Kathleen McInnis (2020, p.73) defines as the "non-routine abrogation of responsibilities in order to minimize operational risk, undertaken at other coalition partner's expense, significantly prior to mission conclusion."

Subsequently, it is these specific circumstances which prompt small states to, at least partially, abandon their duties, partners and the policy gains they sought to achieve through their contributions in the first place, that this study aims to uncover. Therefore, this study poses the following guiding research question: *Under what circumstances do small states defect from multinational military coalitions?*

Source: Adopted from International Institute of Strategic Studies (2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019).

Figure 1:
Number of combat aircraft contributed to the Global Coalition Against ISIL



Note: these numbers include reserve planes.

To answer this overarching question, this study will turn towards Kathleen McInnis' (2020) seminal model of coalition defection and expand it twofold. First, towards a new, contemporary setting – i.e., The Global Coalition Against ISIL (henceforth Global Coalition or GC), an 83-member coalition of international organizations and states – large and small – founded in 2014 at US direction to combat the rise of ISIL through airstrikes, special forces operations, and training missions (Saideman, 2016). Second, towards a new set of cases: small states. Specifically, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands. Despite their smallness and subsequent limited military capacity, these three states nevertheless contributed significantly to combat effort against ISIL. As shown in figure 1, at the height of their combat contributions, Belgium deployed 6 F-16s, Denmark 7, and the Netherlands 8 (McInnis, 2016, p.8-11). These numbers include reserve planes.

Strikingly, turning again to figure 1, these combat contributions made by small states Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands are roughly on par with the contributions of several larger powers with significantly higher military capacities, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. Moreover, these contributions even surpass those of Germany, Italy, Poland, and Spain, which did not contribute any combat units and fielded lower-risk support missions instead (Mello, 2019, p.7). Then, with their combat contributions to the GC, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands drastically "punched above their weight" (Cooper & Shaw, 2013, p.22).

While the interests that compelled these states to make such curiously sizable contributions to the GC will be studied below, even more academically puzzling is the fact that these three very similar states – comparable in size, military capacity, vulnerability, strategic outlook, and GC contributions – ceased their combat contributions at strikingly different times prior to GC mission success, being ISIL's territorial defeat on March 23rd, 2019 (Mello, 2019, p.15). Belgium halted its combat operations in 2015 and 2018; Denmark withdrew in 2015 and 2016; and the Netherlands retreated its combat units in 2016 and 2019. While some of these states have since recommitted to the GC combat effort – e.g., on 1 October 2020, Belgium deployed 4 F-16s to the GC, with Dutch force protection (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2020) – these prior withdrawals may still have compromised overall mission progress against ISIL and thus warrant attention.

Then, using McInnis' (2020) seminal framework, this study will seek to understand the circumstances triggering these withdrawals and assess whether they amount to coalition defection. Hence, to answer the central research question, this study will investigate the following case-specific question: *Why did small states Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands cease their combat contributions to the Global Coalition Against ISIL prior to mission conclusion and to what extent do these early withdrawals constitute cases of coalition defection?* This chapter will now proceed to extol the relevance and introduce the theoretical and methodological bases of the present study.

Relevance

In answering the above research questions, the present study serves both academic and policy ends. Academically, this study addresses dual gaps in IR and security studies scholarship, respectively on coalition defection and small states.

Starting with the former, while such multilateral military coalitions have become "the vehicle of choice" for prosecuting international military missions (McInnis, 2020, p.4), academic interest in their workings has so far lagged behind (Choi, 2012). Moreover, those few works completed on the topic of coalitions have mainly addressed the contributions made to rather than defections from such coalitions. Put differently, while theorists have worked to understand the interests states seek to attain through their coalition contributions, they have generally omitted the circumstances under which such interests turn towards a premature exit instead. Therefore, by isolating and analyzing coalition defection and the context thereof, this study takes a first and vital step towards gaining a holistic understanding of coalition dynamics.

Moreover, those few works completed on coalition defection have mostly studies the US-led coalitions in Iraq and Syria – i.e., OIF in Iraq and the International Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan (Davidson, 2014; Massie, 2016; McInnis, 2020; Mello, 2016; 2020). Hence, by focusing on the Global Coalition Against ISIL, this study expands defection literature twofold. On the one hand, it imparts further scholarly attention on the Global Coalition against ISIL, which – despite the valuable efforts of authors such as Tim Haesebrouck (2016), Patrick Mello (2019) and Stephen Saideman (2016) – has remained regrettably underexposed. Particularly the defections from this coalition have yet to receive structural academic attention, which this study will attempt.

On the other hand, this study introduces to defection research a new *type* of coalition. Where OIF and ISAF combined all three traditional domains of warfare – i.e., land, sea, and air (McInnis, 2020, p.44) – the GC mainly focused its combat efforts on an airstrike campaign, which entails lower operational risks. Hence, such a coalition might attract the contributions of more risk-averse allies that will sooner "head for the exits" when the going gets tough, as Jason Davidson (2014) put it; thereby possibly increasing the risks of coalition defection from the GC.

Turning to small states, IR and security studies scholarship has routinely omitted this most numerous and diverse category of cases (Veenendaal & Corbett, 2015). This category includes states ranging from tiny microstates, like San Marino and Palau, to states such as the Netherlands, which boast relatively robust economies but are dwarfed by surrounding states (Maass, 2009; Jesse & Dreyer, 2016, p.6-7). Yet, despite their inherent diversity, most theories and theorists have disregarded small states altogether; assuming them, due to their relatively limited economic and military capabilities – such concepts of power and capabilities underpinning most traditional IR theories – to be weak, vulnerable, and as such inconsequential (Jesse & Dreyer, 2016, p.1-3).

Still, small states continuously find ways to transcend their smallness and influence world affairs (Cooper & Shaw, 2013). Not just by focusing on niche topics, as suggested by Christine Ingebritsen (2002), but equally by joining larger powers in the high politics of war and peace, leveraging their military support for greater status and influence with the powers that be (Graeger, 2014; Wivel & Crandall, 2019); behavior which is not covered by and occasionally challenges traditional IR theories. Hence, by focusing on small state coalition defection, this study highlights an underrepresented set of cases and simultaneously tests McInnis' (2020) model of defection against these small state wildcards of IR theory, exhibiting "the most puzzling behavior" (Mello, 2019, p.15); thereby strengthening both its theoretical credentials and overall generalizability.

Then, looking beyond academia, this project aids policy makers and military planners in the following fashions. First, it studies the enduring security threat that is ISIL, which continues to dominate the security agenda despite the territorial defeat of its "fraudulent territorial caliphate" by the GC on March 23rd, 2019 (Blinken, 2021). Second, as mentioned, multilateral military coalitions have become the vehicle of choice for the prosecution of international military mission. As stressed by McInnis (2020, p.78-80), defections present a profound danger to the success and very survival of these coalitions. By providing insight into the various factors prompting small states to contribute to and defect from a coalition, this study offers military planners the necessary tools to recognize and address imminent cases of coalition defection. So that the relevant issues can be addressed when they arise, and coalition collapse can ultimately be avoided.

Lastly, and crucially, the valuable and varied roles of small states in multinational military coalitions, both politically and operationally, often go overlooked. Hence, by tracing the Belgian, Danish, and Dutch contributions to the Global Coalition, this study aims to honor the sacrifices made by such small states in service to and support of their allies, no matter the withdrawal date.

Literature Overview

Having argued the relevance of the present research project, this section will briefly review the existing scholarship on small states and coalition defection. To start with the former, small states are generally regarded as weak in traditional IR theory. Due to their modest economies and "inability to maintain a full spectrum of military capabilities" (Urbelis, 2015, p.63), small states are unable to unilaterally guarantee their domestic security vis-à-vis their larger rivals (Jesse & Dreyer, 2016, p.21). In the words of Anthony Payne (2004, p.21), "vulnerabilities rather than opportunities are the most striking consequence of smallness."

Consequently, small states are dependent upon larger states to ensure their national security and therefore tend to be fervent proponents of alliances and other international (security) organizations (Neumann & Gstöhl, 2006). Yet, "while small states have a strong incentive to support the development of international security organizations, they have few incentives to carry an equitable share of the burden after these organizations are created" (Haesebrouck, 2020, p.3). Given the non-rival and non-excludable nature of security and the limited capacities of small states, small states are expected to free-ride on the efforts of other states (Ringsmose, 2010, p.324).

Still, a cursory glance at the various multilateral military coalitions prosecuted since the end of the Cold War, particularly at the US, shows evidence to the contrary. IR literature suggests that this remarkable small state military activism is the result of a so-called fear of abandonment. Small states fear abandonment by the larger powers upon which they depend for their domestic security and thus contribute to the military coalitions prosecuted by these states in order to prove their defend-worthiness and thus guarantee their domestic security (Snyder, 1984; Matláry, 2014). However, authors like Pedersen & Reykers (2020) argue that the interests motivating small state coalition contribution are not limited to such negative security interests, but also include positive factors such as a desire to gain foreign policy prestige and influence with coalition allies.

Nevertheless, circumstances may arise whereunder the costs of continued coalition contribution may come to outweigh the benefits and interests turn instead towards an early exit from the coalition in question. Although scholarship on coalition defection remains in its early stages, several factors which may prompt coalition defection can be gleaned from the extant literature. Atsushi Tago (2009) and Cristian Cantir (2011) contend that coalition defection is the result of domestic election cycles. Jason Davidson (2014) and Justin Massie (2016) assert that not the elections themselves but the resulting leadership change, particularly from the right to the more dovish left, prompts coalition defection. Alternatively, Alex Weisiger (2016) argues that when states are confronted with diminishing battlefield circumstances, defection becomes more likely.

Michael Koch & Patricia Sullivan (2010) claim that it is the public approval of the chief executive of a certain state which "affects the timing of conflict termination." Sarah Kreps (2010) challenges this. She maintains that if elite consensus exists on the necessity of a certain operation, the electorate cannot distinguish between political parties on this issue, thereby rendering it moot. Hence, elite consensus keeps states engaged with a coalition or operation despite public opposition (Lagassé & Mello, 2018). Thus, "public opinion hardly matters" (Kreps, 2010, p.199). However, when such elite consensus breaks down, coalition defection once again becomes a possibility (Davidson, 2014, p.253). Finally, Patrick Mello (2016; 2020) highlights the impact of terrorist attacks during coalition deployment; stating that "terrorism works" to trigger defection.

While these accounts present a good starting point to study coalition defection, they still only assess individual pieces of the defection puzzle. Moreover, these works define defection in a binary sense, as a state being either all in or fully out of a coalition. Consequently, they omit the bulk of defection cases, which can take myriad shapes beyond such a complete withdrawal. Here,

McInnis identifies the following defection strategies: a) partial withdrawal; b) repositioning of forces; c) re-role of forces; d) increasing of caveats on forces; and e) swapping of high-risk combat units for lower risk support units (McInnis, 2020, p.73).

It is here that, by combining these pieces, Kathleen McInnis (2020) offers a comprehensive model to analyze coalition defection in all the above forms. This model is built on Robert Putnam's (1988) concept of the two-level game, which holds that a state's foreign policy is the result of interplay between the domestic and international politics. McInnis applies this concept to the topic of coalition defection. In her model, states decide to defect from a coalition on the domestic level, based on their domestic politics and military capacity. The shape of this defection is subsequently decided by the international political ties and dependencies of the defecting state upon its coalition allies, which influence a state to remain involved in the coalition in question beyond its defection, albeit in a more limited capacity (McInnis, 2020, p.99).

Put differently, domestic politics, military capacity, and "alliance/international pressures" are the independent variables of this model (McInnis, 2020, p.99). Put together, they compose the dependent variable: a state's operational profile – i.e., the "precise mix" of contributions made (McInnis, 2020, p.11). Consequently, coalition defection can be defined as any "significant change to a nation's operational profile [at least one year prior to mission conclusion,] that minimizes a nation's exposure to risk while increasing the operational burden on other coalition partners" (McInnis, 2020, p.18). This model is the analytical basis upon which this study will proceed.

Case Selection & Methodology

This section introduces the cases upon which the above theoretical framework will be tested. This study has selected for analyses the three European small states which contributed to the Global Coalition's anti-ISIL air combat campaign – i.e., Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands. As shown in table 3, these cases made remarkably sizable combat contributions to the GC despite their relatively small military expenditures. Respectively, Belgium contributed 6 F-16s, Denmark deployed 7 F-16, and the Netherlands sent a combat contingent counting 8 F-16s.

Beyond such similar contributions to the GC, these three small states share a striking number of similarities which render them highly comparable and thus compatible for a most alike research design. First, being situated in Western Europe, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands share similar geographical and geopolitical positions. Second, based on the objective factors

Table 1

Small state characteristics and contributions to the Global Coalition Against ISIL

State	Population (July 2021 estimate)	Military Spending in 2019 (% GDP)	Combat units contributed to GC in Iraq	Combat units contributed to GC in Syria	Date(s) of withdrawal
Belgium	11,778,842	0.93%	6 F-16s	6 F-16s	2015; 2018
Denmark	5,894,687	1.31%	7 F-16s	7 F-16s	2015; 2016
Netherlands	17,337,403	1.36%	8 F-16s	6 F-16s	2016; 2019

Sources: CIA World Factbook (2021a; 2021b; 2021c; 2021d; 2021e; 2021f), SIPRI (2021), International Institute of Strategic Studies (2015; 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019).

shown in table 8 – i.e., population size and military expenditures – as well as their geopolitical proximity to regional powers such as the UK, France, and Germany, these three states can be regarded as – and regard themselves as – small states. Third, due to their smallness, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands attempt to guarantee their domestic security through membership of the same alliances and international organizations – specifically NATO and the EU. Although, Denmark and the Netherlands are more – or in the case of Denmark, entirely – oriented towards the former, whereas Belgium attempts to balance its security policy between these two actors. Lastly, these three small states have near identical political systems, namely constitutional monarchies with parliamentary democracies governed by coalition governments.

On the basis of such similarities, one would expect these three states to withdraw from the GC in an equally similar timeframe, upon mission conclusion. Yet, as demonstrated once more by table 8, these states withdrew along widely varying timeframes. Consequently, these similar cases appear to be animated by dissimilar interests. To analyze the factors causing such dissimilarity and possible coalition defection, this study employs a comparative case study with a ‘most alike’ design, following the precedents set by other scholars of coalition defection, such as Jason Davidson (2014), Justin Massie (2016), and Kathleen McInnis (2020). This approach allows for the appreciation and navigation of the complex and context-dependent causal processes of coalition defection, which do not lend themselves to more surface-level quantitative methods. Furthermore, by keeping constant those variables shared across comparable cases, a ‘most alike’ design enables a more detailed focus on those idiosyncratic factors that send a case down a different path relative to its peers (McInnis, 2020, p.22). In short, context is key.

The foremost tool this case study employs to uncover the circumstances under which small states defect from major power-led coalitions is process-tracing. Process-tracing entails the "tracing of causal mechanisms using detailed, within-case empirical analysis of how a causal process plays out in an actual case" (Beach, 2017, p.1). Consequently, since the selected theoretical framework combines multiple independent variables, a detail-oriented approach like process-tracing is the ideal method to study the "multiple causal pathways" towards defection (Davidson, 2014, p.255). Such causal pathways are unique for each case. Therefore, using official document and public reporting, this study will trace and juxtapose the various domestic and international processes that led small states Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands to contribute towards and eventually withdraw from the GC combat effort, and thereon judge if defection has taken place.

While this study serves many academic and societal purposes, some limitations nonetheless apply. First, coalition defection is difficult to distinguish. Due to the numerous defection strategies available and the incentives for both the defecting state and the coalition to obfuscate any cases of defection, this study may accidentally omit a case of coalition defection. Second, this study aims to provide an overview of the factors causing coalition defection. While it may get far, establishing an exhaustive list is beyond the scope of this study. Third, since the factors uncovered in this study are unique to their respective cases, generalizability is limited. Still, identify those circumstances under which defection may become likely is vital for military planners and policy makers alike.

Reading Guide

This study will proceed along seven chapters. Chapter two reviews in further detail the extant literature on small states and coalition defection, describes the selected theoretical framework – i.e., Kathleen McInnis' (2020) model of coalition defection – and thereon establishes several expectations to guide the later analysis. Chapter three addresses the methodology employed, justifies the case selection, and further identifies the scope conditions limiting the analysis of the subsequent chapters. Chapters four through six analyze the selected cases, respectively Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands. Per case, these chapters provide an overview of the contributions to and withdrawals from the Global Coalition and trace the underlying causal processes leading thereto. These chapters conclude by judging the hypotheses vis-à-vis the results found. Finally, chapter seven summarizes the findings of the previous chapters, provides a concluding answer to the central research question, and identifies avenues for further research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

Small states represent the most numerous and diverse category of cases in comparative politics, comprising over half of the United Nations membership (Brady & Thorhallsson, 2021, p.2). A category which, if anything, will see its membership grow rather than decline in the near future, "as the average size of countries around the globe continues to decrease" (Veenendaal & Corbett, 2015, p.544). Though, despite their big numbers, small states have received only an equally small share of academic attention in both IR and security studies literature (Edström et al, 2018, p.4).

The same holds true for research on multinational military coalitions, as lamented by scholars such as Kathleen McInnis (2020, p.49) and Alex Weisiger (2016). Such coalitions have become the cornerstones of the foreign and defense policies of large and small states alike (Baltrusaitis, 2010). As Weisiger (2016, p.753) points out, even a major power like "the United States has not fought a war without coalition partners in over a century." Yet, a holistic understanding of their dynamics, especially regarding coalition defection and collapse, continues to elude scholars (McInnis, 2020, p.30). By addressing the dynamics of small state coalition defection, this study aims to address these dual gaps in existing IR and security studies scholarship.

Therefore, this section reviews the extant literature on small state coalition behavior and coalition defection. Subsequently, it introduces the selected theoretical framework and thereon identifies a set of hypotheses which will come to guide the analysis in the subsequent chapters.

Literature Review

As mentioned, small states have received lamentably little attention in IR theory (Hey, 2003). Furthermore, when small states were awarded scholarly consideration, assessments of their theoretical significance and national survival are skeptical at best (Wivel, Bailes & Archer, 2014). Especially in classical realism, where military power is the means to survival, small states – due to their insufficient military capacities to deter their rivals – are dismissed as weak (Donnelly, 2000; Guzzini, 1998); or as "the pawns of great power competition" (Brady & Thorhallsson, 2020, p.2). Alternatively, liberalism hails economic cooperation as an equalizer between large and small states (Keohane, 1971). Yet, the fact that the institutions facilitating such cooperation are formed by and for larger states is often overlooked. Therefore, as Anthony Payne put it (2004, p.21), in classical IR theory, "vulnerabilities (…) are the most striking consequence of smallness."

Their dismissal of small states aside, these classical IR theories do highlight a central characteristic of the small state condition: a fundamental security dependency on larger states. Yet, despite such dependency, and vulnerability, small states have not all been subjugated and wiped off the world stage by their larger counterparts. If anything, their numbers have surged after the Second World War (Baldacchino & Wivel, 2020, p.8). Consequently, there must be some foreign policy strategies that enable small states to transform their dependency into security; to survive.

The basis for these strategies can be found in the combined works of Stephen Walt (1985; 1990) and Glenn Snyder (1984), the founders of alliance theory. These authors assert that, since small states are unable to unilaterally guarantee their national security, their best hope is to find security in numbers within military alliances (De Wijk, 2005; Knudsen, 2007). Walt (1990, p.17) identifies two strategies that guide such efforts at alliance formation: balancing and bandwagoning.

First, "balancing is defined as allying with others *against* the prevailing threat" (Walt, 1990, p.17, emphasis added). An example of which is the successful attainment of NATO and EU membership by small Baltic states Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in 2004 to distance themselves from and balance against an increasingly assertive Russian Federation (Lamoreaux & Galbreath, 2008). Second, bandwagoning instead entails alignment *with* the adversarial power (Edström et al, 2019, p.36). Walt (1990, p.172) notes that cases of bandwagoning are relatively rare and only occur when balancing has either failed or is altogether impossible. To illustrate using the above example, bandwagoning would have occurred if the Baltic states had aligned themselves with the encroaching Russian Federation rather than its rivals – i.e., NATO and the European Union (EU).

Alternatively, if their geopolitical position allows or demands it, small states can forego alignment with any major power and instead practice a kind of strategic independence in the form of neutrality (Simpson, 2018). Such strategies of neutrality are mainly practiced by small states in close proximity to hostile nations – e.g., Finland during the Cold War, which found itself on the doorstep of the expansionist Soviet Union (Vaicekauskaite, 2017, p.12). By practicing neutrality and avoiding any behavior which can be perceived as threatening, small states – like Finland – can still maintain their security in the face of overwhelming opposition (Morris & White, 2011, p.104).

However, as Laurent Goetschel (1999) notes, with the end of the Cold War and the onset of globalization, both the need for and the possibility of practicing complete neutrality has all but disappeared. Hence, while some small states arguably still follow a strategy of limited neutrality, such as Switzerland (Morris & White, 2011) and Ireland (Jesse & Dreyer, 2016), the lion share of

small states tend to address their security dependency on larger states by practicing some degree of balancing and seeking shelter within alliances or international organizations. For instance, half of the founding members of NATO and the European Coal and Steel Community – and later the EU – were small states, and such numbers have only increased since the end of the Cold War (Burton, 2018).

Contrarily, Tim Haesebrouck (2020, p.3) warns that, "while small states have a strong incentive to support the development of international security organizations, they have few incentives to carry an equitable share of the burden after these organizations are created." Jens Ringsmose (2010, p.324) explains this counterintuitive phenomenon. The author highlights that the security generated by an alliance is in essence a purely public good, meaning that its benefits are available to the entire community, irrespective of their contributions towards it. Hence, small states, given their "inability to maintain a full spectrum of military capabilities" (Urbelis, 2015, p.63) and narrow economies, are expected to merely free ride and let their larger allies "bear a disproportionate share of the burden" (Wivel & Crandall, 2019, p.393; Pedersen, 2018, p.221).

Such expectations, based on the collective action theory pioneered by Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser (1966), gave rise to a burgeoning literature on burden-sharing in alliances and multinational military coalitions and operations (see Auerswald & Saideman, 2014; Baltrusaitis, 2010; Davidson, 2011; Haesebrouck, 2017). Yet, in his review of such burden-sharing literature, Tim Haesebrouck (2018b, p.104) finds an "anomalous lack of free riding" by small states. Likewise, a cursory glance at the membership of most (Western) post-Cold War multinational military coalitions, whether prosecuted through an alliance or ad hoc by a major power, shows an abundance of small states and microstates willing to take responsibility and contribute (ref).

Hence, according to Ida Maria Oma and Magnus Petersson (2019, p.105), this begs the question: "[w]hy would small states accept nontrivial costs and risks in out-of-area missions, often in the face of incentives for free riding?" Glenn Snyder (1984, p.467) regards such willingness to make costly coalition contributions as the product of an alliance security dilemma faced by small states, consisting of two competing pressures: a fear of entrapment versus a fear of abandonment (Matláry, 2014, p.254). The former expresses small state apprehension of becoming entrapped in a costly conflict only marginal to the small state's national interests. Whereas the latter is an expression of small state dependency upon its larger allies, betraying its fear that a decision to free ride may prompt abandonment by its security patrons and a return to insecurity (Cha, 2000, p.265).

Consequently, due to their fundamental security dependence upon their larger allies – their security patrons – for small states, "abandonment outweighs entrapment fears" (Snyder, 1984, p.484). Then, such abandonment fears trigger small states to participate in and contribute towards major power-led coalitions and thereby prove to their allies that they are still "defend worthy" (Pedersen & Reykers, 2020, p.17). In her review of NATO's post-Cold War coalitions, Janne Haaland Matláry (2014, p.254) finds that, relative to the Cold War, allies' fears of abandonment by the US have indeed grown since the end of bipolarity, prompting increased activism from allies.

However, Rasmus Brun Pedersen and Yf Reykers (2020) reject the assertion that a fear of abandonment constitutes the only, even primary, motivation for small states to contribute towards a major power-led coalition. The authors observe such a striking degree of variation in the contributions made by similar small states to major power-led coalitions, "which indicates that other drivers than just a fear of abandonment might be at play" (Pedersen & Reykers, 2020, p.19). Additionally, the authors insist that academic literature has yet to present credible evidence that larger powers indeed threaten to abandon smaller states if they fail to contribute towards a certain operation or coalition, in order to force them to overperform (Pedersen & Reykers, 2020, p.19).

While this does not invalidate any fear of abandonment on the part of small states, which does exist, as Matláry (2014) has demonstrated. Rather, Pedersen and Reykers (2020) state that no cases have been recorded of larger states actively exploiting such fears for their own gain. Hence, the authors argue that an altogether different approach is required to ascertain those factors motivating small state contributions to major power-led coalitions. An approach which looks beyond merely negative, threat-based incentives and instead similarly considers "more positive drivers" of small state coalition contributions (Pedersen & Reykers, 2020, p.19).

It is here that Kathleen McInnis (2020, p.50-60) offers one such model to categorize and understand the various interests guiding (small state) coalition contributions. McInnis identifies three such categories of interests: core, linked, and shared interests. Although states are not limited to one interest at a time and can subsequently be acting upon a combination of these interests. First, 'core interests' concern those "motivations for coalition participation that are straightforwardly related to a nation's fundamental national interests, culture, or values" (McInnis, 2020, p.50). Put differently, if a state contributes to a major power-led coalition to address a perceived threat to its very national or cultural survival, it is acting upon core interests. Then, where core interests are involved, strategic stakes are high, and the costs of inaction even higher. Hence, the state *must* act.

The most straightforward example of such core interests being at stake is in the event of an offensive attack upon a state's sovereign or allied territory, or the threat thereof (Saideman, 2016, p.295). Patrick Mello (2019a, p.3) emphasizes that such existential "external threats" can emanate both from other states – e.g., the Japanese attack upon Pearl Harbor, causing the US to enter World War II – or from non-state actors, such as transnational terrorist networks like Al-Qaeda and ISIL – e.g., the 9/11 attacks against the US by Al-Qaeda. Threats and attacks by this latter category of actors have become one of the main motivators for post-Cold War coalition formation, prompting the formation of such grand coalitions as OIF, NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, and more recently the Global Coalition Against ISIL (Saideman, 2016). Yet, this is not to say that all coalition partners were similarly motivated by core interests.

Turning to the specific plights of small states, justified or not, fear of abandonment remains a strong incentive for small states to contribute to major power-led coalitions. Since abandonment would mean such a critical loss of security, as noted by Snyder (1997, p.181), small states remain "inclined to contribute to international military missions to secure traditional, excludable alliance benefits" (Oma & Pedersen, 2019, p.106). For example, Georgia joined the US-led ISAF coalition after having been invaded by Russia in 2008 (Mouritzen & Wivel, 2012). By contributing, Georgia sought US support to deter Russia and secure its core interests: survival (McInnis, 2020, p.229).

Moreover, this fear of abandonment is yet more pronounced for those small states pursuing a strategy of 'super-loyalty' (Keohane, 1971, p.168). As Anders Wivel and Matthew Crandall (2019, p.392) understand, super loyal states design their entire foreign and security policy around "a strong and unwavering support" of a major power, to establish a so-called 'special relationship.' Then, super loyalists accept permanent entrapment to minimize risks of abandonment. Yet, to maintain this special relationship, super loyalists – or Super Atlanticists, in case of the US – must dutifully support the coalitions of their partner or risk losing their status and the essential security guarantees therein. Hence, super loyalists tolerate significant operational risks, as the strategic stakes are high. Estonia and Denmark are examples of Super Atlanticist states (Mouritzen, 2007).

Second, authors like Anders Henriksen and Jens Ringsmose (2012), Benjamin de Carvalho and Iver Neumann (2014), Babak Mohammadzadeh (2017), and Rasmus Brun Pedersen and Yf Reykers (2020) urge scholars to look beyond such negative, threat-based incentives and instead assess the various positive interests small states have to voluntarily contribute towards multilateral military coalitions. Upon these calls, McInnis (2020, p.53) identifies so-called 'linked interests.'

Linked interests concern cases in which states contribute to major power-led coalitions in order to achieve policy goals unrelated to the conflict prosecuted by the coalition in question. Put differently, when participating on linked interests, states utilize their coalition deployments as a means to a policy end unrelated entirely to the stated mission of the coalition (McInnis, 2020, p.53-60). William Wallace (1976, p.164) calls this practice 'issue linkage.' Chief among the linked ends desired, particularly for smaller states, is increased status with a powerful coalition leader. Next, such status can be leveraged for policy concessions from this state. Hence, small states "desire to be seen (…), to be recognized" and to be rewarded for their contributions (Pedersen, 2018, p.219).

Examples of such "forces for status" (Græger, 2014, p.86), "troops-for-influence" (Jakobsen, Ringsmose & Saxi, 2016, p.12) or "show-the-flag" strategies (Pedersen & Reykers, 2020, p.27) are legion. Justin Massie and Benjamin Zyla (2018) unmask Canada's significant combat contributions to US-led coalitions as attempts to improve relations with the US and better Canadian standing within NATO (Massie, 2013; 2019). Whereas Kathleen McInnis (2020, p.228) highlights France's success at leveraging its deployment to ISAF for US support for more French command positions within NATO. Yet, after having achieved its goal, France defected. Therefore, since states guided by such linked interests have no direct stake in the combat mission, they tend to be more risk-averse and thus – like France – are more likely to defect when risks or costs mount.

Lastly, states can be motivated to join multinational military coalitions on more normative grounds. McInnis (2020, p.52) labels these drivers 'shared interests' – i.e., those norms widely shared across the international community, like "adherence to treaties, advancing state sovereignty (…), protection of state borders and deterring territorial aggression" (McInnis, 2020, p.52). A prime example of such shared, normative interests is the so-called principle of 'responsibility to protect' (R2P) (Bellamy & Dunne, 2016). Born from the atrocities of the early twenty-first century, R2P obligates the international community to "help protect [global] populations from war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" (United Nations General Assembly, 2005, p.30).

However, while R2P has been used – and misused, according to Jeremy Moses, Babak Bahador and Tessa Wright (2011) – to justify myriad military interventions, such normative incentives are rarely the central motivators of military deployments. Even when they do prompt coalition participation, their distance from domestic politics and interests limits risk tolerance and even incentives free riding, since other states share these moral obligations to respond. Therefore, shared interests are generally insufficient to explain coalition contribution (McInnis, 2020, p.53).

Yet, interests – core, linked, shared, or a combination thereof – do not necessarily trigger coalition participation. Rather, before being able to deploy any "troops, resources, and authorities" to a coalition, states must address myriad national-level restrictions constraining their war powers (McInnis, 2020, p.11). Patrick Mello (2019b) discerns three types of such restrictions. Structural restrictions, which comprise those capacity and legal requirements that must be addressed before a state can consider any deployment. Put differently, does a (small) state have sufficient military strength and legal basis to contribute to a coalition operation – e.g., the "German constitution restricts the use of force to defensive purposes" (Mello, 2019b, p.44; Wagner, Peters & Glahn, 2010). Procedural restrictions pertain instead to the influence of parliamentary veto-players in the decision-making process that can limit the extent of coalition participation or prevent it altogether. Wolfgang Wagner (2018) reports modest empirical support for what he calls 'parliamentary peace' (see also Fonk, Haesebrouck & Reykers, 2019; Ruys, Ferro & Haesebrouck, 2019).

Finally, when deployment has been approved, states then seek to limit the impending operational risks to their contributed forces, particularly those states with no core interest in coalition warfare. Mello (2019b, p.47-49) labels such efforts operational restrictions. Following Stephen Saideman and David Auerswald (2012), such restrictions consist of behavioral or geographical caveats upon seconded forces, restricting the combat roles these forces can perform or the areas to which they can be deployed both to lower risk alternatives. The authors state that such limitations are political motivated and most likely under coalition governments, due to the many veto-players involved, as compromise means caveats (Saideman & Auerswald, 2012, p.69). For a thorough account of caveats, see Gunnar Fermann and Per Marius Frost-Nielsen (2018).

Then, do these numerous limitations upon states' coalition contributions equally limit their value to a coalition and its leading power? Especially concerning small states, which – given their limited military capacities and risk-averse nature – would be more likely to place such restrictions upon their forces. Olivier Schmitt (2019) identifies two rival approaches to small state coalition utility. Some military planners regard small state support, however limited, to be essential to a coalition's legitimacy on the world stage (Oma & Pedersen, 2019, p.106). Yet, Schmitt (2019, p.76) argues that such limited contributions muddy operational waters and thereby compromise mission progress. Instead, the value of small state contributions lies in their operational integration with the leading power and their ability to support the leading power in its mission priorities (Davidson, 2011, p.6-7). Successful integration breeds legitimacy, Schmitt (2019, p.81) contends.

In the face of such limitations upon their contributions and the value thereof, as well as myriad incentives to free-ride and let their larger allies bear a larger share of the burden, one can wonder under which circumstances the costs of contribution come to outweigh the benefits for small states and coalition defection becomes imminent. Although scholarship on the topic of (small state) coalition defection remains underdeveloped, several factors which may trigger coalition defection can nonetheless be gleaned from the extant literature. To establish when democracies become less reliable coalition partners, Atsushi Tago (2009) reviews twelve unilateral withdrawals from the US-led Operation Iraqi Freedom. Tago (2009, p.219) concludes that "the occurrence of a national election serves as a strong driving force to accelerate" coalition exits. Cristian Cantir (2011) supports this notion that coalition defection is mainly the result of domestic election cycles.

Alternatively, authors like Jason Davidson (2014), Michael Koch and Patricia Sullivan (2010), Justin Massie (2016), and Ulrich Pilster, Tobias Böhmelt, and Atsushi Tago (2015) argue that it is not merely domestic elections themselves but rather the resulting turnover of political leadership that prompts states to defect. However, according to Massie (2016, p.89-90), this causal effect is not universal. Rather, it is mediated by the political direction of the specific leadership turnover. Hence, coalition defection becomes more likely when, over the course of a coalition contribution, political leadership shifts from a more hawkish right-leaning government towards a more dovish left-leaning government (Koch & Sullivan, 2010, p.617).

Yet, Ajin Choi (2012) rejects such notions that domestic elections and leadership changes prompt what he names coalition 'abandonment behavior.' Instead, based on a review of 172 cobelligerent states in 47 wartime coalitions between 1816 and 2000, Choi (2012, p.649) asserts that lengthy war duration, a diminishing chance of victory, and large coalition membership render a state more likely to leave coalition warfare before mission conclusion. Alex Weisiger (2016) continues this line of argument. Weisiger (2016, p.764) alleges that such diminishing chances of victory as well as deteriorating battlefield circumstances – i.e., rising war costs – heavily influence the likelihood of coalition defection. In short, rising war costs mean rising odds of defection.

Furthermore, Michael Koch & Patricia Sullivan (2010) claim that it is not war costs as such but rather the public approval of the chief executive of a state that "affects the timing of conflict termination." Meaning that if public disapproval mounts vis-à-vis a certain deployment, political leaders will be incentivized to halt participation in that mission, to ensure their political survival. Though Sarah Kreps (2010) disputes this account. The author posits that if there exists a consensus

among domestic elites on the necessity of a certain deployment, the public tends to tolerate risks and casualties more readily (Baum & Potter, 2008, p.47). Furthermore, displeased electors can no longer differentiate between political parties on this issue, effectively rendering the issue moot politically. Consequently, Kreps (2010, p.191) insists that "public opinion hardly matters."

Then, elite consensus keeps states engaged with a coalition or operation despite public opposition. However, as Philippe Lagassé and Patrick Mello (2018) note, when such consensus breaks down and dissensus arises amongst elites, political considerations return to the fore of public discourse and elites subsequently default to the least electorally risky positions, fearing electoral retribution. Hence, Jason Davidson (2014, p.176) warns, when both the public and the opposition favor withdrawal, "it is just a matter of time before the ally's government will announce withdrawal." Justin Massie (2016, p.85) names a breakdown of elite consensus the subsequent return of electoral calculations as the main cause of Canadian and Dutch withdrawals from ISAF.

Moreover, Patrick Mello (2016; 2020) identifies domestic terror attacks during coalition deployment as another possible cause for defection. While some authors, like Stephen Saideman (2016) mainly regard terror attacks as incentives for states to enter a coalition, Mello stresses that an intensification of such terror attacks in response to and as a retribution for a state's involvement with a coalition can be a powerful incentive for that state to seek an early exit from coalition warfare. Therefore, Mello (2020, p.68) concludes that terrorism does indeed 'work' to trigger defection. Additionally, Tim Haesebrouck (2018a) argues that the same holds true regarding foreign terrorist fighters. Since states may join a coalition to address the threat of foreign fighters but may ultimately reverse this decision as coalition participation can cause further security threats, in the form of retaliation from returning – and trained – foreign fighters or further domestic radicalization (see Byman, 2015; Hegghammer, 2013; Lister, 2014; Milton, 2020; Wright, 2018).

Finally, traditional small state literature can be coopted to establish the last possible factor of coalition defection, namely capacity limitations. Small states may have defied the expectations of traditional small state literature and contributed towards the combat operations of a major power-led coalition. Nevertheless, there may come a moment that a small state must prematurely end its coalition duties due to insufficient military capacity – e.g., units contributed to a coalition return for maintenance with no replacement units available, or the units in question are instead required domestically for self-defense or for military duties under a different coalition or alliance. Then, while capacity limitations may not preclude deployment, they may still prematurely halt it.

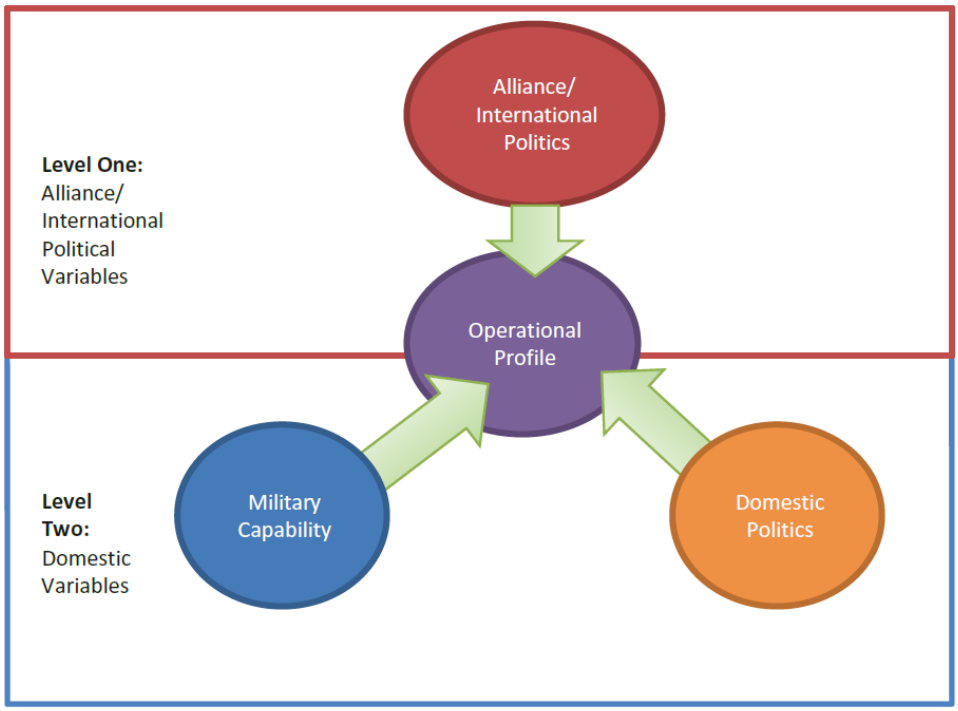
While these various accounts present a valuable starting point for the study of coalition defection, these works are nonetheless limited in size and scope, since they only assess individual pieces of the wider coalition defection puzzle. As Patrick Mello put it (2016, p.19): "there is no single factor that can account for withdrawal decisions." Moreover, most of the studies reviewed above employ a restrictive, binary definition of coalition defection. Meaning that states are defined as either all in or all out of a coalition, with coalition defection being regarded as the latter. Yet, as Kathleen McInnis (2020) recognizes, defection rarely takes the shape of a total withdrawal. Rather, there are myriad defection strategies which states can employ beyond the complete abandonment of their coalition partners. These strategies, which will be set out below, are fundamentally omitted by existing scholarship on coalition defection. Hence, a different, more comprehensive approach is required to serve as the theoretical framework for the present study.

Theoretical Framework

Combining the above reviewed disparate pieces of the coalition defection puzzle into one holistic, "integrated framework" (Massie, 2016, p.107), the work of Kathleen McInnis (2020) will provide the theoretical basis for the present study and the analysis conducted in the subsequent chapters. McInnis' model is constructed on Robert Putnam's (1988) concept of the two-level game, which holds that a state's foreign policy is the product of the mutual interaction between the domestic and international levels of politics. McInnis (2020, p.19) applies this concept of the two-level game to the topic of coalition defection and thereon identifies three independent variables: domestic politics, domestic military capability, and alliance/international politics. Together, these factors produce the dependent variable: a state's operational profile – i.e., "the precise mix of forces, resources, and authorities comprising a nation's contribution to a coalition" (McInnis, 2020, p.11).

In McInnis' (2020) model, presented below in figure 2, domestic politics covers public opinion, political discourse and debate, and the degree of consensus or dissensus among elites regarding the necessity of coalition contribution. Domestic military capability straightforwardly comprises a state's total array of available military units that could conceivably be contributed to a major power-led coalition. Lastly, alliance/international politics can be understood as a state's ties with or security dependency upon its coalition partners or the framework through which the coalition is prosecuted – e.g., NATO (McInnis, 2020, p.99-100). Justin Massie and Benjamin Zyla (2018) regard such dependency as the strategic 'value' of a coalition or alliance to a certain state.

Figure 2:
Causal model of coalition defection as established by Kathleen McInnis (2020).



Source: adopted from McInnis (2020, p.99).

The causal model, presented in figure 2, forms the basis for any change to a nation's operational profile, be it contribution or defection. Any such decision originates at the domestic level, where domestic politics will decide the employment of the available military capacity. When domestic politics has rendered a decision, the shape and execution of that course is subsequently determined on the alliance/international political level. Meaning, when a state decides to contribute towards a major power-led coalition, the shape of the contribution and the resulting national operational profile depend on the specific needs of the coalition and its leading power (McInnis, 2020, p.100). Especially when a state desires enhanced status, contributions are tailored to match the requests of and thus garner recognition from the leading power in question (Pedersen, 2018).

The same holds true where coalition defection is concerned. Pressures to push states out of their coalition responsibilities, for whatever reason, generally originate from domestic sources. However, when such national desires to defect reach the international level, they are subjected to the counter pressures of partner states. Such partner states have vested interests in pulling a leaving state back into the coalition, to maintain coalition integrity, legitimacy, and mission progress.

Hence, such pressures work to keep defecting states involved, albeit in a more limited capacity (McInnis, 2020, p.101). Justin Massie (2016) demonstrates this dynamic in the Canadian defection from ISAF. When the Canada signaled its intention to withdraw completely from ISAF, the US pressured Canada to remain involved and field a lower-risk military training mission instead of a high-risk combat operation. However, even though Canada remained involved in ISAF following its defection, it had lost all the prestige it had accrued over the course of its contribution; both within NATO and bilaterally with coalition leader the US (Massie, 2016).

Hence, in the words of Sarah Kreps (2010, p.203), major power-led coalitions have a degree of "institutional stickiness" about them. They work to keep states tethered to the coalition, even if their national interests turn from contribution to defection (McInnis, 2020, p.101). This is however not to say that coalition defection can no longer occur. Yet, this pressure exerted by partners may prompt defecting states to abandon their pursuit of a total withdrawal and instead select a different defection strategy, thus placing less operational strain on these very partner states. McInnis (2020, p.73) identifies five such alternative defection strategies: a) partial withdrawal; b) repositioning of forces to a lower risk area; c) re-role of forces – i.e., tasking seconded troops with lower risk roles; d) increasing of operational caveats on forces, limiting areas and missions to which troops can be deployed; and e) swapping high-risk combat units for lower risk support units. These various defection strategies are presented in further detail in table 4 (chapter 3).

Like a complete withdrawal, these alternative defection strategies still denote a "significant change to a nation's operational profile that minimizes a nation's exposure to risk while increasing the operational burden on other coalition partners," at least one year prior to mission conclusion (McInnis, 2020, p.18), and consequently qualify as cases of coalition defection. In short, while the decision to defect from a coalition originates at the domestic level, the specific strategy employed by a defecting state is dependent on the various international and alliance-level pressures brought to bear on the defecting state by its allies to prevent total withdrawal and even possible coalition collapse (McInnis, 2020, p.87); as was the case following Canada's defection from ISAF (McInnis, 2020, p.219).

Then, to fully grasp the factors animating the decision-making process behind coalition defection, this study must address "variables situated at both the domestic and international level" (Haesebrouck, 2016, p.18). Since McInnis' (2020) model comprehensively integrates such domestic and international-level variables, it will form the theoretical basis for the below analysis.

Hypotheses

Based on this theoretical framework, constructed on Putnam's (1988) concept of the two-level game of foreign policy, Kathleen McInnis (2020, p.24) establishes two hypotheses to guide defection research. First, "over time, perceptions of increased military and/or domestic political risk prompt nations to revisit their operational profile;" and second, "the determinants of which defection strategy to pursue are heavily influenced by alliance relationships and international politics" (McInnis, 2020, p.24). Yet, since this study endeavors to expand this model of coalition defection to fit a novel set of cases – small states – its hypotheses must equally be expanded to fit the context and scholarly literature of small states. Table 2 presents a list of these hypotheses.

With the first hypothesis, McInnis' (2020, p.24) identifies two domestic-level predictors of coalition defection – i.e., military capabilities and domestic politics. Yet, in its present phrasing, the former is erroneously equated with military *risk* and subsequently disregards the possibility of military *capacity limitations* – i.e., an insufficient number of available military units or budgetary means to deploy such units – as a pathway to coalition defection. Moreover, according to the above introduced literature, it is not an increase in military risks, as small states face myriad incentives to weather such risks – both positive (status-seeking) and negative (fear of abandonment) – but precisely such military capacity limitations which hamper small state ambition and force them to limit their assumed operational profile (Pedersen & Reykers, 2020; Urbelis, 2015).

Then, before this hypothesis can be employed to study small state coalition defection, it must first be rewritten to include military capacity limitations as an avenue to coalition defection. Moreover, another hypothesis will be introduced to specifically account for the aforementioned idiosyncrasies of small states. These hypotheses are as follows. H1: *Coalition defection is the result of domestic level limitations to a state's military and/or political capacity to maintain its operational profile with a major power-led military coalition.* H1A: S*mall state coalition defection is primarily influenced by limitations to military capacity rather than domestic politics.*

Proceeding to McInnis' (2020, p.24) second hypothesis. This hypothesis adequately captures the expected influence of international politics upon coalition defection decision-making – i.e., determining which defection strategy a state will pursue. Hence, this expectation does not require rewriting and can subsequently be adopted in its entirety to serve as the next hypothesis of the present study. H2: *The determinants of which defection strategy to pursue are heavily influenced by alliance relationships and international politics.*

Table 2
List of hypotheses

Hypothesis	Expectation
H1	Coalition defection is the result of domestic level limitations to a state's military and/or political capacity to maintain its operational profile with a major power-led military coalition.
H1A	Small state coalition defection is primarily influenced by limitations to military capacity rather than domestic politics.
H2	The determinants of which defection strategy to pursue are heavily influenced by alliance relationships and international politics
H2A	Due to their dependency upon their coalition partners, small states will proactively select a defection strategy which minimizes the international political fallout of their defection.

Source. Adopted from McInnis (2020).

Yet, this hypothesis does not specify any determinants. Small state scholarship does, however, offers one such factor which may structure the choice of defection strategy by small states, namely dependency. Since small states lack the military capacity to unilaterally guarantee their security, they are dependent upon larger states for their survival (De Wijk, 2005, p.17-23). Hence, small states seek to maintain a favorable relationship with their larger security patrons in order to avoid abandonment by these states and a subsequent loss of security (Snyder, 1984).

This dynamic of dependency transcends bilateral ties and equally comes into play when small states enter or (prematurely) exit military coalitions, particularly those led by their security patrons. First, when contributing, small states must tailor their operational profile not merely to the military needs of the coalition but also to the whims of the leading patron, or risk incurring its disapproval. Second, when defecting, small states directly threaten the integrity of the coalition, and subsequently the interests of the leading patron. This may severely damage relations and thus security, though this is not always the case – e.g., UNOSOM II (McInnis, 2020, p.90). Therefore, when small states defect from major power-led military coalitions, they are expected to select such a defection strategy as to minimize damage to the relations and security arrangements with the relevant security patrons. Hereon, the following – and final – hypothesis can be constructed. H2A: *Due to their dependency upon their coalition partners, small states will proactively select a defection strategy which minimizes the international political fallout of their defection.*

Chapter 3: Methodology

With the theoretical framework established, this chapter turns to the methodological underpinnings of the present study. In four sections, this chapter a) justifies the case selection; b) introduces the employed research methods; c) operationalizes the core concepts and variables of the theoretical framework; and lastly d) ponders the conditions of the scope of the present study and its findings.

Case Selection

As mentioned in the introduction, this study aims to uncover when and why small states defect from major power-led multinational military coalitions. To do so, this study traces the ebb and flow of combat contributions made by several small states to one such coalition, namely the Global Coalition Against the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This coalition was formed in 2014 at US direction to combat the rising threat of terrorism from ISIL and its "fraudulent territorial caliphate" (Blinken, 2021). Over time, membership of the Global Coalition has waxed and waned (Mello, 2019). At the time of writing, the Global Coalition counts 83 partners "united in ensuring Daesh's enduring defeat," including international organizations – such as NATO and the Arab League – as well as states, both large and small (Global Coalition, 2021).

The efforts undertaken by the Global Coalition to ensure ISIL's enduring defeat – dubbed Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) by the Pentagon – can be divided into three pillars (Saideman, 2016). First, an unrelenting air campaign, with coalition fighters striking ISIL targets in both Iraq and Syria. Second, a training mission to improve the ability of the local rebel forces "to engage [ISIL] in combat on the ground (Saideman, 2016, p.291). Lastly, a bid to arm these local opposition groups with modern equipment to ensure their ground superiority over ISIL (Haesebrouck, 2016). On March 23rd, 2019, these efforts proved successful, and ISIL's last remaining strongholds were liberated by the Global Coalition and its local partner forces. Two years later, the Global Coalition remains united to remove the last remnants of ISIL and ensure its "lasting defeat" (Blinken, 2021).

Yet, while 5 international organizations and 78 states have joined the Global Coalition, "actual contributions to the multilateral [combat] effort have been characterized by great variance" (Mello, 2019, p.1). Only thirteen member states have contributed to the air campaign against ISIL – i.e., the United States, Australia, Canada, France, Saudi-Arabia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Bahrain, Belgium, Denmark, Jordan, the Netherlands, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Table 3
Small state characteristics and contributions to the Global Coalition Against ISIL

State	Population (July 2021 estimate)	Military Spending in 2019 (% GDP)	Combat units contributed to GC in Iraq	Combat units contributed to GC in Syria	Date(s) of withdrawal
Bahrain	1,526,929	3.70%	None	Unspecified[b]	2014; 2015[b]
Belgium	11,778,842	0.93%	6 F-16s	6 F-16s	2015; 2018
Denmark	5,894,687	1.31%	7 F-16s	7 F-16s	2015; 2016
Jordan	10,909,567	4.70%	Unspecified[b]	20 F-16s[b]	2015; 2017[b]
Netherlands	17,337,403	1.36%	8 F-16s	8 F-16s	2017; 2019
UAE	9,856,612	5.80% (2014)[a]	None	Unspecified[b]	2014; 2015[b]

Sources: CIA World Factbook (2021a; 2021b; 2021c; 2021d; 2021e; 2021f), SIPRI (2021).
Notes. [a]: This is the most recent official figure available. Though, the UAE is estimated to have maintained a similar spending pattern through 2019 (Jo, 2021).
[b]: Insufficient or contradictory data. Documents mention contributions, though no specifics.

(McInnis, 2016, p.8-11; Saideman, 2016, p.291). The latter six of these are small states and thus form the population from which a sample will be drawn for review in the present study.

Yet, what exactly renders these states 'small?' Though no generally agreed upon definition of "smallness" has yet been established, two approaches can be identified (Crowards, 2002, p.143; Maass, 2009). On the one hand, scholars may purely emphasize absolute factors – e.g., GDP, population, or military capacity (Bailes, 2015) – which, if below a predetermined threshold, render a state small. Alternatively, by employing such factors comparatively, state size can be determined relatively (Jesse & Dreyer, 2016, p.6). Though the characteristics of the six small state contributors to the GC, presented in table 3, show striking variation, it is through their interaction with other, larger states – e.g., coalition leader US or regional powers like Germany or Saudi-Arabia – that all these states are defined – and even define themselves – as small (Jesse & Dreyer, 2016, p.10-12).

Employing this latter definition and turning once again to table 3, two strikingly different contribution trends can be identified. On the one hand, Arab small states Bahrain, Jordan, and the UAE show significantly higher defense expenditures than their European counterparts, expectedly owing to geopolitics and significant oil wealth (e.g., see Waltz, 2012). Yet, despite such higher capabilities, their contributions to the GC were ultimately sporadic, scarcely integrated with GC command structures, and generally limited to one conflict theatre (McInnis, 2016; Taylor, 2015).

For example, between 2 and 5 February 2015, Jordan dispatched an estimated 20 F-16s on a three-day bombing campaign in retaliation for the brutal immolation of a Jordanian fighter pilot at the hands of ISIL (Alarabiya, 2015). According to a Jordanian Air Force Commander, these strikes killed 55 militants and destroyed 20% of ISIL's military capabilities (Malkawi, 2015), though these claims remain unverified. Moreover, due to capacity limitations, Jordanian support trailed off immediately after this three-day campaign (Broder, 2015). Furthermore, Bahrain and the UAE both deployed fighter squadrons of unspecified size in early 2015, yet details remain vague to nonexistent (Cooper & Barnard, 2015; Reuters, 2015). This absence of consistent data disqualifies these "vague contributors" for analysis in the present study (Saideman, 2016, p.292).

On the other hand, table 3 demonstrates that European small states Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands similarly made both significant and consistent combat contributions to the Global Coalition, despite their lower defense spending compared to their Arab counterparts – significantly below NATO's 2% guideline and subsequently the topic of contentious debates and a burgeoning literature on burden-sharing (e.g., Blum & Potrafke, 2020; Haesebrouck, 2017; Ringsmose, 2010; Weiss, 2019). Respectively, these states deployed 6, 7, and 8 F-16 fighter aircraft to the GC combat effort (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2020, p.24; Forsvarsministeriet, 2021; Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2014, p.6).

Beyond such similar contributions to the Global Coalition, small states Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands share a striking number of characteristics and similarities that render them highly comparable. First, despite the differences in population size, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands can all three be identified as – and regard themselves as – *small states*, with a security and economic dependency on their larger partners, both within Europe and across the Atlantic (Andeweg & Irwin, 2014; Haesebrouck, 2020; Jakobsen & Rynning, 2019). Second, these three states have *near-identical political systems* – i.e., a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy producing coalition governments (Folketinget, 2014; Fitzmaurice, 1987).

Third, due to their small size, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands are forced to seek security within military alliances and international organizations, as predicted by Walt (1990). Moreover, since these three states share comparable geographical and geopolitical positions, their quest for security has led them to establish equally *comparable international organization and alliance memberships.* For example, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands are all founding members of the UN, the OSCE, and NATO. Additionally, Belgium and the Netherlands are

founding members of the European Communities – later the EU – which Denmark joined in 1973, during the first official enlargement (Juncos & Pérez-Solórzano Borragán, 2019).

Yet, these three states approach their shared memberships in remarkably different ways, particularly their NATO and EU memberships. Belgium, which hosts the governing bodies of both NATO and the EU, has generally strived to balance Atlanticism and Europeanism (Coolsaet, 2015, p.12). Though overall, Belgium tends to follow NATO and US leads on security matters. However, this support is not unconditional. Belgium vocally opposed the 2003 Iraq War, which severally strained relations with the US (Hummel, 2007, p.10). Subsequently, Belgium has sought to repair its standing with the US through coalition participation (Pedersen & Reykers, 2020, p.24).

Denmark, on the other hand, has opted out of the European Union's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) wholesale, due to a rejection of the Maastricht 'Treaty on European Union' by its electorate in a 1992 referendum (Wivel, 2014). Instead, integration with NATO and the US has become "the overall foundation for Danish foreign [and security] policy" (Wivel & Crandall, 2019, p.405). This strategy can be defined as a case of Super Atlanticism, as introduced above (Græger & Haugevik, 2009, p.44). Finally, the Netherlands tends to favor NATO collaboration on security policy and EU cooperation on economic policy (Vollaard, 2015). Hence, the Netherlands is generally regarded as an Atlanticist state (Ringsmose, 2010, p.332). Still, despite such dissimilar approaches to similar memberships, these three states are all still highly dependent upon the direct and indirect security guarantees offered by NATO, the EU, and especially the US.

Lastly, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands face a *similar level of threat from Islamic extremism and ISIL*. These three small states have all been the target of Islamic terrorism, with ISIL claiming direct responsibility for the 2016 Brussels Bombings that killed 32 civilians and wounded hundreds (BBC, 2016). Furthermore, between 420 and 516 Belgian, 125 Danish, and 220 Dutch citizens have departed to join ISIL as so-called foreign fighters (Van Ginkel & Entenmann, 2016). While Belgium has the most foreign fighters per capita in Europe, these foreign fighters still represent a pressing and complex security threat to all three states, the level of which only rises the longer a state is militarily involved in the Middle East (Reed & Pohl, 2017).

To summarize, European small states Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands share numerous similarities, both in their characteristics – size, political systems, geopolitical position, alliance and international organization memberships, and threat exposure – as well as their contributions to the Global Coalition Against ISIL – contributing 6, 7, and 8 F-16s, respectively.

Hence, one would equally expect such similar states to withdraw their troops from the Global Coalition along a comparable timeline. Yet, as shown in table 3, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands withdrew their combat forces at different times and drastically prior to mission conclusion. Then, these similar states appear to be animated by dissimilar interests. Begging the question which circumstances prompted these early exits and whether they amount to cases of coalition defection. Due to this theoretical potential and the availability of reliable official reporting in English or Dutch, small states Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands meet the conditions of theoretical sampling (Seawright & Gerring, 2008, p.295) and convenience sampling (Bryman, 2012, p.201) both. Henceforth, these states are selected as cases for analysis in this study.

Before progressing, the concepts of reliability and validity warrant some thought. Having selected three comparable but complex cases, a qualitative method – the shape of which will be detailed below – is the logical approach. Traditionally, reliability – or replicability (Bryman, 2012, p.46-47) – has not been the strong suit of such qualitative research. To nonetheless guarantee replicability to the highest possible degree, a comprehensive bibliography of the sources employed to study each of the selected cases is presented in the appendices. These limitations are further compensated with a robust validity – meaning a high causal integrity of the generated conclusions (Bryman, 2012, p.47). Since this study is built on context-based thick description, a holistic understanding of the various causal pathways guiding a state towards coalition defection – even those beyond the expectations of the extant theory – can be established. An understanding beyond the inferences offered by quantitative methods. The fruits of which are presented below.

Method

Following the precedents set by leading scholars of coalition defection, such as Jason Davidson (2014), Justin Massie (2016) and Kathleen McInnis (2020), this study exploits the compatibility between the selected cases to conduct three comparative case studies following a ‘most alike’ design – or ‘most similar systems design,’ if one prefers. As Carsten Anckar (2008, p.389) understands, “the reason for choosing systems that are similar is the ambition to keep constant as many extraneous variables as possible,” in order to focus on and causally explain an unexpected divergence between these otherwise similar systems. In the present study, this point of divergence between Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands can be found in their respective withdrawal dates from the Global Coalition air combat campaign. These dates are presented above in table 3.

Using more general quantitative methods, authors like Ajin Choi (2012), Atsushi Tago (2009), and Alex Weisiger (2016) have demonstrated that coalition defection indeed occurs and is a phenomenon deserving of closer academic attention. Yet, each coalition defection decision is the product of idiosyncratic domestic circumstances and processes, mediated by international level pressures. In other words, context is key to studying coalition defection (Massie, 2016, p.86). By keeping constant the many factors shared between the selected cases, the selected design affords the researcher a unique opportunity to gain insight into and compare the factors underpinning the decision-making processes underpinning coalition withdrawal and defection. Hence, although interrelation is generally frowned upon in social sciences, it is an advantage to the present study.

To make the most of this context-oriented research design, this study requires a method of data collection that is equally context-sensitive. It here that Jason Davidson (2014, p.255) suggests the use of process-tracing. Following Derek Beach (2017, p.1), process-tracing entails the "tracing of causal mechanisms using detailed, within-case empirical analysis of how a causal process plays out in an actual case" (see also Beach, 2016; Beach & Pedersen, 2013). Since the selected theoretical framework combines multiple independent variables, which themselves are aggregates for larger socio-political processes, process-tracing is the ideal method to disentangle the various causal paths leading to coalition defection. Hence, in the words of Massie (2016, p.87), this study will conduct three "comparative, process-tracing case studies." To this end, this study will analyze and synthesize public reporting, official documents, speeches, parliamentary proceedings, and relevant scholarly work. A bibliography of the sources used per case is available in the appendices.

Measurements

This section succinctly operationalizes the variables of the theoretical framework. This theoretical framework expects that the decision to contribute towards or defect from a major power-led military coalition originates at the domestic level and is the product of interplay between two independent variables: military capabilities and domestic politics. The former is defined by McInnis (2020, p.64-65) exclusively as a state's total arsenal of deployable military units to a coalition. Yet, this omits a state's military budgets from the equation. A (small) state may possess enough military units that could be deployed to a coalition but may still lack the budgetary means to do so. Hence, this study expands and rewrites 'military capabilities' to 'military capacity,' which is more appreciative of the capacity limitations claimed by the literature to constrain small states.

The latter aggregates all those domestic socio-political factors and circumstances which determine how and if the available military capabilities are contributed, or indeed withdrawn, from a major power-led coalition (McInnis, 2020, p.65-69). Put differently, this variable concerns a state's political will. The above reviewed extant theory on coalition defection offers many suitable examples of such domestic political factors – e.g., election cycles, leadership turnover, elite dissensus, battlefield circumstances, terrorist attacks, and returning foreign fighters.

Finally, while the decision to defect is determined by the domestic-level variables, the specific shape – or strategy – of that defection is the result of the last independent variable – i.e., alliance/international politics (McInnis, 2020, p.63-64). This variable can be understood as the sum of all the pressures levelled at the defecting state by its partners to maintain coalition integrity and keep this state tied to the coalition, albeit in a more limited capacity. Such pressures can stem from partner states or the alliance that prosecutes the coalition and can range from diplomacy and sanctions, or the threat thereof, to the defecting state's own dependence upon its coalition allies – i.e., alliance/coalition value. Though not exclusively, this is particularly relevant for smaller states.

Together, these three independent variables – military capability, domestic politics, and alliance/international politics – produce the dependent variable: the operational profile – i.e., the total number of military units and authorities seconded to a coalition (McInnis, 2020, p.11). Then, coalition defection can be recognized as a sudden and "significant change to a nation's operational profile that minimizes a nation's exposure to risk while increasing the operational burden on other coalition partners," at least one year prior to mission conclusion (McInnis, 2020, p.18). Hence, there are myriad defection strategies, which can be identified from the changes to the operational profile. An overview of these strategies and the associated operational profiles can be found below.

Examples of coalition defection include the Canadian and French defections from ISAF. Canada joined ISAF in 2005 to gain prestige with NATO and the US and defected again in 2011. This defection was due to rising risks and casualties, the unwillingness of NATO allies to help share its sizable operational burden, and the subsequent the breakdown of elite consensus, which until then had insulated the deployment from a deteriorating public opinion. After extensive pressure from the US, which Canada had aimed to court with its considerable combat contribution to ISAF, Canada altered its defection strategy from a complete withdrawal – the removal of the operational profile – to 'swapping' its combat units for a training mission (Massie, 2016). Then, the decision to defect was taken domestically while the strategy was determined internationally.

Table 4
Overview of available coalition defection strategies

Strategy	Expected change to operational profile
Total withdrawal of forces or capabilities.	Total removal of the operational profile.
Partial withdrawal of forces or capabilities.	Reduction of the size of the operational profile.
Repositioning of forces or capabilities.	Size unchanged; relocation of (part of) the units constituting the operational profile.
Re-role of forces or capabilities.	Size unchanged; changed roles for (part of) the units constituting the operational profile.
Increasing caveats upon forces or capabilities.	Size unchanged; added restrictions on (part of) the units constituting the operational profile.
Swapping of high-risk forces or capabilities for lower-risk forces or capabilities.	Size increased/decreased; decrease of combat units with concurrent increase of support units

Source: adopted from McInnis (2020, p.17).

France too joined ISAF to gain prestige with NATO and the US. Having achieved its interests – a four-star position within NATO Command – and following a political leadership turnover from the right to the left, France defected in 2012 by partially withdrawing its combat forces and re-roling the remaining troops in its operational profile to support roles. This enabled France to meet other threats while retaining at part of the prestige gained (McInnis, 2020, p.221).

Scope Conditions

Before proceeding, the possible limitations upon the scope of the present study warrant attention. First, cases of coalition defection are rather difficult to identify for outside observers. Both the defecting state as well as the coalition in question face considerable incentives to obfuscate the defection from the public eye, the former eager to salvage its reputation and the latter desperate to maintain coalition integrity and prevent further premature exits. Moreover, since militaries meticulously prepare myriad scenarios for consideration by policymakers, including drawdowns, defection need not be as messy as the name might suggest; defection may even appear routine (Noll, Van Den Wollenberg & Frerks, 2016, p.6-7). This may reveal why coalition defection has not spawned more academic scrutiny and equally why such scrutiny is direly needed. Therefore, this study may accidentally misinterpret or omit a case of coalition defection despite its best efforts.

Second, as mentioned, the central aim of this study is to provide insight into the various circumstances leading (small) states to defect from major power-led military coalitions. While it may get far, establishing an exhaustive list of every possible factor prompting coalition defection is beyond the scope of the present study. Hopefully, it will form the objective of future research instead. Third, since the various factors uncovered in the present study are unique to their respective cases and contexts and therefore hardly exhaustive, generalizability is inevitably limited, as is the plight of qualitative research (Howard, 2017). Nevertheless, this does not dismiss the value of the below findings, as identifying and recognizing those circumstances under which coalition defection may become increasingly likely is vital for military planners, policymakers, and scholars alike.

Chapter 4: Belgium at the Global Coalition

This chapter initiates the analysis of the present study upon the theoretical and methodological guidelines set out above. This chapter analyzes whether and – if so – how and why Belgium, the first of the three selected cases, defected from the GC combat campaign. To do so, this chapter a) traces the causal process underpinning the two Belgian combat contributions to the GC – between October 2014 and June 2015 and from July 2016 until December 2017; and b) on the basis of such findings, judges the above identified hypotheses and the relevant academic literature.

GC Combat Contribution I: October 2014 – June 2015

Belgium's post-Cold War foreign and security policy is defined by military activism on the one hand and contradictions on the other hand. Since, Belgium's strategic documents identify its desire to establish itself as a "solidary and credible partner" in international military coalitions (Vandeput, 2016, p.71). Yet, simultaneously, Belgium cashed in significantly on the so-called peace dividend and slashed the very military budgets enabling its desired activism (Biscop, 2013, p.34; Sandler & George, 2016, p.182). Moreover, where small state Belgium had sought domestic security shelter mainly with the US and NATO during the Cold War, afterwards it shifted this focus away from the US and towards the EU instead (Coolsaet, 2009, p.40; Flahaut, 2000; Liégeois, 2015).

Eventually, this strategic shift caused a severe clash with the US over the legality of the 2003 Iraq invasion, which was supported by several Atlanticist (small) states Denmark and the Netherlands but was vehemently contested and snubbed by Belgium (Haesebrouck, 2020, p.40), leading US media to brand Belgium the "Axis of Weasel" (Coolsaet, 2009, p.47). Thereafter, Belgium sought rapprochement with the US and to balance its Europeanism and Atlanticism, for twofold reasons (Biscop, 2013, p.37). First, since European security integration remained stuck in its infancy stages, Belgium remained at least partially dependent upon the US for its domestic security. Second, to gain foreign policy influence with the US (Pedersen & Reykers, 2020).

Despite Belgium's limited military budgets, these twofold endeavors were to be attained through the above military activism. Specifically, though significant combat contributions to the various multinational military coalitions prosecuted by the US. For instance, in 2011 Belgium concurrently contributed 6 F-16AMs to ISAF in Afghanistan – until mission conclusion in 2014 – and another 6 F-16AMs to OFF in Libya (Anrig, 2015, p.288; Fonck & Reykers, 2018, p.683).

Despite this increased military activism vis-à-vis the US, Belgium – unlike Denmark – was not invited to attend the origins of the GC, which were laid down during a closed-doors meeting in the wings of the 2014 NATO Wales Summit on 5 September 2014 (Nicks, 2014). Yet, when on 10 September 2014, the US officially "announced the formation of a broad international coalition to defeat The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)" (State Department, 2014), Belgian Foreign Minister Didier Reynders was swift to indicate the willingness of the Belgian government to contribute to the military efforts of such a US-led Global Coalition Against ISIL (Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014a, p.8).

Belgium underlined this willingness to participate in the newly formed GC during its attendance of the Conference of Paris on Peace and Security in Iraq, co-hosted by French President François Hollande and Iraqi President Fouad Massoum on 15 September 2014 (Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014b, p.3). During this conference, Iraqi President Massoum officially requested the attending states for their political and, crucially, military support to ensure the lasting defeat of ISIL and for the formation of a legitimate new Iraqi government (Hollande & Massoum, 2014, p.1). The attending states, including Belgium, welcomed this request and agreed to support the "the new Iraqi Government in its fight against Deach (ISIL), by any means necessary, including [the] appropriate military assistance," and to "remain fully mobilized" until such goals were met (Hollande & Massoum, 2014, p.1-2; Tran, 2014).

Three days after the Paris Conference, on 18 September 2014, Foreign Minister Reynders together with Belgian Defense Minister Pieter De Crem convened a joint session of the Foreign Affairs Commission and the Territorial Defense Commission of the Belgian parliament. During this session the Ministers reaffirmed Belgium's pledge made during the Paris Conference to join the GC combat effort and discussed the shape such a Belgian contribution to the GC might take.

First of all, Minister Reynders underlined that Belgium would under no circumstances deploy ground combat forces (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014b, p.5). The operational risks faced by such ground forces would be too high, according to the Minister. Furthermore, unlike many of its allies, Minister Reynders stated that Belgium would refrain from supplying weapons to local opposition forces, since "it is still not clear where those weapons might eventually end up" (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014b, p.30). Hereon, Defense Minister De Crem identified three possible coalition contributions that would be both feasible and acceptable to Belgian government and – by extension – the Belgian public.

First, Belgium would be willing and able to deploy 6 F-16AMs and 120 personnel to the GC indefinitely. These F-16s would be cleared to conduct airstrikes, armed reconnaissance flights, and intelligence gathering missions under the banner of the GC over Iraqi territory. Second, next to air combat units, Belgium could realistically contribute two C-130 Hercules transport aircraft for an indefinite period and one C-130 Hercules for a limited tour of duty. Third, Belgium could field three squadrons of Special Operations Forces (SOF), totaling 35 operators, to conduct "train, advice and assist," reconnaissance, or limited targeted action missions. Lastly, and surprisingly, Belgium would be able to execute these three deployments both simultaneously and indefinitely, according to Minister De Crem (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014b, p.8-10).

Still, to ensure that its contribution would fit the operational needs of the coalition, the Belgian government signaled that it would await a formal US request to join the GC. This request was received on 23 September 2014. Herein, the US petitioned the Belgian government to "favorably consider the deployment of the F-16s and other military assets, in coordination with US Central Command" and highlighted that such Belgian combat contributions would "provide vital support to the campaign" (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014c, p.6). A day later, on 24 September 2014, the Belgian government officially accepted this US request.

Yet, following the 2014 elections, the Belgian government was in a caretaker upon receipt of the US request. Hence, it required the explicit approval of both parliament and the new incoming government led by Prime Minister Charles Michel in order to deploy any military forces to the GC (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014b, p.13; Fonck & Reykers, 2018, p.682). Consequently, the incoming government drafted a resolution proposing such a contribution to the GC that would subsequently be put to a vote in parliament (De Lobel, 2014). This proposal included the deployment of Belgian F-16s and SOF operators to Iraq and, strikingly, also to Syria until the end of 2014, despite the absence of a clear international legal mandate to justify Belgian deployment to Syria (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014d, p.25-26).

However, due to the objections of the outgoing government led by Elio Di Rupo, which too had to provide its approval, the envisioned Belgian contribution to the Global Coalition was reduced to include the following (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014c, p.6-7): 1) a contribution of 6 F-16AMs, including reserve jets and 120 support troops; 2) for the duration of one month – from October 2014 to November 2014 – after which an extension would be decided pending a parliamentary evaluation; 3) limited to Iraqi territory; and 4) legitimized by the Iraqi

request for international military intervention against ISIL, submitted during the Paris Conference and based on Article 51 of the UN Charter – i.e., the right to collective self-defense (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014c, p.20).

Hence, on 26 September 2014, the latter contribution proposal was put to a vote in parliament. The supporting rationale offered by the government was threefold. First, as stated in the coalition agreement of the incoming Michel government (2014, p.136), Belgium endeavors to portray itself as "a solidary and credible partner." By accepting the US request for participation in the GC combat campaign, Belgium can "maintain its engagement" and garner prestige with its international partners (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014c, p.5). Second, due to the "increasing violence and the grave and systematic violations of human rights by terrorist group ISIL" (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014c, p.20), as one Belgian politician put it, "intervention can even be regarded as a [moral] duty" (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014c, p.13; 2014d, p.53). Lastly, ISIL forms a substantial threat to the security of "the West in general and to the Belgian population and institutions in particular" (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014c, p.20). This threat could not be ignored.

Overall, the Belgian political parties subscribed to the above rationale offered by the government and the proposed Belgian contribution to the US-led Global Coalition was approved with overwhelming support during a plenary session of parliament on 26 September 2014 (Yahoo News, 2014). To be precise, the resolution was passed with 114 votes in favor, 10 abstentions, and 2 votes against (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014d, p.58). Put differently, a strong elite consensus was established in support of the first Belgian combat contribution to the GC, with the following operational profile: 6 F-16AMs and 120 support personnel.

Then, Belgium established its first operational profile upon a mix of what McInnis (2020, p.50-60) respectively calls linked, shared, and core interests. While the former two interests have indeed historically been prime motivators of Belgian coalition contributions (Liégeois, 2015; Pedersen & Reykers, 2020), McInnis warns such interests are only tangentially connected to the outcome of the conflict prosecuted by a coalition and consequently denote a relatively high risk of defection. Yet, Belgium also contributed out of core interests, which reveal high strategic stakes and thus work to keep states tethered to a coalition, even when risks rise and the going gets tough. Hence, as McInnis (2020, p.50-51) predicts that, when states contributing upon core interests do defect, they tend to select such a defection strategy that still keeps them involved in the coalition.

The Belgian government cited as its core interests for contributing to the GC combat effort the direct threat posed by ISIL to the "Belgian population and institutions in particular" (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014c, p.20). Yet, upon closer consideration, a further core interests for the Belgian contribution to the GC can be identified. Since small state Belgium is unable to unilaterally guarantee its domestic security, it depends upon larger actors for protection – i.e., the US and EU as the "pillars" of Belgian domestic security (Vandeput, 2016, p.29). Then, since these actors make up GC leadership – with the US as coalition leader – Belgium has a core interest in contributing to this coalition. Meaning that, by supporting the military efforts of these actors, Belgium in turn hopes to ensure their protection and avoid abandonment.

Still, despite such core interests to participate in the GC, various concerns were raised in parliament about the adopted contribution. Such concerns mainly related to the risks and dangers associated with a possible blowback of the Belgian participation in the GC combat campaign upon its domestic security (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014c, p.7; 2014d, p.37). Politicians expressed concern that the Belgian airstrikes against ISIL might inspire more Belgians to join ISIL and carry out retaliatory terror attacks upon their return to Belgium. These politicians offered as an example the 2014 terrorist attack upon the Jewish Museum in Brussels. This attack, which killed 4 Belgians, was perpetrated by such a returned foreign fighter (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014b, p.31). Minister De Crem conceded this point but reassured his colleagues that while such threats could never be eliminated entirely, they could – and would – be anticipated and addressed by the government. Moreover, Minister De Crem stressed that, despite such risks, resolute Belgian military action against ISIL remained necessary (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014b, p.31).

With parliamentary approval secured, the Belgian F-16s, which had already been on route to their GC base in Jordan during the parliamentary debate on their very deployment – a formality according to Foreign Minister Reynders (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014d, p.55) – conducted their first airstrikes under the banner of the GC on 6 October 2014 (VRT News, 2014). Over the course of their month-long deployment in October 2014, Belgian F-16s conducted 12% of the total coalition flight operations, including airstrikes, close air support, and recon missions. Still, the Belgian red card holder, stationed at the GC HQ in Qatar – which checks every mission against the prevailing rules of engagement – vetoed one air operation to prevent possible excessive collateral damage (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014e, p.5).

Based on this favorable review of the Belgian integration into the GC and US reaffirmation that the long-term engagement of international partners would be critical to mission success, the now fully instituted Michel government informed parliament on 24 October 2014 that it had decided to extend the mandate of the Belgian combat contribution to the GC until 31 December 2014 (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014e, p.6). This decision raised a furor in parliament, since the government had explicitly committed to making any extension or expansion of the initial mission mandate contingent upon parliamentary review and approval (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014e, p.7). Yet, as stressed by Defense Minister De Crem's successor, Steven Vandeput, now that the government was no longer in caretaker status, it could act with the complete authority vested in it by the Belgian constitution, including the deployment of troops – or the extension of their deployment (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014e, p.18; Fonck & Reykers, 2018).

On 19 November 2014, the above history repeated itself. Contending that "doing nothing is not an option," Ministers Reynders and Vandeput informed parliament that the government intended to extend the Belgian combat contribution to the Global Coalition one final time, until 30 June 2015 (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014f, p.10). Next to the extension of the F-16 combat mission, the Belgian government signaled its willingness to begin a training mission in Iraq in 2015 (Van Lierop, 2014). This decision was formalized on 27 February 2015, when the government confirmed that it would contribute 25 "trainers, commandos, and staff officers" to the coalition efforts to "train, advice and assist" the Iraqi military, starting March 2015 (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2016a, p.9; VRT News, 2018). At the time of its deployment, this Belgian contribution to the GC training mission had no scheduled end date.

However, as its now twofold contribution to the GC wore on, it became clear that Belgian military budgets would run out on 30 June 2015 (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014f, p.21). While the training operation could remain active, Minister Vandeput admitted that the Defense Department had planned from the outset to conclude the Belgian combat contribution of F-16s to the GC on 30 June 2015, as this was the maximum deployment present military budgets allowed for (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014f, p.21). Hence, an extension beyond 30 June 2015 would necessitate the clearing of extra funds beyond the defense budget, which would prove controversial in a time of significant cutbacks – e.g., on health care – and was thus unlikely to occur (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014d, p.30; 2014g, p.13).

Then, due to such budgetary limitations to its military capacity, Belgium was unable to extend its combat contribution to the GC a third time and was subsequently forced to withdraw the 6 F-16AMs comprising this combat contribution, which had clocked over 3500 coalition flight hours (HLN, 2017a), on 30 June 2015 (De Greef, 2015). Furthermore, since this withdrawal left the GC with a sizable capacity gap which had to be backfilled by other GC allies, significantly prior to mission conclusion on 23 March 2019, this Belgian withdrawal can be constituted as a case of coalition defection.

However, Belgium did not defect completely from the GC, since it maintained its training mission of 25 army instructors. Moreover, to avoid its limited military budgets from threatening the continuity of the GC combat campaign in the future, in May 2015, Defense Minister Vandeput proposed the creation of a combat rotation system to his Dutch counterpart Defense Minister Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert. Under this proposed system, Belgium and the Netherlands – which too was confronted with military capacity limitations upon its GC contributions – would alternate the deployment of F-16s and force protection units to the GC. Meaning that a Belgian combat contribution would be supported by Dutch force protection and vice versa. Hence, by sharing and "lowering the costs" of contribution, Belgium and the Netherlands could both "secure the deployment of F-16s," and guarantee their continued participation in the GC combat campaign as a whole (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2016a, p.7; HLN, 2017b). While Dutch Defense Minister Hennis-Plasschaert stressed that the Dutch government "would not hesitate" to cooperate with Belgium where operationally viable, the minister also stressed that such a system could only succeed "if every partner keeps delivering" (Knack, 2015).

Upon this warning, the Dutch government agreed to this rotation system, which came into effect just in time to cover the Belgian withdrawal. Thus, when Belgium retreated its 6 F-16s on 30 June 2015, the 6 Dutch F-16s seconded to the GC took over the Belgian combat duties and consequently assumed their first combat rotation (VRT News, 2015). In its turn, Belgium deployed a force protection contingent of 25 troops to secure these Dutch fighter jets (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2016a, p.7; 2020, p.27). Consequently, from July 2015 until July 2016, when duties would rotate again and Belgium would assume responsibility for the shared Belgian-Dutch GC combat mission, the remaining Belgian operational profile at the GC consisted of a training mission of 25 army instructors and a force protection mission also counting 25 troops (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2020, p.27).

Hence, despite the institution of the above Belgian-Dutch combat rotation system, Belgium still effectively defected from the GC, simply by way of a different defection strategy. This particular Belgian strategy is not directly captured by the roster of defection strategies identified by McInnis (2020, p.17) and can therefore best be regarded as a combination of swapping and a partial withdrawal. The former since Belgium swapped its high-risk and cost combat units for lower-risk and cost force protection units. The latter since, by alternating combat contributions as opposed to making individual contributions, Belgium and the Netherlands effectively halved the number of combat units they contributed to the GC; thus, leaving the GC with a capacity gap.

Still, this choice of defection strategy provided further evidence that it was not a loss of political will to contribute to the GC but rather an insufficient domestic military capacity – particularly budgetarily – that was the cause of the premature Belgian exit from the GC. Moreover, even as it retreated its F-16s, the Belgian government stressed its imminent return to the GC anti-ISIL combat campaign (VRT News. 2015).

GC Combat Contribution II: July 2016 – December 2017

A few months after the Belgian defection from the GC, Defense Minister Vandeput reiterated this desire of the Belgian government to return to active GC combat duty, especially if an international legal mandate could be precured to cover operations over Syrian as well as Iraqi territory. In the words of Minister Vandeput, "if there is established an equal coalition in Syria [as in Iraq], (…) we [Belgium] cannot remain on the sidelines" (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2015, p.6). However, it was not this desired mandate expansion to Syria which would prompt the Belgian return to active GC duty, but rather an altogether more tragic reason, namely the heinous terror attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015, perpetrated as retaliation for the French GC airstrikes on ISIL by a Belgian terror cell – partly made up of returned foreign fighters (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2015, p.6).

To show its solidarity with France and take responsibility for the Belgian connection to this tragic event, Belgium deployed its navy frigate Leopold I from 18 November 2015 until 4 January 2016 to support the French aircraft carrier Charles De Gaulle, as the launch platform for retaliatory French airstrikes on ISIL in Syria (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2016b, p. 5; De Morgen, 2015). While Leopold I was deployed on a non-combat force protection mandate, meaning that an analysis of its contribution and withdrawal is technically beyond the

scope of the present study, its short deployment to the GC – though lauded by France and the GC (Global Coalition, 2016) – still represents a case of coalition defection. This defection can be explained by the fact that Leopold I was contributed exclusively on the basis of shared interests – i.e., solidarity with France in the wake of the Paris attacks – and was therefore recalled when more strategically important naval missions required Belgian attention. Hence, this defection was the result of political limitations, specifically strategic de-prioritization.

Urged on by the tragic events in France, the UNSC (2015a, p.2) unanimously adopted Resolution 2249, which called upon its member states to "take all necessary measures (…) to eradicate the safe haven they [ISIL] have established over significant parts of Iraq and Syria." Based on this broader international legal mandate, several states decided to expand the area of operations of their GC (combat) contributions to Syria – e.g., Germany on 1 December 2015 and the UK the day thereafter. Recalling the above statement of Minister Vandeput and reaffirming the "direct threat" of ISIL to Belgium and the West, Belgium too indicated its desire to this end. Hence, on 10 December 2015, the Belgian government officially requested parliament to recognize UNSC Resolution 2249 and thereon expand the mandate of its current and future GC contributions – limited to Iraqi territory by the parliamentary resolution of 26 September 2014 – to equally cover deployments to Syrian territory (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2015, p.11). Parliament subsequently assented to this request from the Belgian government.

Subsequently, on 3 March 2016, the US officially petitioned the Belgian government to employ such expanded internationale legal and parliamentary mandates and to rejoin the GC air combat efforts against ISIL, in both Iraq and Syria (Kroet, 2016; Vanschoubroek, 2016). However, public opinion was skeptical of the legality of such an operation over Syrian territory, despite the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2249. Since, according to several media hit pieces at the time, this resolution did not refer directly to Chapter VII of the UN Charter as the basis for the legitimate use of force under international law (Wouters & Ruys, 2016). Still, the wide consensus among the Belgian elite that participation in the GC and operation over Syrian territory was necessary and justified, as expected by Kreps (2010), negated such public disapproval (Vanschoubroek, 2016).

However, most of this public opposition to Belgian GC airstrikes over Syria evaporated on 22 March 2016. On this fateful day, ISIL-gunmen attacked Zaventem Airport and Maelbeek metro station near the EU Headquarters in Brussels (BBC, 2016). This odious attack killed 35 people and injured 320 more (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2016b, p.1; McDonald-

Gibson, 2017). In response, the Belgian government noted that "despite the fact that our fighter jets ceased their actions in July of last year, our country became the target of an awful attack by ISIL" (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2016b, p.3). This dark day in modern Belgian history, regarded by the Belgian government as the twin result of the "blowback" of its participation in GC airstrike campaign against ISIL and Belgium's "sad record" of the most foreign fighters per capita in Europe, did not halt Belgium's return to its GC combat duties but accelerated it, if anything (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2016c, p.4-7; 2016b, p.8).

This development represents a striking departure from existing defection literature, which holds that such foreign policy blowback, in the shape of domestic terror attacks over the course of a coalition contribution, tends to accelerate coalition defection rather than further contributions to the coalition in question (Mello, 2016; 2020). Although, if such attacks were to increase in both size and number, this outcome might conceivably change. Furthermore, this Belgian risk tolerance is all the more remarkable due to traditional risk-averseness of the Belgian public and political elite (Biscop, 2013, p.34). Consequently, the fact that elite consensus on the need for Belgium to stay involved in the GC combat campaign was maintained in the wake of these grim events shows that the interests underpinning its contributions must strike at the very core of Belgian security, if their benefits continue to outweigh the astronomical cost paid in human lives on 22 March 2016.

Hereon, Belgian Prime Minister Michel on 13 May 2016, reiterated that the government had decided to contribute to both the GC combat campaign in Iraq and Syria (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2016a, p.6). Like in 2014, Belgium would deploy 6 F-16s along with approximately 120 support personnel to the GC combat campaign against ISIL (AD, 2016a). Yet, this second Belgian combat contribution differed strikingly from the first in four key respects.

First, the mission would run for duration of one year – i.e., July 2016 to June 2017 (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2016a, p.8). Second, following the above US request and as justified by UNSC Resolution 2249, the Belgian F-16s would be deployable to both Iraq and Syria (Barnes, 2016; Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2016a, p.8; Yahoo News, 2016). Third, this combat mission would be conducted concurrently with the ongoing training mission in Iraq (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 20120, p.24). Lastly, the Belgian combat mission would be executed as part of the Belgian-Dutch rotation system, meaning that the Netherlands would provide force protection for the Belgian F-16 fighter contingent (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2016a, p.7-8; Rubin, 2016).

Consequently, when duties rotated for the first time on 1 July 2016, 6 Belgian F-16s arrived in Jordan to assume responsibility for the shared GC combat mission and to relieve their Dutch colleagues, which had been stationed there since the beginning of the GC air campaign against ISIL, almost two years prior (NU.nl, 2016). The Netherlands, in turn, substituted the withdrawing Belgian troops and deployed a force protection contingent of 35 troops to secure the Belgian F-16s. This division of tasks was to last until June 2017, when the Netherlands was scheduled to take over the next combat rotation (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2016a, p.8). Then, the Belgian operational profile included 6 F-16s, 120 support troops, and 25 army instructors.

In May 2017, however, when Belgian F-16s had completed over 3400 flight hours and the end of their mission neared, this rotation system started to show the first cracks. Since, on 23 May 2017, the Netherlands indicated that it would be unable to take over the next combat rotation due to limitations to its domestic military capacity and readiness (Van Berlaer, 2017; Heylen, 2017). Consequently, the US strongly requested Belgium extend its combat mission until the end of the year in order to avoid a loss of combat capacity (HLN, 2017b). Though PM Michel promised that the Belgian government would carefully "study" the request, he warned that the requested mission extension "was not accounted for" in the present Belgian defense budgets (HLN, 2017b).

Still, recognizing that "it strengthens the image of our country [Belgium] as a credible partner" (HLN, 2017b), PM Michel eventually acquiesced and extended the Belgian mission until 31 December 2017, though in a more limited capacity (Van Berlaer, 2017). Then, from 1 July 2017 to 31 December 2017, upon the conclusion of its initial contribution, Belgium reduced the number of deployed F-16s from 6 to 4. While Minister Vandeput stressed that "the assignments executed by our [Belgian] planes for the international coalition [would] remain unchanged," he added that the number of monthly flight hours conducted by these planes would also be reduced from 400 to 250 (De Morgen, 2017). Still, PM Michel insisted that this extension was "a strong signal towards our partners [that] Belgium is a reliable partner" (Global Research, 2017). This strong signal was received by the GC and the US and admitted Belgium into the so-called 'restricted core group,' which afforded Belgium high-level access to intelligence, meetings, and allies – including the US.

While this more limited extension of the Belgian combat contribution to the GC may seem at first like a case of coalition defection, following a strategy of partial withdrawal. This would, however, be an oversimplification. Since, the Belgian reduction came in response to a sudden pullback by the Netherlands from its responsibilities under the Belgian-Dutch GC combat rotation

system, which it was due to take over in July 2017. Therefore, this reduction of its number of F-16s contributed from 6 to 4 enabled Belgium to extend its combat mission to the GC and to backfill at least partially the lost Dutch combat capacity, despite such an extension not being calculated in its limited military budgets. Hence, the onus of this case of coalition defection lies not with Belgium but with the Netherlands – and will consequently be further explored in Chapter 6.

As the Belgian operational profile was reduced from 6 to 4 F-16s on 1 July 2017, Minister Vandeput conducted several high-level missions with his Dutch counterpart to discuss the future of the rotation system. Since Belgium did not possess the budgetary and military capacity to extend its contribution a second time, Minister Vandeput emphasized that "it absolutely is the [Belgian] intention that the Dutch take over [the mission] from us in the beginning of next year, following the initial agreements that we made last year" (Heylen, 2017). Subsequently, in September 2017, with its readiness nearly restored, the Dutch government agreed to take over the next combat rotation from January 2018 until December 2018 (RTL Nieuws, 2017). To great Belgian relief.

Subsequently, Belgium and the Netherlands completed this rotation on 3 January 2018 (NOS, 2018). Incidentally, this would be the last rotation of duties between Belgium and the Netherlands prior to ISIL's territorial defeat on 23 March 2019. Under this final rotation, the 4 remaining Belgian F-16s were relieved by 6 Dutch F-16s, for which Belgian troops would provide force protection one last time (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2020, p.24; NOS, 2018). These Dutch F-16s and their Belgian protection would remain stationed at the GC until 31 December 2018. Consequently, following these changes, the Belgian operational profile at the GC was once again reduced to 25 army instructors and 25 troops providing force protection to the Dutch F-16s. This operational profile would remain in place until May 2018, when Belgium made one last contribution to the GC, prior to ISIL's imminent territorial defeat on 23 March 2019.

The conclusion of the second Belgian combat contribution to the GC and the subsequent withdrawal of its 4 remaining F-16s and its accompanying support staff did not constitute a case of coalition defection, since the lost Belgian combat capacity was immediately backfilled by 6 Dutch F-16s; although this Dutch deployment came half a year later than originally scheduled. Put differently, while the institution of the Belgian-Dutch combat rotation system did constitute a case of coalition defection, since it reduced the total number of combat units contributed to the GC by these states, the alternating contributions made thereunder are best understood as one contribution capacity-wise. Deferrals of the deployment and the fallout thereof notwithstanding.

Then, on 4 May 2018, with ISIL on the backfoot, the Belgian government adopted a proposal by Defense Minister Vandeput for a final Belgian contribution to the GC. On the one hand, this proposal included the deployment of the Constructiegenie – the Belgian combat engineering corps – to Erbil Airport in Iraq, to aid with reconstruction and capacity building. On the other hand, this proposal increased the number of Belgian troops conducting 'train, advice and assist' missions in Iraq to 80 (News.Belgium, 2018). Both these contributions were scheduled from half May 2018 until 31 December 2018, to conclude in conjunction with the Belgian force protection mission deployed under the Belgian-Dutch combat rotation system (VRT News, 2018).

Consequently, in January 2019, more than four and a half years after its first contribution to the GC, Belgium withdrew its last remaining capabilities and ended its operational profile at the GC, in anticipation of ISIL's imminent territorial defeat on 23 March 2019 – i.e., mission success (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2020, p.24; De Wolf, 2019). Since this complete Belgian withdrawal from the GC was completed mere months prior to GC mission conclusion – i.e., less than one year – and as such would not have had a sufficiently significant impact upon GC mission progress, it does not constitute a case of coalition defection.

In short, over the course of its tenure at the GC, Belgium has sought to establish itself as a "solidary and credible partner" (Vandeput, 2016, p.71). Despite the various budgetary woes complicating its participation, Belgium has punched significantly above its weight and thereby earned its desired title. This was especially apparent in 2017, when Belgium extended its F-16 mission in response to a last-minute Dutch pullback. Lastly, Belgium would prove its solidarity as a partner once more in 2020, when it contributed F-16s to the GC for a third time (Nieuwsblad, 2020). Yet, this final deployment is beyond the scope of the present study.

Conclusion

In short, Belgium contributed twice to the GC combat campaign – respectively from October 2014 to June 2015 and again between July 2016 and December 2017 – but defected only one, namely upon the conclusion of its first combat contribution – the withdrawal of its navy frigate Leopold I from the GC in January 2016 notwithstanding, as it was only deployed on a non-combat mandate. The second Belgian withdrawal was covered by the Netherlands, upon the very rotation system by which Belgium had defected in the first place. Since this rotation system prevented a loss of GC combat capacity due to the second Belgian withdrawal, it does not constitute a case of defection.

Yet, the question remains: why did Belgium defect at all? H1A expects coalition defection to be the result of domestic-level limitations to a state's political or military capacity to maintain its operational profile with the coalition in question. H1A regards the latter factor to be the main obstacle faced by small states in their efforts to maintain their operational profiles, due to their widely asserted "inability to maintain a full spectrum of military capabilities" (Urbelis, 2015, p.63). Upon consideration of the sole case of Belgian coalition defection form the GC combat campaign, both these hypotheses can be confirmed.

This Belgian defection was the clear result of military capacity limitations, pertaining particularly to Belgium's restrictive military budgets, which were slashed following the conclusion of the Cold War in order to cash in on the so-called peace dividend and have constrained Belgian military activism since (Haesebrouck, 2020, p.42). This can be gathered from the statements by Belgian Defense Minister Vandeput that the Defense Department had known from the outset that military budgets would run out 30 June 2015 and had consequently planned a withdrawal of the Belgian combat forces on that same date, irrespective of political and parliamentary decision-making (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014f, p.21; 2014g, p.13). Moreover, since Belgium was going through a period of budgetary cutbacks, for instance on healthcare, an expansion of the military budgets to maintain the Belgian combat contribution to the GC was expected to prove highly unpopular with the body politic and was therefore not attempted.

Further evidence that the Belgian defection was the result of domestic military rather than political limitations can be found in the fact that, upon the eve of its defection from the GC, the Belgian government had already planned its return to active GC combat duty, as part of the newly instituted Belgian-Dutch combat rotation system. (VRT News, 2015). This rotation system will be considered in further detail below. Still further, the various predictors offered by the extant literature on coalition defection – mostly political in nature – had no bearing on Belgium's early exit from the GC. For example. Belgium went through its election cycle – held as the main accelerator of coalition defection by Cantir (2011) and Tago (2009) – both prior to and after its combat contributions to the GC.

What is more, the political leadership change – from the center-left to the center-right – resulting from these elections and culminating during the establishment of the first Belgian combat contribution to the GC, did not hamper but enabled the adoption of this contribution. According to Davidson (2014) and Massie (2016), as the main proponents of leadership change as a predictor

of coalition defection, this was explained by the ideological direction of the leadership change in question – i.e., from left to right. These authors assert that defection had become more likely it the direction of this leadership change had been reversed (Massie, 2016, p.89-90). Fonck & Reykers (2018) add to this that, since the outgoing government of Elio Di Rupo was in a caretaker position at the time of its consideration to contribute to the GC, it required explicit parliamentary approval for such a contribution. Therefore, the outgoing and incoming governments, despite their political and ideological differences, jointly submitted to parliament a proposal for contribution in the GC combat campaign, which was consequently adopted with wide support.

Then, following Kreps (2010), this demonstrates the existence of a robust elite consensus on the strategic importance for Belgium to become and remain involved in the GC combat effort. This elite consensus regarding the importance of Belgian participation in international military coalitions in general was furthermore shared across the various Belgian governments, taking a prominent place in the coalition agreements of at least the most recent three Belgian governments (Federale Regering, 2011; 2014; 2020) as well as the 2016 'Strategic Vision for Defense 2016-2030,' set out by Defense Minister Vandeput (2016).

The significance of the maintenance of this elite consensus across time and governments is compounded by the fact that Belgium became the target of a deadly terror attack on 22 March 2016, as the direct result of its participation in the GC anti-ISIL combat campaign – constituting a case of foreign policy blowback upon domestic security. The fact that Belgium, which had been increasingly worried about the risk of such a deadly instance of blowback due to its high numbers of departed foreign fighters (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014c, p.7; 2014d, p.37; 2016b, p.3), nevertheless maintained its engagement in the GC combat campaign represents a strong break with extant coalition defection literature. Since, theorists such as Mello (2016; 2020) expect that severe terror attacks – or a high number of foreign fighters in the case of Haesebrouck (2018a) – as a direct result of a state's participation in a military coalition prompts that state to seek an early exit from the coalition in question, as opposed to renewing its engagement. Of course, such a decision might change if such attacks were to intensify in size, scope, and number. Still, the theoretical implications of the Belgian decision to continue its engagement stand.

Moreover, such continued engagement in the face of significant operational risks and costs demonstrates that the interests Belgium seeks to attain through its contributions to the GC combat campaign must be of significant strategic value. Since, by extending its engagement in the GC,

Belgium effectively proves that the benefits of contribution outweigh the considerable costs thereof. The next section will explore and establish these imperatives in detail.

Hence, upon the above, H1 and H1A can be validated, and the mentioned works of the extant defection literature can simultaneously be falsified. Then, with the causal factor prompting the Belgian defection identified – i.e., military capacity limitations, particularly budgetarily – it is equally important to understand why Belgium avoided a total withdrawal upon its defection from the GC in July 2016 and instead decided to combine swapping and partial withdrawal – in the guise of the Belgian-Dutch rotation system – as its defection strategies, which kept it tethered to and involved in the GC combat campaign until – and even beyond – mission completion on 23 March 2019. It is here that H2 identifies Belgium's international political ties as instructive. An expectation which H2A specifies to include Belgium's small state security dependencies upon its GC allies. In the present case, both these hypotheses can be confirmed.

Since, as mentioned, when its planned defection from the GC approached in May 2015, Belgium proactively contacted the Netherlands – which was facing military capacity limitations of its own, though in the shape of a diminished military readiness – to lower and share the costs of GC participation by alternating and rotating the deployment of combat and force protection units. This rotation system was instituted in time for Belgium's defection from the GC, meaning that it defected upon a combination of swapping, by exchanging its F-16s for force protection forces; and partial withdrawal, by effectively halving the number of combat units contributed to the GC by these states. This strategy, testament to the Belgian elite consensus, kept Belgium involved in the GC beyond its July 2015 defection, albeit in a reduced – though not insignificant – capacity.

Put differently, Belgium continued to accept significant operational and domestic risks and costs – as proven during the 2016 Brussels bombings – to participate in the GC combat campaign. Why prompted this decision-making? As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, Belgium aims to portray itself as a "solidary and credible ally" by actively contributing to multilateral military coalitions, such as the GC. The reasons underpinning this endeavor are twofold. First, such military activism "secures the Belgian government a lasting influence and impact upon international security" and subsequently with its larger allies (Vandeput, 2016, p.236). Such influence enables Belgium to purse its foreign policy goals. For example, Belgium's contribution in the GC combat campaign afforded it – along with Denmark and the Netherlands – access to the 'restricted core group' of states, which provided it with direct access to intelligence, meetings, and "additional

Table 5
Overview of Danish defections from the GC anti-ISIL combat effort prior to 23 March 2019

Defection date(s)	Cause	Strategy
July 2015	Military capacity limitations (H1A)	Swapping/partial withdrawal. The rotation system instituted by Belgium and the Netherlands swapped half of the F-16s initially contributed to the GC by these states for lower-risk force protection units.

Note: dates are approximations.

restricted discussion forums" with coalition leader the US, at various political levels (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2020, p.23). Then, such access enabled Belgium to punch above its weight and thereby to contradict Payne's (2014, p.623) statement that "vulnerabilities rather than opportunities are the most striking consequence of smallness in global politics."

Second, despite such access, certain vulnerabilities remained. Belgium remains a small state which is unable to unilaterally guarantee its domestic security. Especially, since the European security infrastructure upon which Belgium had placed its post-Cold War security hopes remains to this day stuck in its infancy stages. Consequently, Belgium was forced to strike an at times uneasy balance between its desired Europeanism and more pragmatic Atlanticism – between the EU and the US – to guarantee its domestic security, even though it had snubber the latter following the end of the Cold War (Biscop, 2013, p.33; Coolsaet, 2009, p.40). Hence, Belgium furthermore contributed to the GC, its leadership made up by these actors – Belgium's primary security patrons – to maintain its relationships with and guarantee protection from these actors, upon which Belgian domestic security depended. As Defense Minister Vandeput (2016, p.236) put it in his 'Strategic Vision for Defense 2016-2030,' Belgium "generates security through [military] solidarity."

In summary, Belgium only defected once from the GC anti-ISIL combat campaign – i.e., in July 2015, following the conclusion of its first combat contribution to this coalition – by creating a rotation system with the Netherlands to alternate combat contributions. This choice of defection strategy demonstrated Belgium's willingness to accept non-trivial risks in order to remain involved in the GC combat campaign. This is the result of a combination of foreign and security policy imperatives. The former a pursuit of influence and the latter a pursuit of security. Both core Belgian interests. Henceforth, upon this conclusion, both hypotheses H2 and H2A can be confirmed.

Chapter 5: Denmark at the Global Coalition

In two parts, this chapter a) traces the causal process and factors behind the two Danish combat contributions to the GC – i.e., from October 2014 until October 2015 and between June 2016 and December 2016 – and its subsequent withdrawals following the conclusion of these missions; and b) concludes by judging the guiding hypotheses vis-à-vis the findings of this process-tracing effort.

GC Combat Contribution I: October 2014 – October 2015

Since the end of the Cold War, small state Denmark has practiced a security policy of super loyalty to the US, which theorists such as Mouritzen (2007) and Wivel & Crandall (2019) term 'super Atlanticism.' Under this policy, Denmark has positioned itself as a dutiful and "impeccable" supporter of the US and its various military operations and coalitions (Ringsmose & Rynning, 2008), both within NATO and without – e.g., OIF, ISAF, and OFF. This military activism established Denmark as a close ally of Washington (Rynning, 2013, p.91). In turn, this status allowed Denmark to emphasize a so-called 'special relationship' with the US, which afforded Denmark access to, influence with, and – most crucially as a small state – protection from the US, especially vis-à-vis renewed Russian geopolitical aggression (Jakobsen & Rynning, 2019, p.893).

As an expression of such Danish military activism and support for US military efforts, Danish Foreign Minister Martin Lidegaard already on 25 August 2014 – weeks prior to the official formation of the Global Coalition on 10 September 2014 – submitted to the Danish parliament a proposal to support the US efforts in Iraq with the deployment of a C-130J Hercules transport plane along with 55 support troops until the end of the 2014-2015 parliamentary year (Folketinget, 2014a, p.2). This transport plane would provide logistical support to US, Iraqi and, Kurdish forces – e.g., by transporting weapons, ammunition, and other materiel (The Local, 2014a).

Two days later, on 27 August 2014, this resolution was adopted with 104 votes in favor, 0 votes against, and 75 absent – the latter statistic a quirk of the Danish political system rather than a measure of political opposition (Folketinget, 2014b). Afterwards, Foreign Minister Lidegaard said that he was "pleased with the broad political support for Denmark's contribution against ISIS in Iraq. [Since] ISIS is one of the biggest – if not the biggest – threats currently faced by the international community" (The Local, 2014a). Hence, with the deployment of this C-130J Hercules transport plane, Denmark's GC operational profile was established even before the GC itself.

Subsequently, when the US presented its plans for a multinational coalition to fight ISIL for the first time on 5 September 2014, during a behind closed doors meeting in the margins of the 2014 NATO Wales Summit, Denmark's proactive contribution and its reputation as a close and loyal ally earned it a seat on the table alongside its larger allies – i.e., the US, UK, France, Australia, Germany, Canada, Turkey, Italy, and Poland (Nicks, 2014). During this meeting, the present allies – including Denmark – "agreed that there is no time to waste in building a broad international [military] coalition to degrade and, ultimately, destroy the threat posed by ISIL" (Kerry & Hagel, 2014). Hence, unlike its compatriots from the Low Lands, Denmark was a founding member of the Global Coalition Against ISIL, established on 10 September 2014 (State Department, 2014)

Denmark reaffirmed its commitment to this US-led Global Coalition against ISIL during the Paris Conference on Peace and Security in Iraq, hosted by French President Hollande and Iraqi President Massoum on 15 September 2014. During this conference, Iraqi President Massoum requested the international community for military assistance in the fight against ISIL, which "is a threat not only to Iraq but to the entire international community" (Hollande & Massoum, 2014, p.1). In response, the attendees pledged to support the Iraqi government and population in the fight against ISIL "by any means necessary, including [the] appropriate military assistance" in order to ensure the lasting degradation and defeat of ISIL (Hollande & Massoum, 2014, p.1; Tran, 2014).

On 25 September 2014, Denmark received an official request from the US to transform these commitments into contributions to the GC's anti-ISIL air combat campaign. Hence, the next day, on 26 September 2014, Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt announced that the government was planning to contribute 7 F-16AMs to the GC combat effort against ISIL for the duration of 12 months (The Local, 2014b). Moreover, the area of operations of these Danish jets would be limited to Iraq, as such operations were legitimized by the "concrete request [for military aid] by the Iraqi government," according to PM Thorning-Schmidt (The Local, 2014b). Pending parliamentary approval, these Danish jets could depart for their base of operations in Kuwait and execute their first GC missions within a week's time (The Local, 2014b).

Lastly, PM Thorning-Schmidt stressed that she understood that many Danes felt hesitant regarding the proposed Danish deployment to Iraq, but that equally "there are many Danes who are deeply concerned about ISIS" and the threat it posed to Danish security (The Local, 2014b). Hence, Denmark had a responsibility to both its citizens and the international community to fight the "horrific and brutal terrorist organization" called ISIL, the PM contended (The Local, 2014b).

Consequently, four days later, on 30 September 2014, the Danish government submitted to parliament a proposal to deploy the abovementioned 7 F-16AMs, including 4 operational and 3 reserve jets. Additionally, it envisioned the deployment of a) approximately 140 troops to support these 7 F-16AMs; b) up to 20 staff officers; and c) a capacity building mission consisting of up to 120 army instructors with non-combat mandates (Folketinget, 2014c, p.3). These Danish forces would be seconded to the GC for the duration of 12 months – i.e., from October 2014 to September 2015 – and absent sufficient international legal mandate to operate above Syria, would be limited in their deployment to Iraqi territory, as legitimized by the Iraqi request for international military intervention against ISIL, as submitted during the Paris Conference (Folketinget, 2014c, p.3-4).

The Danish government offered the following grounds for its proposed contribution to the GC. First, ISIL has committed "severe violations of human rights" against the populations of Iraq and Syria (Folketinget, 2014c, p.2). Denmark has a moral duty, "in accordance with the principle of Responsibility to Protect, to assist authorities in Iraq with protecting the civilian population from serious harm" (Folketinget, 2014c, p.2). Second, ISIL "also forms a growing risk to Danish and international security," particularly by attracting and inspiring Western foreign fighters, which upon their return could target their home countries with terror attacks (Folketinget, 2014c, p.2). Then, to address this growing threat of ISIL to Danish security, military intervention was required.

In other words, Denmark contributed to the GC to attain both shared moral interests and core security interests. Yet, this official narrative omits the main historical motivator of Danish participation in US-led coalitions – i.e., the maintenance of its reputation as a loyal US ally. Since, as a super Atlanticist small state, Denmark's domestic security depends upon US protection, which it earns through "a strong and unwavering support" of US military efforts and coalitions (Wivel & Crandall, 2019, p.392; Mouritzen, 2007). Hence, Denmark's combat contribution to the US-led GC was indeed motivated by core security interests, although such interests extended beyond the limited – though not insignificant – threat posed by ISIL to encompass a more fundamental threat, namely a fear of abandonment by primary Danish security patron the US.

These grounds and interests were subsequently accepted by the Danish parliament on 2 October 2014, which approved the proposed combat contribution to the GC with 94 votes in favor and 9 against (Folketinget, 2014d) – revealing a broad elite consensus. With their mandate secured, the 7 Danish F-16s arrived at Ahmed Al Jaber Air Base in Kuwait on 5 October 2014 and conducted their first operation under the banner of the GC on 16 October 2014 (The Local, 2014c).

Following this first Danish anti-ISIL mission, during which no weapons were deployed, Danish Defense Minister Nicolai Wammen said that he was "very pleased that the Danish F-16s are now actively contributing to the international coalition's fight against the Islamic State" (The Local, 2014c). Yet, Minister Wammen warned the Danish public that despite the success of the first mission, "this will not be an easy fight. It is also not without danger. But it is a fight that we [Denmark] cannot abstain from being involved in" (The Local, 2014c). Hence, starting 5 October 2014, Denmark's operational profile at the GC officially incorporated combat units for the first time and consequently took the following shape: 1 C-130J Hercules transport plane; 7 F-16AMs with up to 140 support personnel; 20 staff officers; and 120 army instructors to train Iraqi forces.

Overall, the first half year of the first Danish combat contribution to the GC proceeded without incident or significant domestic political controversy. Yet, on 15 February 2015, Denmark was awoken from this slumber by a terror attack in its capital Copenhagen, which killed two people and wounded five officers in two separate shootings throughout the city, respectively near a cultural center and a synagogue (BBC, 2015a). In the wake of the attack, media reported that the perpetrator, a 22-year-old Danish citizen born to Jordanian-Palestinian parents, had become radicalized and "swore fidelity to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi" days before perpetrating his attack (Ellis, Yan & Gargiulo, 2015; Higgins & Eddy, 2015). Consequently, this attack could be regarded as a case of foreign policy blowback, in which the Danish participation in the GC fight against ISIL sparked retaliation in the guise of a domestic terror attack.

Yet, contrary to the expectations of scholars studying such foreign policy blowback – e.g., Mello (2016; 2020) – this terror attack did not shake Danish conviction in the fight against ISIL, nor did it prompt it to defect from the GC. If anything, it only strengthened consensus on the need for Denmark to remain involved in the GC. Then, in the present case terrorism did not "work" to convince Denmark to abandon its coalition responsibilities. While a detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this study, one might be able to explain Denmark's continued engagement on the basis that defection and the resulting loss of standing with – if not abandonment by – the US formed a more profound threat to Danish domestic security than a sole ISIL-inspired terror attack. Although, if such attacks were to intensify in size and scope, such risk calculations could conceivably change.

This elite consensus on the necessity of the Danish participation in the GC was put to the test once more on 18 June 2015, during the national parliamentary elections. Since, according to Cantir (2011) and Tago (2009), elections incentivize politicians to adopt the least electorally risky

positions, which generally do not entail support for multilateral military coalitions – like the GC. While the February Copenhagen shootings did call extra attention to such topics as immigration, integration, and security (Kosiara-Pedersen & Little, 2016, p.558), the Danish participation in the GC did not become point of contention during the 2015 parliamentary elections, nor did it prompt politicians to reverse their support for this topic. Then, the elite consensus passed its electoral test.

Moreover, even as the political leadership changed and a new government took office, such elite consensus remained, even though scholars like Davidson (2014) and Massie (2016) regard such leadership changes – rather than the elections from which they result – to be the primary sites for coalition defection. This post-leadership change continuation of the Danish GC combat mission can best be explained by the fact that, following the 2015 elections, leadership shifted from a more dovish left-leaning coalition led by PM Thorning-Schmidt to a more hawkish right-leaning bloc of liberal parties headed by Lars Rasmussen (BBC, 2015b). By virtue of its very political ideology and emphasis on law and order during the election campaign, this new government was more likely to continue the Danish contribution to the GC than if the results had been reversed, and it did.

Having endured the above tests, the Danish combat contribution to the GC completed the final months of its contribution without incident. Hence, on 26 August 2015, the newly inaugurated Danish Foreign Minister Kristian Jensen lauded the operational success of the Danish F-16s, which by that time had conducted approximately 476 missions and deployed 425 smart munitions (The Local, 2015a). Despite their success, Minister Jensen announced that the Danish government had decided to withdraw the 7 Danish F-16s contributed to the GC upon the end of their mandate, in order to conduct repairs "and for pilots and other personnel to be restored to health" (The Local, 2015a). This decision "was necessary if Denmark is to continue to be a part of the international coalition fighting the Islamic State," Minister Jensen argued (The Local, 2015a).

Still, Minister Jensen reassured Denmark's allies that the government did not intend to abandon the GC, and that – pending parliamentary approval – the Danish F-16s would return to active GC combat duty at the latest in summer 2016 (The Local, 2015a). Moreover, Minister Jensen stressed that the Danish capacity building mission of 120 instructors would remain active. Lastly, the minister promised that, in the interim, Denmark would explore other avenues of GC contribution and that Denmark would contribute wherever and whenever it could (The Local, 2015a). Although, Denmark was unlikely to deploy ground combat forces and "put boots on the ground," as the operational risks would be too significant (The Local, 2015a).

Subsequently, on 24 September 2015, about a week prior to the return of the Danish F-16s from Ahmed Al Jaber Air Base in Kuwait in October 2015, Foreign Minister Jensen reiterated that Denmark remained "ready to do its part, also during the period when our [Danish] fighter jets must be sent home" (Udenrigsministeriet, 2015). Moreover, Defense Minister Carl Holst added that "after the decision to withdraw our air forces (…) it has been important to me – together with the Defense Command – to find another contribution (…) which will make a significant difference in the fight against ISIL/Da'esh in the same way that our F-16 fighters have" (Udenrigsministeriet, 2015). Hereon, the Danish government proposed to contribute to the GC a mobile ground-based radar array with up to 30 support personnel, to be stationed at – and alternate between – Al Asad Air Base in Iraq and Al Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates (Udenrigsministeriet, 2016).

Defense Minister Holst remarked that there was "general agreement" among the political elite on the shape and necessity of such a substitute contribution to the GC (Udenrigsministeriet, 2015). Therefore, when the Danish government on 8 October 2015 submitted to parliament a draft resolution encompassing the proposed radar contribution, mandated initially for 12 months though with the possibility of an extension (Folketinget, 2015a), it was adopted on 10 November 2015 with overwhelming support – i.e., counting 94 votes in favor and 16 against (Folketinget, 2015b).

Consequently, a month after their return, the 7 Danish F-16s which had been contributed to the GC anti-ISIL combat campaign – and had completed a total of 1112 sorties, 547 missions, and deployed 503 smart munitions under the banner thereof (Udenrigsministeriet, 2016) – were officially substituted by the aforementioned radar array. Hence, from November 2015, the Danish operational profile at the GC contained the following contributions: 1 mobile ground-based radar array with 30 support personnel; 20 staff officers; and a capacity-building mission of 120 trainers.

It is here that the first case of Danish coalition defection from the GC can be identified. Since, the Danish withdrawal and substitution of its 7 F-16s for a lower risk and cost ground radar contribution – a practice which McInnis (2020, p.17) calls 'swapping' – constituted a significant reduction to Denmark's operational profile at the GC. Moreover, this reduction to the Danish operational profile occurred significantly prior to GC mission conclusion on 23 March 2019 and consequently required other GC allies to backfill the lost Danish combat capacity in order to avoid the compromise of mission progress, which forced upon them added and undue operational risks.

As can be gathered from the various statements made by Danish Foreign Minister Jensen, this defection was not due to a loss of domestic political or public will to remain involved in the

GC combat effort. If anything, a robust elite consensus existed on the need for small state and super Atlanticist Denmark to remain actively involved in the US-led GC. First, since Denmark had a moral responsibility to protect the civilian populations from the severe human rights violations perpetrated by ISIL (Folketinget, 2014c, p.2). Second, to address the not insignificant threat posed by ISIL to Danish domestic security (Folketinget, 2014c, p.2). Third, to maintain its reputation as a loyal ally of – and thereby avoid abandonment by – the US, Denmark's primary security patron (Mouritzen, 2007; Wivel & Crandall, 2019).

Yet, since Denmark only has at its disposal a fleet of 44 combat capable F-16 fighter jets (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2016, p.89), upon which it relies for both its domestic security and its participation in international military coalitions, Denmark's political ambitions are nevertheless constrained by its limited military capacity. Consequently, when the 7 Danish F-16s contributed to the GC – representing 16% of Denmark's total fighter capacity – required repairs in October 2015, Denmark lacked the military capacity to send replacement jets to the GC. Hence the decision of the Danish government to substitute its F-16s for a lower cost radar contribution and only return its F-16s to GC combat duty in summer 2016, after the necessary repairs had been made and crew had been rested (The Local, 2015a). In short, Denmark's first defection from the GC was the result of domestic-level limitations to its military rather than political capacity.

GC Combat Contribution II: June 2016 – December 2016

Only three days after the Danish parliament had approved the abovementioned radar contribution to the GC, on 13 November 2015, Paris became the target of an odious ISIL-inspired terror attack, which left 130 people dead (RTE, 2015). In the aftermath of the Paris attacks, Danish Foreign Minister Jensen paid respects to the victims and stressed that "we must get the Danish F-16 fighter planes back [in the fight against ISIL] as fast as possible" (Zawadzki & Tange, 2015). Further, Minister Jensen added that "the government wishes that they return with a broader mandate, to make it possible to fight ISIS, wherever they may be – whether on one or the other side of the border to Syria" (Zawadzki & Tange, 2015). Though this would require parliamentary approval.

With the adoption of UNSC (2015a) resolution 2249, which called on all UN member states to "take all necessary measures (…) to eradicate the safe haven they [ISIL] have established over significant parts of Iraq and Syria," this mandate expansion and the deployment of Danish forces to Syria came a step closer. Even further impetus was added for a swift Danish return to GC combat

duties when, on 9 December 2015, GC coalition leader and Denmark's primary security patron the US explicitly requested Denmark to increase its military contributions to the fight against ISIL (The Local, 2015b). In response, Minister Jensen reported that the Danish government had received and was "positively considering" the US request, since Denmark "has an obligation" to the international community and the US to explore how it might expand its military efforts against ISIL, which is not "limited to a single geographic area (..) [and] has the ability and unfortunately also the will to attack other countries" (The Local, 2015b).

In January 2016, media reported that the Danish government was considering a twofold intensification of its military presence in the fight against ISIL. On the one hand, an expansion of the mission mandate to enable Danish F-16s to conduct combat missions over Syrian territory (The Local, 2016a). On the other hand, the deployment of approximately 50 SOF operators to both Iraq and Syria (The Local, 2016a). While the deployment of such SOF ground forces to Iraq and Syria would mark a sizable expansion of the Danish military presence in the fight against ISIL, it would mark an equally sizable expansion of the operational risks upon these Danish forces, consequently these media furthermore reported that the attempts by the government to garner political support for its plans proved rather fraught, despite the overall elite consensus on the necessity of the Danish participation in the GC in general (The Local, 2016a).

On 12 February 2016, Danish Defense Minister Peter Christensen presented the plans of the Danish government to his US counterpart, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, underlining that "Denmark is ready to take responsibility" (The Local, 2016b). Consequently, with the support of the US, the Danish government officially presented its plans for a second combat contribution to the GC during a session of the Foreign Policy Committee of the Danish parliament on 4 March 2015 (Forsvarsministeriet, 2016a; 2016b). These plans included: a) the redeployment of 7 F-16s with approximately 110 support troops and an expanded mandate to cover both Syria and Iraq; b) a contingent of up to 60 SOF operators to conduct train, advice, and assist missions in both Iraq and Syria; and c) one C-130J Hercules transport aircraft, accompanied by 60 support personnel, to execute logistical missions for the GC over both Iraq and Syria (Udenrigsministeriet, 2016, p.3).

Afterwards, Foreign Minister Jensen said that the contribution proposed by the government would advance Denmark "to the very front of the contributing countries" (Forsvarsministeriet, 2016b), and that he henceforth hoped "for broad support in the parliament, [of] which we also have indications of after the meeting in the Foreign Policy Committee (Forsvarsministeriet, 2016b).

Then, on 29 March 2016, the Danish government officially submitted its plans for a second combat contribution to the GC to parliament in the form of a resolution, which was subsequently adopted on 19 April 2016 with 90 votes in favor and 19 against (Folketinget, 2016a; 2016b). In response to the passing of this resolution, which paved the way for Denmark's imminent return to the GC combat effort, Defense Minister Christensen said that he was "pleased that a large majority has voted for the extended Danish military engagement against" ISIL and that, clearly, the "Danish military capabilities are in high demand" (Forsvarsministeriet, 2016b). Subsequently, Foreign Minister Jensen added that "this resolution will now enable us [Denmark] to contribute at the very forefront of the fight against Da'esh. There is a clear need for this" (Forsvarsministeriet, 2016b).

This resolution approved, among other things, the contributions proposed by the Danish government in March. First, it mandated the redeployment of 1 C-130 Hercules transport plane as well as 7 F-16AMs, respectively with 60 and 110 support troops, to operate above Iraq and Syria, for the duration of 6 months – i.e., from June 2016 until November 2016 (Folketinget, 2016a, p.3); meaning a planned withdrawal in December 2016. Second, despite the abovementioned concerns on operational risk-levels, this resolution authorized a contribution of 60 SOF operators to conduct training, advice, and assist missions on the ground in both Iraq and Syria for a period of 12 months (Folketinget, 2016a, p.5). Third, the mandates of the existing Danish capacity-building and radar contributions were extended without a predetermined end date (Folketinget, 2016a, p.4).

The Danish government legitimized the expansion of its GC mission mandate to include Syria on the basis of UNSC (2015a; 2015b) resolutions 2249 and 2254, which called on all states to "eradicate the sanctuaries established by ISIL in parts of Iraq and Syria" (Folketinget, 2016a, p.5). The continuation of Danish military activity in Iraq was once more justified on the principle of collective self-defense, as enshrined in Article 51 of the UN Charter, and invoked by the explicit request for international military intervention against ISIL submitted by the Iraqi government to both the UN and the Paris Conference in September 2014 (Folketinget, 2016a, p.4). Lastly, the interests cited by the Danish government as prompting this second combat contribution to the GC closely resemble the interests upon which Denmark made its previous contribution – i.e., a mix of shared moral interests, such as human rights, and core security interests (Folketinget, 2016a, p.2).

US Secretary of Defense Carter the decision of the Danish parliament to approve a second combat contribution to the GC as a "welcome contribution from a valued partner in the counter-ISIL coalition" (Business Standard, 2016). Carter continued by praising Denmark as "a steadfast

partner in global coalition efforts. [Whose] contributions (…) have already been significant" (Business Standard, 2016). Particularly, Denmark's decision "to participate in the full spectrum of combat operations in Iraq and Syria, will further increase the military pressure on ISIL," Carter emphasized (Business Standard, 2016). Hence, Denmark's attempts to gain recognition from and maintain its reputation with the US – and thus its domestic security – by contributing to the GC combat effort, until April 2016 at least, can be regarded as successful.

Then, upon such dual domestic and international approval, a contingent of 7 Danish F-16s arrived at Incirlik Air Base in Turkey on 17 June 2016, from which these F-16s would conduct missions over both Iraq and Syria (The Local, 2016b). During the first weeks of their deployment, the Danish F-16s conducted 67 missions and deployed 93 munitions over Iraqi territory. Only on 5 August 2016 did these Danish jets conduct their first GC combat operation over Syrian territory (The Local, 2016b). While Danish Defense Minister Christensen conceded that the risks of civilian casualties would be greater when operating over Syrian territory, the minister maintained that there were "no indications that the Danish F-16 missions in Operation Inherent Resolve would be to blame for unintended civilian casualties" (The Local, 2016b).

Yet, as the conclusion of the second Danish combat contribution to the GC approached, the Danish government announced on 2 December 2016 that it had decided not to extend the mandate of its F-16s, which – along with the C-130J Hercules and its 60 support troops – would consequently be withdrawn later in December 2016, as planned under the original parliamentary resolution (Reuters, 2016). Newly appointed Danish Foreign Minister Anders Samuelsen, Foreign Minister Jensen's successor, argued that "it has been assessed [by the Danish government] whether it would make sense from economical and practical considerations [to extend the mission] (…) the conclusion has been that it makes no sense, so we just stick to the plan" (Reuters, 2016). In other words, Minister Samuelsen cited (military) capacity limitations as a justification for the withdrawal of the Danish F-16s in December 2016.

However, various media outlets (Dewitte, 2016; Egypt Independent, 2016; Middle East Monitor, 2016; Reuters, 2016; The Local, 2016d) noted that the Danish decision came only days after a US military investigation revealed that two Danish F-16s had been involved in an errant GC airstrike which, on 17 September 2016, due to a series of "unintentional human errors" (Reuters, 2016), mistakenly targeted and subsequently struck fighters aligned with the Syrian regime, leaving at least 60 dead (Middle East Monitor, 2016).

While Minister Samuelsen made no mention of the incident in his statement, the Danish government had been aware of the incident since its occurrence on 17 September 2016 and called it "regrettable" at the time (Forsvarsministeriet, 2016c). Henceforth, one could argue that it was not the "economical and practical considerations" (Reuters, 2016) cited by Minister Samuelsen in his address that caused the Danish decision to withdraw its combat contribution in December 2016, but rather due to the Danish involvement in the abovementioned erroneous GC airstrike and its consequent culpability for the deaths of more than 60 Syrian troops. This incident may have rendered support for Danish participation in specifically the GC combat effort as too electorally risky, prompting the loss of elite consensus, and thus the cessation of the GC combat contributions.

Regardless of the circumstances which prompted the Danish government to withdraw its continent of 7 F-16AMs contributed to the GC in December 2016, this nevertheless constituted Denmark's second case of coalition defection from the US-led GC. Since, as with its first defection from the GC in October 2015, the withdrawal of its F-16s represented a significant reduction to its operational profile at the GC, which occurred significantly prior to mission success on 23 March 2019, and consequently required other GC allies to backfill the lost Danish combat capacity in order to avoid compromising GC mission progress.

Still, while Foreign Minister Samuelsen stressed that Denmark had "offered the [global] coalition extra help with some construction and engineering troops" (Reuters, 2016), such offers remained unspecified. Therefore, Denmark's second defection, unlike its first defection – when it ceremoniously 'swapped' its contingent of F-16 fighter jets for a lower cost and risk ground-based radar array – did not unfold along a strategy of swapping but instead took the shape of a partial withdrawal. Meaning that Denmark although withdrew its F-16 fighter contingent from the GC, it upheld the other contributions in its operational profile with the GC. Consequently, following the withdrawal of the Danish C-130J Hercules and F-16s in December 2016, the Danish operational profile at the GC was reduced to the following: 60 SOF operators conducting training, advice, and assist missions in Iraq and Syria; 20 staff officers; a capacity-building mission counting 120 army instructors; and lastly a mobile ground-based radar array with approximately 30 support troops.

Then, this second defection marked the end of the Danish participation in the GC combat campaign. Yet, this is not to say that Denmark exited the GC altogether. On the contrary. Denmark maintained a strong presence in the GC until ISIL's territorial defeat on 23 March 2019, albeit in a non-combat capacity. Consequently, the Danish subsequent Danish contributions to the GC are

beyond the scope of the present study. Nevertheless, to provide a comprehensive account of Denmark's tenure at the GC – and since these contributions were undoubtedly of strategic value to the GC – the following Danish contributions can still be identified.

First, between February and May 2017, Denmark deployed a navy frigate to escort a US aircraft carrier group (Folketinget, 2017a, p.2-3). Second, in January 2018, the Danish parliament approved an expansion of the Danish GC capacity-building mission to a total of 180 troops as well as the deployment of a C-130J Hercules transport aircraft with up to 60 support personnel for the duration of 6 months (Folketinget, 2017b, p.2) – which was eventually deployed between October 2018 and April 2019, alongside an emergency medical unit of up to 12 medics (Forvarsministeriet, 2021). Hence, despite its premature exit from the anti-ISIL combat campaign, Denmark "remains on of the largest per capita troop contributors" to the GC (Global Coalition Against ISIL, 2021).

Conclusion

In summary, Denmark defected twice from the GC combat campaign by failing to extend the mission mandates of – and subsequently withdrawing – its F-16 fighter contingent – respectively in October 2015 and December 2016. While such pre-planned drawdowns may not appear to be instances of coalition defection, as they were announced and executed in a transparent and orderly fashion, these withdrawals nevertheless represented sizable reductions of the Danish operational profile at the GC, significantly prior to mission conclusion on 23 March 2019. Furthermore, these withdrawals left the GC with a considerable combat capacity gap, which had to be backfilled by other GC allies to avoid a loss of GC mission progress, and thus placed increased operational risks and costs upon these allies. Hence, under the definition of coalition defection employed in the present study, these dual Danish withdrawals can be constituted as cases of coalition defection.

To uncover the causal factors and circumstances underpinning these twofold cases of what McInnis (2020, p.76) calls "planned defections," this section turns to hypotheses H1 and H1A. H1 suggests that coalition defection is the result of domestic-level limitations to a state's political or military capacity to retain its operational profile with a multilateral military coalition. H1A tailors this expectation to the setting of small states – their smallness often understood in military terms – and thereon predicts military capacity limitations to be the primary cause of small state coalition defection. When applied to the two identified cases of Danish defection from the GC, H1 can be confirmed for both cases whereas H2A can only be confirmed vis-à-vis the first Danish defection.

Denmark's first defection from the GC combat campaign was the result of an insufficient domestic military capacity – counting only 44 combat ready F-16s, upon which Denmark relied for both its domestic security and its participation in international military coalitions – to replace its contingent of 7 F-16s contributed to the GC when these fighters had to be recalled "in order to be repaired and for the pilots and crew to be restored to health," as Danish Foreign Minister Jensen put it (The Local, 2015a). Further evidence that this defection was the product of domestic military capacity limitations rather than a loss of Danish political will can be found in the various confident statements by Minister Jensen that the Danish F-16s would be "sent out again" to the GC as soon as these required repairs were completed (The Local, 2015a). Then, the Danish political elite remained in agreement on the need for Denmark to remain involved in the GC combat campaign, their political ambitions constrained only by a limited domestic military capacity.

This conclusion is most remarkable. Since, over the course of its first combat contribution to the GC, Denmark experienced all those domestic political challenges which are held as the most likely predictors of coalition defection in the above reviewed extant literature. First, possibly due to its participation in the GC combat campaign, Denmark became the target of an ISIL-inspired terror attack on 15 February 2015. Despite the profound impact of this attack on Danish domestic security – 2 dead and 5 injured – this attack did not prompt Denmark to seek an early exit from the GC, and thereby contradicted the assumptions of scholars like Mello (2016; 2020). Instead, elite consensus on the strategic need for continued Danish participation in the GC remained steadfast.

The steadfastness of this elite consensus was proved again during the Danish parliamentary elections in June 2015, which following Cantir (2011) and Tago (2009, p.219) "serve as a strong driving force to accelerate" defection. Yet, Denmark's participation in the GC combat campaign did not become a topic of contention during the elections nor the resulting leadership change, held by Davidson (2014) and Massie (2016) as the next possible causal factor for coalition defection. Yet, since both the outgoing more dovish left-leaning government and the more hawkish right-leaning government agreed on the need to maintain Danish participation in the GC combat effort, the first Danish defection did not result from a loss of political will (Massie, 2016, p.89-90).

At first, the second Danish defection from the GC – executed in December 2016 – appeared to follow a similar pattern as the previous defection. Since, Foreign Minister Samuelsen, like his predecessor Jensen, cited "economic and practical considerations" as the rationale for the defection (Reuters, 2016). Yet, the enthusiastic claims of an imminent Danish return to the GC combat effort

were wholly absent. This suggested the presence of a different underlying reason for the premature Danish exit from the GC combat effort. This reason was revealed days prior to the announcement of the second Danish defection from the GC, when the US Department of Defense reported that two Danish F-16s had been involved in an errant GC airstrike which had erroneously targeted and killed over 60 troops aligned with the Syrian government on 17 September 2016 (Reuters, 2016).

Since this incident stood diametrically opposed to the reputation and interests Denmark sought to further by contributing to the GC combat campaign, the once so robust consensus among the Danish elite on the need for continued Danish participation slowly eroded from the occurrence of this incident, of which the Danish political elite had been aware from the beginning. Combined with the fact that Danish governments are coalition-based without one party holding an absolute majority, this erosion and eventual collapse of elite consensus meant that, when the second Danish combat contribution to the GC came up for parliamentary review, insufficient political support remained for an extension to be considered and let alone passed.

In short, following authors like Lagassé & Mello (2018), the second Danish defection from the GC appears to have been the result of a collapse of elite consensus, prompted by the Danish involvement in a failed GC airstrike, and resulted in an unwillingness rather than an inability to deploy further combat units to the GC. Interestingly, this result effectively constitutes a reversal of the findings of the previous case of Danish coalition defection considered, when military capacity constrained a resolute political will to contribute to the GC. Hence, international political factors appear to have had a more profound effect upon the Danish domestic political decision-making process regarding coalition contribution than domestic political factors, such as a deadly ISIL-inspired terror attack. Therefore, regarding the second Danish defection from the GC only hypothesis H1 can be confirmed.

However, despite such adverse domestic effects of coalition participation, these two Danish defections from the GC combat campaign did not represent an exit from the GC as a whole. Put differently, instead of opting for a total withdrawal from the GC, Denmark selected such defection strategies which kept it tethered to and involved in the GC, albeit in a more limited and non-combat capacity. H2 expects this decision to be the result of Denmark's international political ties to its GC allies. H2A predicts that, as a small state, particularly Denmark's security dependencies upon its GC allies will have informed and steered defection decision-making. When juxtaposed to the two cases of Danish defection, hypothesis H2 and especially hypothesis H2A can be confirmed.

Since, when it became clear in August 2015 that its military capacity would be too limited to guarantee the continuity of its combat contribution to the GC and that defection was unavoidable, Denmark opted for a defection strategy that still kept it involved in the GC during its forced break from its GC combat duties – i.e., swapping its combat contribution counting 7 F-16 fighter jets for a mobile ground-based radar array with up to 30 support personnel. While this substitute contribution was of significantly lower risk and cost to Denmark and still necessitated other GC allies to assume additional operational risks and backfill the lost Danish combat capacity, Denmark nevertheless demonstrated that is remained "ready to do its part" for the GC and its coalition leader the US (Udenrigsministeriet, 2015).

A similar dynamic can be observed around Denmark's second defection from the GC combat campaign in December 2016. While this defection was not the result of a limited domestic capacity, despite the claims of Foreign Minister Samuelsen to that effect (Reuters, 2016), but due to a loss of political elite consensus on the need for Denmark to remain involved in the GC combat effort specifically, Denmark once more eschewed a total withdrawal and instead opted for a partial withdrawal, recalling only its combat contribution of 7 F-16 fighter jets and upholding the various non-combat contributions in its operational profile – e.g., army instructors and SOF operators – the deployment of which Denmark later both extended and expanded (Folketinget, 2017a; 2017b).

From its proactive efforts to remain involved in the GC despite dual domestic military and political limitations, it can be established that – as expected – Denmark had a vested interest in remaining involved in the US-led GC. That this interest motivating the Danish participation in the GC extended beyond the direct domestic and global threat posed by ISIL was demonstrated on 15 February 2015, when Denmark became the target an ISIL-inspired terror attack but decided to nevertheless remain involved in the GC, even though it was this Danish participation in the GC which seemed to have at least partially prompted this terror attack in the first place (Ellis, Yan & Gargiulo, 2015). Furthermore, this Danish decision contradicts extant coalition defection theory, which holds that terror attacks are prime predictors of coalition defection (Mello, 2016; 2020).

Then the main interest motivating Denmark's participation in the GC even after its twofold defections from the GC combat effort can be found in its core security policy of so-called super Atlanticism (Mouritzen, 2007). This strategy, which Denmark has pursued since the end of the Cold War, entails "a strong and unwavering support" of the US and its military coalitions (Wivel & Crandall, 2019, p.392). Through such military activism, small state Denmark – which is unable

Table 6
Overview of Danish defections from the Global Coalition Against ISIL prior to 23 March 2019

Defection date(s)	Cause	Strategy
October 2015	Military capacity limitations	Swapping. Denmark substituted its 7 F-16s for a mobile ground radar array with 30 support troops.
December 2016	Loss of political elite consensus	Partial withdrawal. Denmark withdrew its 7 F16s in December 2016 without providing a replacement contribution. This defection marked the end of the Danish participation in the GC combat campaign.

Note: dates are approximations.

to unilaterally guarantee its own domestic security, as is one of the defining features of a small state – managed to capture the attention of and establish a reputation with the US as a reliable and "impeccable ally" (Ringsmose & Rynning, 2008). In turn, this reputation afforded Denmark high-level access to and subsequently protection from both coalition and US officials, including its very presidents (Rynning, 2013, p.91). Hence, this strategy of super Atlanticism has become the foundation of Danish foreign and domestic security policy (Jakobsen & Rynning, 2019).

It is upon this reputation as a close and reliable ally of the US that Denmark was invited to attend the foundational GC meeting in the wings of the Wales NATO Summit in September 2014. However, Keohane (1971) warns that the attention of large power security patrons is fickle at best and that, consequently, super Atlanticist states must continuously prove and maintain their gained reputation with the security patron in question. It is upon this desire to maintain its reputation – and the resulting security arrangements – with the US that Denmark initially joined the GC in October 2014, following the above meeting with its larger allies.

Then, when Danish defection from this coalition seemed unavoidable in October 2015 and December 2016 respectively, which would inevitably damage its reputation with the US, Denmark proactively selected such defection strategies – i.e., swapping and partial withdrawal, as showing in table 6 – which limited the scope of its defection and kept it involved in the GC to the furthest possible extent. In other words, Denmark remained willing to accept sizable operational risks by remaining involved in the GC even beyond its defection, since the loss of reputation and thus security following a total withdrawal and possible abandonment by the US presented an even greater existential security threat. Consequently, hypotheses H2 and H2A can be confirmed.

Chapter 6: The Netherlands at the Global Coalition

Following the same structure as the previous chapters, this chapter traces and discusses the Dutch contributions to and withdrawals from the GC anti-ISIL combat campaign, to identify the causal factors prompting such coalition behavior. Prior to GC mission conclusion on 23 March 2019, the Netherlands had made two distinct combat contributions – i.e., between October 2014 and June 2016 and from January 2018 until December 2018. To attain a comprehensive understanding of the rationale underpinning these contributions and withdrawals, this chapter analyzes the so-called 'Article 100 letters' by which the Dutch government informs parliament of its troop deployments as well as "the reasons for [coalition] participation, the risks and feasibility of the operation, and the duration of the Dutch participation" (Noll & Moelker, 2013, p.260).

GC Combat Contribution I: October 2014 – June 2016

Possibly due to its defection from previous US-led coalitions, such as OIF and ISAF (see Massie, 2016; McInnis, 2020), the Netherlands was not invited to attend the formational GC meeting in the wings of the NATO Wales Summit on 4 and 5 September 2014, despite its Atlanticist security policy. Still, when the US officially unveiled its plans for a Global Coalition Against ISIL on 10 September 2014, Dutch Foreign Minister Frans Timmermans conveyed the Dutch willingness to join "even though it had not yet been invited" (NOS, 2014a). To underscore this willingness, the Netherlands attended the Paris Conference on Peace and Security in Iraq on 15 September 2014. During this conference, Iraqi President Massoum formally requested the Netherlands and the other attendees – including Belgium and Denmark – for military intervention against ISIL. In response, these states pledged "the appropriate military assistance" (Hollande & Massoum, 2014, p.1).

Henceforth, on 24 September 2014, the Dutch Government sent one of the aforementioned Article 100 letters to inform parliament of its decision "to contribute to the fight against ISIS" (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2014, p.1). This contribution, to be deployed for a maximum duration of one year – i.e., from October 2014 until September 2015 – would consist of a) 8 F-16AMs, including 2 reserve planes, to be stationed on Al Azraq Air Base, Jordan; b) 250 technical support personnel to facilitate this contribution; and lastly c) 130 army and SOF instructors to train both Kurdish Peshmerga rebels and Iraqi armed forces (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2014, p.6). Finally, the Dutch government stressed that while the operational risks to its F-16s "seemed

limited," the same could not be said for ground forces. Hence, under the banner of the GC, there would be no Dutch "boots on the ground" (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2014, p.7).

Since there existed "no international consensus on the question of an international legal mandate for deployment to Syria," the proposed Dutch contribution to the GC combat effort would be "limited to Iraq" (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2014, p.5). Still, Dutch Deputy Prime Minister Lodewijk Asscher and Defense Minister Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert stressed that the Netherlands "understood" the need for military action above Syrian territory and emphasized that "we [the Netherlands] are not ruling out taking part in Syria, but for now we are limiting participation to Iraq, and we will follow international developments" (Escritt, 2014; NOS, 2014b).

Finally, to satisfy its constitutional obligations under Article 100, the Dutch government provided the following grounds for its decision to participate in and contribute towards the GC. First, the government stressed that the Dutch deployment would first and foremost "contribute to preventing and ending the grave violations of human rights by ISIL currently taking place in Iraq and Syria" (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2014, p.2). Second, "the threat emanating from jihadis in Syria and Iraq also impacts our [Dutch] national security. To cope with this threat, the strength of ISIS must be broken, and its ideological draw eroded" (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2014, p.2). To which participation in the GC combat campaign was offered as the key. Lastly, participation in the GC would afford the Netherlands "excellent bilateral and multilateral" access to and influence with its allies, like the US (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2014, p.6).

Then, from October 2014 until September 2015, the Dutch operational profile at the GC counted 8 F-16s, 250 support troops, and 130 instructors. For a small state, this was a considerable contribution, especially since the Netherlands only has 61 operational F-16s at its disposal for both domestic security and international military operations (Escritt, 2014). Put differently, the first Dutch combat contribution to the GC consisted of more than 10% of the Dutch domestic air combat capacity. As per the above referenced Article 100 letter, the Netherlands made this sizable GC contribution to attain a mix of linked prestige-seeking, shared moral, and core security interests.

As mentioned in previous chapters, the former two interests, though not less valid, overall denote a lower risk-tolerance and thus a higher chance of defection when operational risks and costs rise (McInnis, 2020, p.50-60). Alternatively, the latter interests signify a core Dutch interest to become and remain involved in the US-led GC. While the Dutch government cites the threat posed by ISIL as this core interest – like in the previous cases – a further core interest can be found,

namely the Dutch desire to repair its military reputation with the US following its defections from prior US-led coalitions. This desire stems mainly from the fact that, as an Atlanticist state, Dutch security policy is oriented towards and dependent upon attention and protection from the YS.

While the Dutch parliament had approved the contribution of Dutch F-16s to the GC on 1 October 2014 after a day-long debate, some controversy still remained, since three of these Dutch F-16s had already departed for Al Azraq Air Base in Jordan prior to the conclusion of the debate on their deployment (Trouw, 2014a; 2014b). Nevertheless, on 4 October 2014, all 8 Dutch F-16s were present in Jordan and successfully conducted their first missions under the flag of the GC a day later (Trouw, 2014c; 2014d). During their year-long deployment to the GC, the Dutch F-16s "executed several missions per day" and targeted "ISIS headquarters, storage facilities, IED (Improvised Explosive Devices) factories, vehicles, and ISIS fighters" (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015b, p.9). Hence, the Dutch F-16s were well integrated into GC command structures.

However, as its dual training and combat missions progressed, the Netherlands became increasingly aware of the costs of continued participation in the GC anti-ISIL combat campaign – both to its budgets and its overall military readiness (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015a, p.10). Hence, when in May 2015, Belgian Defense Minister Vandeput proposed the construction of a rotation system under which Belgium and the Netherlands would alternate the deployment of combat units and force protection units in order to lower the costs of coalition participation and thereby enabling "a permanent binational presence" at the GC (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015a, p.2), Dutch Defense Minister Hennis-Plasschaert declared that the Netherlands "would not hesitate" to cooperate with Belgium where operationally viable (Knack, 2015).

This declaration became reality on 19 June 2015, less than two weeks before Belgium's retreat from the GC combat campaign, when the Dutch government sent another Article 100 letter to inform parliament of its intention to cooperate with Belgium "in the framework of the [GC] air campaign" (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015a, p.2). This cooperation would take the shape of the rotation system proposed by Belgian Defense Minister Vandeput, under which the Netherlands would assume the first combat shift, to allow Belgium to relieve its strained military units and budgets. Consequently, the Netherlands extended its combat contribution to the GC for a maximum duration of one year – i.e., until September 2016 – or until Belgium could assume the next combat rotation and "take over the Dutch deployment from July 2016" (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015a, p.11). Whichever came first.

Contradictorily, this Belgian-Dutch rotation system, designed to ensure the permanent engagement of these small states despite their various domestic military and budgetary limitations, caused a significant capacity gap for the GC as a whole. Since, by alternating combat contributions instead of making cumulative individual contributions, Belgium and the Netherlands effectively halved the number of combat units they contributed the GC, which left the GC with a significant capacity gap that subsequently needed to be backfilled by other GC allies. Then, in their attempts to remain engaged in the GC combat effort, Belgium and the Netherlands inadvertently impeded the progress of this effort. Consequently, the implementation of the combat rotation system can be understood as the first case of Dutch – and Belgian – coalition defection from the GC.

While the Netherlands extended its combat and training contributions to the GC, with the former now including the duties of the departed Belgian F-16s, it did so in a more limited capacity. From October 2015 onwards, the Netherlands reduced its operational profile at the GC from 8 F-16AMs and 250 support personnel to 6 F-16AMs with 200 support personnel, for which Belgium would provide force protection units. The Dutch training mission, consisting of 130 instructors, remained unaffected however (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015a, p.2). The Dutch government justified this partial withdrawal of F-16s from the GC since the "contribution of F-16 fighter planes to the fight against ISIS constrains the regular education and training programs for F-16 pilots" (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015a, p.10); and thereby threatened Dutch overall military readiness, which would take one year to restore after the completion of the Dutch mission extension (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015a, p.10).

Then, due to the withdrawal of 2 F-16s from the Dutch operational profile at the GC, this extension of the first Dutch combat contribution to the GC can nevertheless be constituted as the second case of Dutch coalition defection from the GC. While previous definitions of coalition defection would have omitted this case of coalition defection – e.g., Choi (2012) and Weisiger (2016), for whom coalition defection is limited to a total abrogation of coalition participation – the present definition recognizes this Dutch partial withdrawal as a significant change to the Dutch operational profile which leverages undue operational costs and risks upon coalition partners, at least one year prior to mission conclusion. Though, like its previous defection, the Netherlands executed this withdrawal to remain engaged in the GC despite the sizable strain thereof upon its limited domestic military capacity, the retreat of 25% of the combat units in its operational profile nevertheless constitutes a second case of Dutch coalition defection from the GC.

Further, with the extension of its GC contribution, the Dutch government observed again that "the absence of a solution for the conflict in Syria is an important underlying factor for the broader instability in the region and the rise of ISIS" (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015a, p.4). Therefore, the Dutch government reported that it had studied the legal possibilities for Dutch military deployment to Syria alongside Canada and the US, which were already active in Syria. Yet, the Dutch government concluded that the broad interpretation of Article 51 of the UN Charter – i.e., collective self-defense – upon which these allies based their military activities in Syria was "insufficient" mandate for a Dutch deployment (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015a, p.6). Hence, like during its initial contribution, the area of operations for the missions conducted by Dutch troops and F-16s under the banner of the GC would remain limited to Iraqi territory.

About half a year later, following the abhorrent terrorist attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015, the Netherlands received explicit requests from both France and the US to "intensify its military contribution to the fight against ISIS" and expand its area of operations to Syria (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015c, p.1). On 11 December 2015, the Dutch government informed parliament that it would "study the desirability and feasibility of an intensification of the Dutch military contribution" (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015c, p.1), and on 29 January 2016 in an additional Article 100 letter reported the Dutch government's approval of these French and American requests (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2016a, p.4-5).

In this letter, the Dutch government observed "positive developments in Iraq, to which the Netherlands actively contributed," but equally warned that "as long as a large part of Syria remains under the control of ISIS, a safe and stable Syria and Iraq are unthinkable" (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2016a, p.2). Arguing that ISIL had to be fought militarily in both Iraq and Syria, the Dutch government declared that it would expand the mandate of its F-16s to include raids on ISIL supply routes in East-Syria (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2016a, p.5). This modest mandate expansion allowed the Netherlands to participate in Syria without further compromising its training programs and readiness (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2016a, p.2).

Lastly, like most of its peers, the Netherlands justified this expansion of its GC combat mission mandate to cover Syria on the basis of two UNSC resolutions established in the wake of the 2015 Paris attacks – i.e., UNSC resolutions 2249 and 2254 (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2016a, p.2-3). These resolutions called on all states with the capacity to do so, including the Netherlands, to intensify their fight against ISIL and to eradicate the safe havens ISIL had

established over significant parts of Syria (United Nations Security Council, 2015a; 2015b). Then, these calls to action by the UNSC caused the Netherlands to have a new "weighing moment" and reconsider its mission mandate (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2016a, p.4).

Prior to this mandate expansion, the Dutch F-16s were the fourth most active contingent in the GC air campaign against ISIL, having completed at least 1500 sorties as of 28 January 2016, in more than 1050 of which weapons were deployed (AD, 2016b). Five months later, upon the conclusion of the Dutch combat rotation at the GC and the departure of the Dutch F-16s from their base in Jordan, these numbers had ballooned to over 2100 sorties and 1800 weapon deployments (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2016b, p.12). Although, despite their mandate expansion to include Syria, most of these sorties were nevertheless conducted over Iraqi territory, as the Dutch F-16s appeared to lack the required communication equipment to operate safely over Syrian territory (NOS, 2016). Still, Defense Minister Hennis-Plasschaert praised the Dutch F-16 pilots for "having fulfilled a crucial role in the weakening and reduction of IS" (NU.nl, 2016).

Subsequently, upon such mixed reviews, the first Dutch withdrawal from the GC combat campaign was completed on 30 June 2016. On the same day, as per the agreed rotation system, Belgium deployed 6 F-16s to Jordan to relieve their Dutch colleagues and assume responsibility for the shared GC combat operation for the first time. In turn, the Netherlands stationed 35 troops in Jordan to ensure the force protection of these 6 Belgian F-16s (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2016b, p.2). In addition to swapping its combat units for force protection units, the Netherlands had expanded its GC training mission with 25 extra instructors in April 2016 (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2016b, p.10). To summarize, starting July 2016, the Dutch operational profile at the GC no longer encompassed any active combat capabilities, but solely consisted of 35 force protection troops and 155 army and SOF instructors training Iraqi soldiers and rebel forces.

Upon first glance, this total withdrawal of the Dutch combat units contributed to the GC almost three years prior to GC mission conclusion may appear to be a textbook case of coalition defection, especially following a binary definition of coalition defection. Yet, since this withdrawal was completed under the banner of the Belgian-Dutch GC combat rotation system, Belgian F-16s immediately substituted the departing Dutch F-16s, ensuring that no combat capacity was lost and would have to be backfilled by other GC allies. Moreover, this withdrawal did not place an undue operational burden upon Belgium outside the burden-sharing agreements made between these two small states. Hence, the 2016 Dutch withdrawal from the GC did not constitute coalition defection.

On 9 September 2016, a few months after withdrawing from the GC combat campaign, the Dutch government sent an Article 100 letter to parliament evaluating the performance of the Dutch contribution. In this letter, the Dutch government highlighted "the crucial support of the Dutch F-16 for ground forces in the province Anbar and North-Iraq" (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2016b, p.12). Still, the Dutch government also revealed the significant impact of such deployments upon the Dutch military capacity, stating that "the Dutch contribution of F-16 fighter aircraft in the fight against ISIL has led to a further qualitative and quantitative reduction to the regular education and training programs for F-16 pilots (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2016b, p.14). Consequently, as the Dutch government had warned upon the extension of its combat contribution in 2015, it would take one year to restore Dutch military readiness (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015a, p.10). Only then could another combat contribution be contemplated.

To still carry its weight until its next combat rotation in July 2017, the Dutch government extended the duration of its recently expanded GC training mission until 31 December 2017. Moreover, it offered to make available to the GC the remaining Dutch air-to-air refueling capacity (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2016b, p.2). Then, despite its limited military capacity and twofold defections from the GC, the Netherlands proved itself to be a resourceful partner.

GC Combat Contribution II: January 2018 – December 2018

Under the Dutch-Belgian rotation system, the Netherlands was due to take over responsibility for the shared GC combat mission from Belgium on 1 July 2017. However, to the surprise of the Dutch parliament, the Dutch government revealed on 27 January 2017 that the Netherlands would not be able to uphold this commitment, as "it became clear that the recovery period of the combat readiness of the F-16s would take eighteen months," rather than twelve months it had originally conveyed to its allies – particularly Belgium (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017a, p.1). Consequently, due to this significant loss of domestic military readiness, the earliest that the Netherlands would be able to return to active GC combat duty was 1 January 2018 (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017a, p.1).

Still, the Dutch government stressed that, despite this loss of Dutch combat capacity, "the Netherlands had portrayed itself as a reliable ally from the start" and that the Netherlands remained "fully committed to the fight against ISIL" (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017a, p.1). To emphasize this commitment to the GC and simultaneously compensate for the deferral of its

second combat contribution, the Dutch government twice deployed a KDC-10 refueling airplane with 45 support troops, first from the end of January 2017 until March 2017 and again from June 2017 until November 2017 (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017a, p.1; RTL Nieuws, 2017a).

On 9 May 2017, during a GC summit in Copenhagen, the Netherlands officially informed its allies that – due to its insufficient military readiness – it would be unable to take over the next rotation of the joint Belgian-Dutch GC combat mission in July 2017 and that it would only "from 1 January 2018 be able to contribute again to the pool of fighter jets at the disposal of the coalition" (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017b, p.2). This deferral of the next Dutch GC combat contribution until 2018 left the GC with a significant gap in its combat capacity for the second half of 2017, which now had to be backfilled by other coalition members. Specifically, coalition leader the US turned to Dutch combat partner Belgium and strongly requested it to extend its current combat mission of 6 F-16AMs until at least 31 December 2017 (HLN, 2017b).

While Belgium officially lacked the budgetary and military means to facilitate this request, the Belgian government nevertheless acquiesced in order to solidify Belgium's reputation as a limited capacity and in July 2017 recalled 2 of its 6 F-16s seconded to the GC. Additionally, the remaining 4 F-16s would execute a reduced number of coalition flight hours per month – i.e., 250 instead of 400 (De Morgen, 2017). Hence, even though a coalition partner – Belgium – was able to partially backfill combat capacity gap caused by the Dutch mission deferral, some capacity was ultimately lost, which hampered mission progress at a critical part of the GC anti-ISIL campaign.

The Netherlands praised the Belgian decision to extend its combat contribution as "positive" and vouched to support the execution of the Belgian decision "where necessary and possible" (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017c, p.1). This support took the shape of, on the one hand, an extension of the Dutch force protection mission – totaling 35 troops – to protect the remaining 4 Belgian F-16s stationed in Jordan (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017c, p.1). On the other hand, the Netherlands contributed a KDC-10 refueling airplane from June 2017 until November 2017 and a C-130J Hercules transport airplane from October 2017 until December 2017, both with support contingents counting 45 troops (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017b, p.2). These support planes would be stationed in Kuwait, from where they would provide logistical support for various GC operations and missions over Iraqi territory (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017b, p.2).

Then, due to a significant loss of domestic military readiness, born from its participation in the GC combat effort, the Netherlands effectively swapped its pledged combat units for lower risk and equally lower cost support units – i.e., force protection, refueling, and transport units. As this action was undertaken more than one-and-a-half years prior to GC mission conclusion and left the GC with a sizable capacity gap which could only be partially backfilled by Belgium, which itself lacked military and budgetary means, the Dutch deferral of its second combat contribution to the GC can be identified as the third case of Dutch coalition defection from this very coalition.

As the Belgian mission got underway with Dutch logistical support, the Dutch government submitted another Article 100 letter to parliament on 11 September 2017, to reveal the fate of the deferred Dutch combat contribution to the GC. In this letter, the Dutch government touted its contribution of the above support units to the GC and, crucially, confirmed that it would indeed extend the Dutch GC training and combat missions until December 2018 (RTL, 2017b; Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017d, p.2). Dutch military readiness would be sufficiently recovered for the Netherlands to take over combat duties from Belgium on 1 January 2018 with a contingent of 6 F-16AMs and 150 support personnel (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017d, p.2).

Furthermore, the Dutch F-16s would be mandated to conduct GC operations above both Iraqi and East-Syrian territory (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017d, p.11). This expanded mission mandate was explicitly based on the right to collective self-defense, as enshrined in Article 51 of the UN Charter. For Iraq, this justification pertained to the initial request for international intervention against ISIL submitted by the Iraqi government to the UN and Paris Conference in September 2014. Regarding deployment to Syria, the Dutch legitimation followed US precedent, invoking the aforementioned right to the collective self-defense of Iraq vis-à-vis specifically the attacks perpetrated by ISIL from Syrian territory (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017d, p.8-9). Incidentally, the Dutch government had in 2015 dismissed this justification as "insufficient" for the deployment of Dutch troops to Syria (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015a, p.6).

On 24 November 2017, the Dutch government reiterated its intention to restart its combat duties at the GC on 1 January 2018 with 6 F-16s and 150 support personnel for the duration of one year (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017e, p.6). While it was expected that these Dutch F-16s would have to deploy weapons less often as compared to their previous deployment, "coalition fighter jets nevertheless have a crucial deterrence function," according to the Dutch government (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017e, p.6). Additionally, at the request of GC coalition

leader the US, the Netherlands would field an emergency surgical unit counting 10 surgeons to Al Asad Air Base in Iraq for the duration of one year – i.e., from January 2018 until January 2019 (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017e, p.6). Finally, the Dutch government announced the withdrawal of a brigade of 25 army instructors and its KDC-10 refueling plane, which had completed their respective GC assignments (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017e, p.7).

Then, on 3 January 2018, Belgium and the Netherlands rotated their GC responsibilities one final time prior to ISIL's imminent territorial defeat on 23 March 2019. The Netherlands dispatched 6 F-16AMs along with 150 support personnel to Al Azraq Air Base in Jordan to relieve their Belgian counterparts (Dagblad van het Noorden, 2018; NOS, 2018). Belgium, in turn, deployed 25 troops to provide force protection to these Dutch F-16s and their supporting personnel (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2020, p.24). Simultaneously, the Netherlands withdrew its C-130J Hercules transport plane, which had completed its mandated GC deployment of two months. Therefore, in January 2018, the remaining Dutch operational profile at the GC consisted of 6 F-16AMs with 150 support personnel, 130 instructors, and a team of 10 surgeons.

While the withdrawal of these logistical and training units prior to mission conclusion may certainly have impacted the GC in some capacity, due to the lower operational risks and costs associated with their deployment, such units were however in significantly higher supply than the air combat units whereon the GC anti-ISIL campaign actively relied. Therefore, the consequences of such withdrawals would have been limited at best, which is not to say that coalition defection could not have occurred. Still, due to their limited impact and their non-combat mandate, these instances of coalition withdrawal are outside the scope of analysis of the present study.

To proceed, in the press, commentators and army commanders alike observed the changing nature of the GC fight against ISIL (Dagblad van het Noorden, 2018; NOS, 2018). Since ISIL had lost ground significantly at the time of the second Dutch combat contribution to the GC, the nature and frequency of the missions conducted under the flag of the GC by the Dutch F-16s would also change to fit this novel tactical situation. According to Dutch Lieutenant-General Dennis Luyt, the Dutch F-16s would become less active as there was less remaining ISIL territory to cover. Moreover, mission priorities would shift from precision airstrikes to close ground support and intel-gathering flights (Dagblad van het Noorden, 2018). Consequently, some commentators observed that the Dutch second contribution was motivated less by "military necessity" and more by political posturing, as an attempt to show the Dutch flag and (re)gain prestige (NOS, 2018).

Intentions aside, on 13 April 2018, the Dutch government reported that the Dutch F-16s had conducted roughly 100 GC flight missions since their deployment in January 2018 (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2018a, p.10). Indeed, a marked reduction of flight time compared to their previous deployment between October 2014 and June 2016, as expected. Therefore, on 14 September 2018, the Dutch government decided "not to prolong the use of F-16s in the fight against ISIL" (Rijksoverheid, 2018). Hence, the Dutch F-16s would withdraw from the GC as planned on 31 December 2018, since "the end of the military struggle against ISIL appeared to be in sight" and territorial victory seemed at hand (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2018b, p.1).

Subsequently, "the need in Iraq for assistance from the international community changed from offensive action against ISIL to support for the reinforcement and reform of the security sector" (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2018b, p.1). To meet these changing needs of both the Iraqi authorities and the GC, the Dutch government extended the Dutch GC training mission until December 2019, though with an added focus on capacity building, human rights, and so-called 'train-the-trainer' programs (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2018b, p.7). This training mission would consist of 70 army and SOF instructors, down from the 130-odd instructors fielded by the Netherlands to the GC during 2018 (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2018b, p.9).

Then, on 2 January 2019, the Dutch F-16s returned to their bases in Volkel and Leeuwarden (Van Den Broek, 2019), which officially concluded the second Dutch combat contribution to the GC and the final rotation of the Belgian-Dutch rotation system prior to ISIL's territorial defeat. Upon the return of its F-16s, the Dutch government expressed its admiration for the fighter pilots and their support personnel, which had completed over 950 air missions over the course of their second deployment, approximately 300 of which necessitated weapons deployment. Moreover, as opposed to the first Dutch combat contribution to the GC, most of these air missions were conducted over (East) Syrian territory (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2019, p.9).

A month later, upon the completion of their mandate, the Netherlands also withdrew its emergency surgical team, which had been supporting a GC field hospital at Al Asad Air Base in Iraq (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2019, p.9). Consequently, in February 2019 – one month prior to ISIL's territorial defeat on 23 March 2019 – the Dutch operational profile at the GC was reduced to a sole training contribution counting 70 instructors, until 31 December 2019. Though a significant reduction of the Dutch operational profile, these withdrawals were completed within a year – or month – of GC mission completion and therefore do not constitute coalition defection.

While the Netherlands would redeploy a force protection unit of 35 troops to Jordan to secure Belgian GC F-16s in October 2020 and, at the request of the GC, would contribute a further 100 to 150 troops for the force protection of Erbil Airport in Iraq in November 2020 (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2020, p.1-2), these contributions – though worthy of mentioning and recognition – were made following ISIL's territorial defeat and are consequently beyond the scope of the present study and its analysis.

Conclusion

In sum, from joining the GC in October 2014 until achieving mission success in the shape of ISIL's territorial defeat on 23 March 2019, small state the Netherlands contributed to and fully withdrew its air combat forces from the GC combat effort twice – i.e., in July 2016 and January 2019. Though strikingly, neither of these cases of complete withdrawal from the GC amounted to coalition defection under the definition employed thereof by the present study. Since, on the one hand, the Dutch withdrawal of F-16s in July 2016 was planned and executed under the auspices of the Belgian-Dutch rotation system and consequently substituted by Belgium. On the other hand, while the Dutch withdrawal in January 2019 was not substituted by a coalition ally and thus may have caused a capacity gap, it occurred less than a year prior to mission conclusion – i.e., three months. Therefore, this capacity gap, even if it existed, would not have significantly impacted GC missions progress and consequently dismisses the 2019 Dutch withdrawal as a case of coalition defection.

Still, this is not to say that the Netherlands did not defect from the GC. Quite the contrary, since the Netherlands defected from the GC anti-ISIL air combat campaign three times and in three different fashions. First, the Netherlands entered into a rotation system with its close ally Belgium, which – by alternating combat contributions between these states – effectively halved the number of combat units contributed to the GC by these two states. Second, upon extending its first combat contribution to the GC in October 2015 as per the above rotation system, the Netherlands only redeployed 6 of the 8 F-16AMs it had originally contributed. This partial withdrawal placed extra operational burdens upon GC allies significantly prior to mission success. Third, the Netherlands deferred its second combat contribution to the GC from July 2017 until January 2018 and instead swapped its pledged combat units for lower risk and cost support units in the interim. Resultingly, Belgium was requested by the US to extend its combat contribution with half a year to cover the combat capacity lost due to the Dutch defection in the shape of a deferral of deployment.

Subsequently, the hypotheses posed by the present study must be judges vis-à-vis these cases of coalition defection. H1 expects such instances of coalition defection to be the result of domestic-level limitations to either the political or military capacity to maintain an operational profile at the coalition in question. H1A extends this line of reasoning to the idiosyncratic context of small states and therefore regards the latter factor – a limited military capacity, as one of the defining features of a small state – to be the most likely predictor of small state coalition defection.

Regarding the three identified Dutch defections from the GC combat campaign, both these hypotheses can be confirmed, as each of the observed cases was the result of an insufficient level of domestic military capacity or readiness to maintain its established – or scheduled – GC operational profile. Regarding the first Dutch defection, the Netherlands entered into its rotation system with Belgium to address the military and budgetary "shortage" which threatened the GC participation of both these states and even ended the Belgian contribution in July 2015 (Knack, 2015). Hence, the Dutch government posited this rotation system as a means to maintain "Belgian and Dutch participation in the coalition air campaign" and to ensure "a permanent binational presence" by these states in the GC as a whole (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015a, p.2).

According to the Dutch government, its second defection from the GC by redeploying only 6 instead of 8 F-16AMs to the GC combat effort in October 2015 was the direct result of the adverse effect of GC participation upon the Dutch domestic military readiness (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015a, p.10). Specifically, the contribution of approximately 10% of the entire Dutch air combat capacity to the GC hampered the "education and training programs for F-16 pilots" (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015a, p.10) and consequently lowered the combat readiness of its F-16s, as unfit pilots preclude their deployment. Consequently, to limit such effects but still remain involved in the GC, the Dutch government decided to retreat 2 of its F-16s.

Lastly, as mentioned, the third Dutch defection from the GC occurred in July 2017, when the Netherlands deferred its second combat contribution – originally scheduled for July 2017 – to January 2018. This decision was justified as a misjudgment of the impact two years of GC combat contribution had wrought upon the Dutch military readiness. Since, after withdrawing its F-16s in July 2016, the Dutch government had warned that it would take approximately one year to recover the lost combat readiness. Yet, in January 2017, it became clear that this impact had been more profound than anticipated and that it would instead take 18 months before another GC contribution could be made (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017a, p.1). Hence the Dutch defection.

Then, the Dutch defections from the GC were not caused by a loss of domestic political will. Since there was a relatively strong elite consensus on the necessity of the Dutch participation in the GC, which was only really threatened after ISIL's territorial defeat, when it became clear that Dutch F-16s had been involved in an errant airstrike on an IED factory in Hawija, Iraq, which had killed over 70 civilians despite US warnings of possible excessive collateral damage (NOS, 2019; 2020). Instead, as predicted by hypotheses H1 and particularly H1A, the Dutch defections were the consequence of limitations to the Dutch military capacity and readiness, some of which even directly resulted from its participation in the very coalition from which it defected: the GC.

Subsequently, with the causal factors underpinning the Dutch defections established, one question remains: why did the Netherlands remain involved in the GC post-defection, albeit in a more limited fashion, instead of exiting altogether? It is here that hypotheses H2 and H2A offer the following predictions. H2 theorizes that the choice of defection strategy is determined by the international political ties of the defecting state. Regarding small states, H2A predicts that their security dependency upon their larger coalition allies, prompts defecting small states to proactively select a more limited defection strategy to avoid abandonment by these larger states.

Once more, both these posed hypotheses can be affirmed. Since, in all three cases of coalition defection under review, defecting small state the Netherlands proactively opted for such a defection strategy which kept it involved in the GC. Moreover, this was the very point, as the Netherlands did not desire to exit the GC but merely sought to secure and uphold its engagement in a more cost-effective fashion. Therefore, instead of executing a complete withdrawal from the GC, the Netherlands opted for a combination of partial withdrawal and swapping – i.e., swapping high-risk and cost combat units for lower-risk and cost support units. The first and third Dutch defections took this latter shape whereas its second defection followed the former strategy.

Yet, this does not answer the question as to why the Netherlands desired to remain within the GC and thus selected these specific defection strategies. To find such answers, one must turn to the interests that prompted the Netherlands to contribute to the GC in the first place. As stated above, the Netherlands joined the GC upon a mix of shared, linked, and core interests – like the other two cases under review. Of this range of interests, the latter core interests proved decisive.

Since, after having defected from several previous US-led coalitions – e.g., OIF and ISAF (Massie, 2016; McInnis, 2020) – and having not qualified as a close enough military partner to the US to be invited to the foundational GC meeting during the NATO Wales Summit, the Netherlands

Table 7
Overview of Dutch defections from the GC anti-ISIL combat effort prior to 23 March 2019

Defection date(s)	Cause	Strategy
May 2015	Military capacity limitations	Swapping/partial withdrawal. The rotation system instituted by Belgium and the Netherlands swapped half of the F-16s initially contributed to the GC by these states for lower-risk force protection units.
October 2015	Military capacity limitations	Partial withdrawal. Redeployment of 6 instead of 8 F-16AMs previously in operational profile.
July 2017	Military capacity limitations	Swapping. Deferral of second combat mission with 6 months. Netherlands fielded support units instead.

Note: dates are approximate.

sought to repair its standing with and avoid abandonment by the US, the "cornerstone" of its domestic security as an Atlanticist state (Noll & Moelker, 2013, p.261). Put differently, while ISIL certainly represented a significant threat to Dutch domestic security and was repeatedly identified as such by the Dutch government, the primary security threat the Netherlands sought to address by contributing to and remaining involved in the GC was its fear of abandonment by coalition leader and security patron the US. Hence, upon its defection, the Netherlands selected such defection strategies that kept it involved in the GC to the maximum extent possible, to in turn minimize the damage to its gained standing and reputation, and thereby its security arrangements with the US.

Still, this is not to say that only security interests were attained. On the contrary, the Dutch participation in the GC combat campaign brought with it several significant foreign policy gains as well – McInnis (2020, p.53) terms these gains linked interests. Such foreign policy gains took two overall shapes. On the one hand, the Dutch combat contributions received it an invitation to join the so-called 'restricted core group.' Its membership of this forum, consisting exclusively of militarily active GC allies, afforded the Netherlands "ministerial, military (…), and high-level official" access to – and subsequently influence with – its larger GC allies, including coalition leader the US (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2018b, p.6). On the other hand, the Dutch government was afforded access to confidential coalition data and intelligence. Consequently, the Dutch government concluded that its combat contributions to the GC had awarded it "relatively high influence and a good information position (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2018b, p.6).

In short, all four of the hypotheses posed by this study have been confirmed in the present case. While overall the Netherlands has proved itself to be a resourceful and reliable partner, both willing and able to find alternative contribution methods when the situation demanded them, this small state nevertheless defected thrice from the GC anti-ISIL combat effort. As expected of a small state, such defection was necessitated due to limitations to its domestic military capacity and was primarily executed along such strategies as to remain involved in the GC due to its security dependency upon GC coalition leader the US, to whom the Netherlands desires to be a loyal ally in order to ensure its domestic security (Noll & Moelker, 2013, p.261).

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This study has endeavored to answer the following overarching research question: *Under what circumstances do small states defect from multilateral military coalitions?* To do so, this study analyzed the contributions and withdrawals of three such small states – i.e., Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands – to the US-led Global Coalition Against ISIL. Hereon, the following case-specific research question was established: *Why did small states Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands cease their combat contributions to the Global Coalition Against ISIL prior to mission conclusion and to what extent do these early withdrawals constitute cases of coalition defection?* This section will answer these posed research questions, discuss and compare the resulting answers, and upon the remaining knowledge gaps identify avenues for further research.

To answer these research questions, this study identified the following hypotheses, upon an expanded version of McInnis (2020) seminal model of coalition defection to better account for the idiosyncrasies of small states. An overview of these hypotheses, including relevant validating cases, is presented below in table 8. This section proceeds with hypotheses H1 and H1A, which were determined as follows. H1: *Coalition defection is the result of domestic level limitations to a state's military and/or political capacity to maintain its operational profile with a major power-led military coalition.* H1A: S*mall state coalition defection is primarily influenced by limitations to military capacity rather than domestic politics.*

First, it must be established if and when the selected cases defected from the GC at all. All three selected cases defected at least once from the GC combat campaign. Belgium defected once, in July 2016; Denmark defected twice, in October 2015 and again in December 2016; and the Netherlands defected three times, respectively in May 2015, October 2015, and lastly in July 2017. As per the expectations of H1, based on McInnis' (2020) model of coalition defection, all these cases of small state coalition defection indeed resulted from various domestic-level limitations to either the political or military capacities of the observed cases to maintain their operational profiles assumed under the GC. Hence, H1 was validated a total of six times.

Yet, this does not show the full picture. Since, like most of the extant literature on coalition defection, McInnis' (2020) model mainly emphasizes the impact of political constraints upon a state's coalition contributions and omits the possibility of military capacity limitations hampering

Table 8
Overview of validated hypotheses per case and instance of coalition defection

Case	Defection	Strategy	H1	H1A	H2	H2A
Belgium	1	Swapping & partial withdrawal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Denmark	1	Swapping	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	2	Partial withdrawal	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Netherlands	1	Swapping & Partial withdrawal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	2	Partial withdrawal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	3	Partial withdrawal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

the desired coalition contribution. Yet, it is precisely such military capacity limitations which small state literature identifies as the main constraint upon small state coalition participation (Haesebrouck, 2020; Wivel & Crandall, 2019). Since, despite the restrictive assumptions of IR theory – which regards small states as weak, vulnerably, and inconsequential (Brady & Thorhallsson, 2020, p.2) – small state literature asserts that small states do indeed face myriad political incentives to contribute towards and remain involved in multilateral military coalitions, both positive (prestige-seeking) and negative (fear of abandonment) in nature (Jesse & Dreyer, 2016; Matláry, 2014; Pedersen & Reykers, 2020; Snyder, 1984).

However, since the definition of military capacity employed by McInnis (64-65) covers exclusively a state's total arsenal of military units deployable to a military coalition, this definition omits the various budgetary restrictions that may prevent a state from deploying at all the military units it has available. Therefore, this study expanded this definition of military capacity to account for such budgetary limitations faced by small states (Haesebrouck, 2020). Thereon, it established hypothesis H1A, to specifically test the expectation, based small state literature, that small states are mainly constrained by their military rather than political capacity.

As shown by table 8, H1A was validated in five of the six cases of small state coalition defection identified in this study. Hence, the expectation – based on the above small state literature – that small stat coalition defection is primarily caused by military rather than political capacity limitations to maintain its assumed or desired operational profile with the coalition in question can equally be confirmed.

Interestingly, while Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands all three cited such military capacity limitations as the cause for their defections from the GC combat campaign at least once

– the Netherlands did so three times – these military capacity limitations had a different origin and took a different shape for each case. Belgium, for instance, was mainly constrained by its restrictive military budgets, which have proven to be the main limitation upon Belgium's striking military activism since the end of the Cold War (Biscop, 2013; Haesebrouck, 2020). While it had available a sufficient fleet of fighters to indefinitely maintain its combat contribution to the GC of 6 F-16s, as originally desired by the Belgian government (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2014b, p.8-10), it lacked the budgetary means to facilitate such a continuous contribution.

Denmark's first defection from the GC combat campaign was also the result of military capacity limitations. Specifically, Denmark lacked sufficient fighter jets to replace the 6 F-16s it had contributed to the GC combat campaign in order to maintain its responsibilities and operational profile when these 6 jets had to be repatriated for repairs. Lastly, the Netherlands experienced a significant loss of domestic military readiness due to the continued deployment of its F-16s to the GC combat campaign. On the one hand, since the flight missions conducted by the Dutch pilots under the banner of the GC were rather monotonous, thus decreasing the overall proficiency of its fighter pilots. On the other hand, the contribution of its F-16s to the GC meant that there were less jets available for the training of new fighter pilots, lowering further the overall Dutch military readiness (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015a, p.10). Hence, the Netherlands eventually defected to restore its readiness before redeploying to the GC in a lowered capacity.

Still, one case of coalition defection remains to be considered, namely the second case of Danish defection from the GC combat campaign. This was the only case of coalition defection identified by the present study not directly caused by military capacity limitations, though such constraints were offered as the official rationale underpinning the defection (Reuters, 2016; The Local, 2016d). Instead, this defection was the result of a fundamental loss of consensus among the Danish domestic political elite on the strategic necessity for Denmark to remain actively involved in the GC, specifically its combat campaign. Thus, confirming the theories of authors like Kreps (2010) and Lagassé & Mello (2018). This loss of Danish elite consensus, which resulted from the Danish involvement in a failed GC airstrike which had unintentionally killed over 60 fighters of the Syrian regime, is all the more remarkable since it had weathered all those factors regarded by the extant theory on defection to be the primary accelerators of coalition defection prior to this incident – i.e., national elections, a leadership change, and a terror attack as a possible blowback of the Danish participation in the GC. Hence, these theories can be invalidated upon this case.

Furthermore, such a robust consensus among the domestic political elite on the strategic importance of contribution to the GC combat campaign can also be established in the Belgian and Dutch cases, the most striking of which is the former. Since, like Denmark, Belgium suffered a deadly ISIL-inspired terror attack over the course, and as the direct result of, its GC deployment – i.e., on 22 March 2015. While this attack occurred "regardless of the fact that our [Belgian] fighter aircraft ceased their actions in June of" 2015 (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2016b, p.3), it did not prompt Belgium to seek an early exit from the GC, thereby opposing the expectations of authors like Mello (2016; 2020). On the contrary. It led Belgium to renew its combat contribution to this coalition only a few months later, despite the significant risks and costs thereof to its domestic security, as demonstrated on 22 March 2015.

Strikingly, this study found that, despite such significant costs of continued contribution to the GC and its combat campaign, none of the small states observed sought a wholesale departure from this coalition. Alternatively, as shown by table 8, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands all selected such defection strategies that kept them tied to and involved in the GC even beyond their defections, albeit in a more limited capacity – i.e., a combination of swapping and partial withdrawal. Hence, there must have been fundamental interests at stake for these small states to continue their (combat) engagement in the GC in the face of such significant risks and costs.

It is here that McInnis' (2020, p.24) model of coalition defection regards as instructive the various international political ties linking these states to their coalition allies. Hereon, this study identified hypothesis H2. However, since small states are essentially unable to unilaterally guarantee their own domestic security, the most fundamental of such international political ties are their security dependencies upon larger states. Therefore, H2A expected the selection of defection strategies and the resulting continued engagement within the GC by Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands to mainly be the result of these states' security dependencies upon their GC allies.

Recalling table 8 once more, both hypotheses H2 and H2A were confirmed in all six of the observed cases of small state coalition defection. Starting with the latter, this demonstrates that all three of these states employed their contributions to the GC at least partially to maintain their reputation with and subsequently ensure protection from their larger GC allies – i.e., their security patrons. In the words of Pedersen & Reykers (2020), these states employed coalition contribution as an opportunity to prove their defend-worthiness to and avoid abandonment by their security patrons, which would cause a fundamental loss of small state domestic security.

Although such security fears respectively had different origins for Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands, and subsequently influenced their defection decision-making to different extends, these states all shared a fundamental security dependency upon GC coalition leader the US. Hence, defection from the GC would have severely compromised the reputation these states sought to maintain with the Us and consequently threatened the security arrangements dependent thereon. Therefore, when defection from the GC became unavoidable, these small states proactively chose such a defection strategy which enabled them to nevertheless remain involved in the GC in order to limit the fallout of their defection upon their relationship with and protection from the US – e.g., the Belgian-Dutch rotation system and Denmark's substitution of its F-16s for a radar array. Put differently, for these small states, the security risks of total withdrawal from the GC and its combat campaign were higher than the already significant risks of contribution, following Matláry (2014). Hence their decisions to remain involved in the GC beyond their various defections.

Yet, Pedersen & Reykers (2020) urge scholars to nevertheless look beyond such negative, threat-based incentives and instead assess the various positive interests prompting small states to contribute – or continue their contributions – to multilateral military missions. These authors assert that, even when such negative incentives are at play, small states can simultaneously seek to leverage for foreign policy gains the access to and reputation gained with their allies through their contributions to the coalition in question.

These theoretical assertions by Pedersen & Reykers, as well as Henriksen & Ringsmose (2012), De Carvalho & Neumann (2014), and Mohammadzadeh (2017), can be validated by the sixfold confirmation of hypothesis H2. Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands were all three, next to their fundamental security fears, also at least partly motivated to contribute to and remain involved in the GC and its combat campaign to increase and leverage their foreign policy influence, particularly with the US. For example, the various combat contributions made to the GC by these three small states admitted them to the so-called 'restrictive core group' of militarily active GC allies. This exclusive forum allowed them direct access to coalition officials, confidential data and intelligence, as well as high-level meetings with their larger allies – including the US (Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2020, p.23). Such privileged access, afforded by continued contribution to the GC, constituted an invaluable foreign policy resource to these small states.

Consequently, complete defection from the GC would have jeopardized not only domestic security but also the above foreign policy resources and influence. Thus, the defection strategies

selected and practiced by Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands were such that their engagement in the GC and thus their continued foreign policy influence with their larger allies was maintained. Hence, the claims by Pedersen & Reykers (2020) and the other relevant authors that small state contributions can be incentivized by both negative and positive imperatives can be confirmed.

In short, this study has endeavored to address twofold caveats in IR and security studies scholarship, namely on coalition defection and the coalition behavior of small states. Thereon, it has moved to answer the abovementioned research questions, which can now be answered in the following fashion. The circumstances prompting small states Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands to prematurely cease their combat contributions to the US-led Global Coalition Against ISIL and subsequently defect from their responsibilities assumed under this coalition can primarily be constituted as limitations to their domestic military capacities; though such limitations can take various shapes – e.g., budgetary, capacity, and readiness limitations. Additionally, one case of coalition defection was found to be the result of domestic political rather than military limitations, particularly due to a loss of elite consensus on the need for continued contribution following excessive collateral damage. Although the official narrative offered for the defection in question still revolved around "economical and practical considerations" (Reuters, 2016).

Strikingly, such answers mostly validate the expectations of small state literature rather than coalition defection literature, except for the theories of elite consensus and dissensus, as posited by authors such as Kreps (2010) and Lagassé & Mello (2018). This further demonstrates that coalition defection literature – still in its formative stages – does not yet sufficiently account for the idiosyncrasies of small states. Even the seminal model of coalition defection pioneered by Kathleen McInnis (2020) and employed as the theoretical framework of the present study, while appreciative of the bigger puzzle of coalition defection, still misses several important pieces. By expanding the definition of the independent variable 'military capabilities' to 'military capacity,' this study has offered a valuable guideline to uncovering the missing small state pieces and thus completing the puzzle of coalition defection.

The most remarkable result of the three "comparative, process-tracing case studies" (Massie, 2016, p.87) conducted by this study, was the robust consensus among the small state domestic political elite on the strategic necessity to maintain their operational profiles with the GC in the face of profound operational and security risks, as well as those factors which the extant defection literature regards as the primary incentives for coalition defection – i.e., elections,

leadership changes, and domestic terror attacks as a case of blowback of coalition contribution upon domestic security. Yet, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands, remained involved in the GC, even beyond their defections, albeit in a more limited capacity. Moreover, as mentioned, such factors are exclusively political in nature. While small states are less constrained by their political ambition to contribute than they are by the military means at their disposal to act on such ambitions. Still, this demonstrates that small states can – and in the case of Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands, despite their various defections from the GC, have – punched above their weight.

Before proceeding to identify valuable avenues for further research, a few points vis-à-vis the findings of the present study warrant consideration. First, an interaction can be observed between two of the cases of the present study – i.e., Belgium and the Netherlands, whose defections became intertwined in a combat rotation system over the course of their tenure with the GC. Yet, this interaction does not invalidate the results found. Since, on the one hand, such interactions between cases mainly present a danger to quantitative rather than qualitative studies, like the present research project. Such qualitative studies can, by way of process-tracing, identify and explain the points of interaction between these cases.

Therefore, on the other hand, the process-tracing effort of the present study found that while these cases indeed shared superficial similarities in their defection strategies and the causal factors underpinning the selection thereof – i.e., military capacity limitations – factors had different origins between the cases. Belgium was predominantly constrained by its limited military budgets, thus precluding the deployment of its available combat units. Whereas the Netherlands faced a loss of military readiness as a result of its continued deployment to the GC, which had to be restored before another combat contribution could be made. Hence, the combat rotation system set up by and between these states was not an inevitability, but rather a unique small states solution to solve a shared issue with ultimately different causal sources.

Second, while the generalizability of the above findings is admittedly limited, as is the plight of qualitative research (Howard, 2017), the theoretical implications thereof can nevertheless be extended to other cases in a similar context. Moreover, these findings remain of utmost value and interests to policymakers and military planners, to proactively identify and subsequently address imminent cases of coalition defection. Hence, an early recognition of such cases can prevent coalition collapse, as small states face myriad political incentives to uphold their coalition contributions. Military planners merely need to identify valuable alternative contributions.

To conclude, this study identifies several avenues for further research into the topics considered. First, this study has sought to expand the academic understanding of small state coalition defection, which exhibit "the most puzzling behavior" (Mello, 2019, p.15). Yet, the little scholarship completed on this topic – including the present study – has focused exclusively on the Western strategic context. Hence, an exploration of the coalition contributions and defections of non-Western small states would enrich established theory and ensure its generalizability to other strategic cultural contexts. It is here that this study recalls the Arab allies that contributed to the GC – i.e., Bahrain, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates. While these states contributed to the GC combat campaign in a less structured manner, an assessment of the interests prompting these Arab states to join and prematurely depart from the GC would still add to scholarship in meaningful ways, by affording it to transcend its Western-centric focus (Jesse & Dreyer, 2016, p.14-15).

Second, this study has endeavored to expand defection literature by broadening its scope from merely ground-combat coalitions – e.g., OIF and ISAF, which have been covered in academia ad nauseum (Davidson, 2014; Massie, 2016; McInnis, 2020) – to include air combat coalitions, like the GC. However, as also lamented by McInnis (2020, p.44), even less academic attention has been afforded to the topic of defection from naval coalitions. Such naval coalitions may have different goals, affordances, and risk-assessments compared to their ground and aerial counterparts and may thus invite different contribution and defection decision-making processes. Therefore, such naval coalitions would prove a valuable test to the extant literature. Examples of such prominent naval coalitions include the EU's operation Atalanta, as well as the naval components of the US-led operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Lastly, this study – and the wider defection literature on which it is based – has focused exclusively upon the rationale underpinning the contribution and withdrawal of military units. Yet, participation in the military campaign of a multilateral coalition is but one way a state can contribute to the coalition in question. Hence, the valuable civilian, political, and humanitarian contributions made by non-militarily active coalition partners are often omitted from academic consideration. Due to the different nature of these contributions, compared to their military alternatives, the reasons behind their contribution and (early) withdrawal may be equally different. Then, an understanding of such reasons may add to the overall understanding of coalition behavior. In short, even though it remains in its formative stages, defection research is a multifaceted field deserving of more academic attention. This study has aimed to offer a jumping board thereto.

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Appendix 1: GC Timeline of Belgium's GC Contributions

Table 9

Chronology of Belgian contributions to the Global Coalition until 23 March 2019

Date(s)	Theater	Capabilities
October 2014 – June 2015	Iraq	6 F-16AMs
		120 support personnel
March 2015 – May 2018	Iraq	25 instructors
July 2015 – June 2016	Iraq	25 force protection troops
November 2015 – January 2016	Iraq	1 frigate Leopold I
July 2016 – June 2017	Iraq & Syria	6 F-16AMs
		120 support personnel
July 2017 – December 2017	Iraq & Syria	4 F-16AMs
		120 support personnel
January 2018 – December 2018	Iraq	25 force protection troops
May 2018 – December 2018	Iraq	80 instructors
		1 combat engineering corps

Adopted from Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers (2014c; 2016b; 2020)

Appendix 2: Timeline of Denmark's GC Contributions

Table 10

Chronology of Danish contributions to the Global Coalition until 23 March 2019

Date(s)	Theater	Capabilities
August 2014 – March 2015	Iraq	1 C-130J Hercules transport plane
		55 support personnel
October 2014 – October 2015	Iraq	7 F-16AMs
		140 support personnel
October 2014 – December 2017	Iraq	120 army instructors
November 2015 – Present	Iraq	1 mobile ground radar system
		30 support personnel
June 2016 – December 2016	Iraq & Syria	7 F-16AMs
		140 support personnel
		1 C-130J Hercules transport plane
		60 support personnel
August 2016 – October 2018	Iraq & Syria	60 SOF operators
February 2017 – May 2017	Iraq	1 Navy frigate
January 2018 – Present	Iraq	180 army instructors
October 2018 – April 2019	Iraq & Syria	1 C-130J Hercules transport plane
		55 support personnel
		Emergency medical team of 12 medics

Sources: adopted from Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal (2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018).
Notes: [a]: including 2 reserve planes. [b]: including both regular army and SOF instructors.

Appendix 3: Timeline of The Netherland's GC Contributions

Table 7
Chronology of Dutch contributions to the Global Coalition until 23 March 2019

Date(s)	Theater	Capabilities
October 2014 – September 2015	Iraq	8 F-16AMs[a]
		250 support personnel
		130 instructors[b]
October 2015 – June 2016	Iraq (Syria	6 F-16AMs[a]
	in Jan 2016)	200 support personnel
		130 instructors[b]
April 2016 – December 2017	Iraq	155 instructors[b]
July 2016 – December 2017	Iraq	35 force protection troops
January 2017 – March 2017 &	Iraq	1 KDC-10 refueling airplane
June 2017 – November 2017		45 support personnel
October 2017 – December 2017	Iraq	1 C-130 Hercules transport airplane
		45 support personnel
January 2018 – December 2018	Iraq & Syria	6 F-16AMs[a]
		150 support personnel
		130 instructors[b]
January 2018 – January 2019	Iraq	1 surgical unit (10 medical personnel)
January 2019 – December 2019	Iraq	70 instructors[b]

Sources: adopted from Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal (2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018).
Notes: [a]: including 2 reserve planes. [b]: including both regular army and SOF instructors.

Appendix 4: Case Study Bibliography Belgium

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