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## **The Dutch defence implementation strategy regarding the concept of Multi-Domain Operations.**

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Master Thesis

# The Dutch defence implementation strategy regarding the concept of Multi-Domain Operations.

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## **Acknowledgement**

I have always been highly interested in the Dutch defence organisation, but I never really had a clear understanding of it. You hear about budget cuts or increases in the news, but you have no idea what that means for such a large and complex organisation. Particularly due to the war in Ukraine, my interest in defence has grown even more, realising that our security is not something to be taken for granted. This has led to the establishment of my own foundation to help the Ukrainian people, which resulted in me travelling to Ukraine four times to deliver humanitarian aid. When I had to come up with a topic for my thesis, I was certain that I wanted to focus on the Dutch defence organisation. Gradually, I learned more about the organisation, especially when conducting interviews with high-ranking officers and lower-level units, and I discovered that there is a lot of disagreement and ambiguity within the organisation. I definitely did not expect my research question to be answered in this way. Thanks to the guidance and tips from my supervisor, Mr. Reijling, to maintain a sharp and neutral perspective on my research, I ultimately obtained an unbiased answer to my research question.

## List of relevant abbreviations

|           |                                                   |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------|
| MoD       | Ministry of Defence                               |
| DoD       | Department of Defence                             |
| NATO      | North Atlantic Treaty Organization.               |
| MDO       | Multi- Domain Operations                          |
| CDS       | Chief of Defence staff                            |
| DGB       | Director-General Policy                           |
| CLAS      | Chief of the Army staff                           |
| CZSK      | Royal Netherlands Navy                            |
| CLSK      | Royal Netherlands Air Force                       |
| KMAR      | Royal Netherlands Military Police                 |
| ASBT      | Air surveillance battery                          |
| DCC       | Defence Cyber Commando                            |
| NLD SOCOM | Netherlands Special Operations Command            |
| DMO       | Defence Materiel Organisation                     |
| DOSCO     | Defence Support Command                           |
| MIVD      | Military Intelligence and Security Service        |
| NLDA      | Netherlands Defence Academy                       |
| KMA       | Royal Military Academy                            |
| KIM       | Royal Naval Institute                             |
| KMS       | Netherlands Military Academy                      |
| NDD       | Dutch defence doctrine                            |
| OPCO      | Operational command                               |
| DIME      | Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic |
| COIN      | Counterinsurgency                                 |

## 1. Introduction

February 24th, 2022, can arguably be seen as the darkest day since the Second World War on the European continent. On this day, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, announced a "special military organisation" to "denazify" and "demilitarise" Ukraine. As a result, around 150,000 to 200,000 Russian troops marched into Ukraine from four general directions. Putin's initial plan was a ten-day special military operation to bring Ukraine to its knees. Due to a number of factors such as the resistance of the Ukrainian armed forces and its citizens, the low morale of Russian forces, and a failure in destroying Ukraine's airforce and anti-air facilities, this plan failed (Zabrotsky et al., 2022, p. 1). As a result of the failed plan to bring Ukraine to its knees in ten days, the offensive from the Russian Federation turned into a long war of attrition. The support from NATO members for Ukraine and their condemnation of Russia's invasion has heightened tensions between NATO and the Russian Federation, reminiscent of the Cold War. NATO members have announced an increase in their defence spending (NATO, 2022) and have deployed 40,000 troops to their eastern flank.

Dutch Minister of Defence, Kaja Ollongren, stated that the Netherlands will invest an additional 5 billion euros per year in defence, a 40% increase from current spending, in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. At the time of the invasion, the Netherlands spent only 1.47% of its GDP on defence. This extra investment will enable the Netherlands to reach the 2% target by around 2024-2025 (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2022). In the Defence White Paper 2022, the Dutch government states that the additional budget will improve the operational readiness and deployability of its armed forces, by investing in equipment and supplies, allowing units to be deployed faster, more frequently, and for longer periods of time in all domains. Given the security situation, timeliness is important as Defence must be reinforced as quickly as possible (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022).

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has prompted important lessons for the Dutch armed forces, according to The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS). It highlights that a conventional war is no longer unthinkable in Europe, and the support of the United States remains crucial for European defence. The study emphasises the need for a Multi-Domain approach to warfare, as demonstrated by the Russian-Ukraine conflict. Drones play a

significant role in reconnaissance and guiding military operations, while cyber warfare disrupts enemy communication. Perseverance is vital for military success, requiring adequate personnel, ammunition, and equipment. The HCSS asserts that regardless of the outcome, Russia will remain a significant military threat to European security, necessitating an adaptation of NATO countries' military strategies, including the Netherlands (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2023).

In another research by HCSS, De Wijk et al. (2023) argue that the Russian invasion of Ukraine has shifted the security landscape in Europe. NATO members, including the Netherlands, need to refocus their military strategies on conventional warfare due to the heightened risks to European borders. The primary lesson learned is the need for NATO to adjust and strengthen its collective defence. The Russian Federation has demonstrated a willingness to escalate conflicts both horizontally and vertically, engaging in hybrid warfare, such as interfering in elections and cyberattacks. NATO's strategy relies on nuclear and conventional deterrence, but European-NATO countries must replenish their conventional war capabilities and invest in hybrid warfare capabilities. With the United States prioritising China, European-NATO countries may need to confront Russian aggression themselves and rely on their own deterrence capabilities. The retrenchment of European-NATO armed forces has limited their ability to wage warfare in different domains, as seen in Ukraine (de Wijk et al, 2023).

In his article "The answer is Multi-Domain Operations, but what is the question," Lieutenant-Colonel Tuinman explores the concept of MDO and highlights the lack of a clear definition (The answer is multi-domain operations! - Carré no. 2 - 2023, n.d.). Although MDO is widely used within the military, its specific parameters remain ambiguous. Tuinman notes that the first concrete publication on MDO occurred in 2017, signifying its relative novelty but increasing significance. Historian Michael Howard's assertion that "Military organisations inevitably get the next war wrong, mostly for reasons that lie beyond their control" reinforces Tuinman's argument (The answer is multi-domain operations! - Carré no. 2 - 2023: 13, n.d.). Tuinman cites several instances from American military history where painful lessons were learned, such as the misguided approach of open battle during World War I, resulting in significant casualties within a short period. Similarly, the doctrinal success of World War II did not prevent the disappointment and reflection that followed the Vietnam War (The answer is multi-domain operations! - Carré no. 2 - 2023, n.d.). Tuinman asserts that these experiences

highlight the need for doctrinal change after major threats or wars. This necessity is particularly evident in Ukraine, where the conflict spans all domains simultaneously. He poses a crucial question: are the Dutch armed forces capable of waging a war across all domains, including land, air, sea, cyber, and space? If not, can they adapt their doctrine and strategy to become proficient in this regard? The war in Ukraine serves as a valuable opportunity for the Dutch armed forces to gain insights into modern warfare and adjust their approach accordingly (The answer is multi-domain operations! - Carré no. 2 - 2023, n.d.).

Additionally, Dutch army commander Martin Wijnen emphasises the importance of a hybrid form of warfare and the need for a mix of instruments from multiple departments to address various methods employed by the enemy: Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic (DIME) (Wijnen, 2023). He highlights the significance of integrating multiple domains and dimensions, including land, sea, air, cyber, space, and combined arms operations. The war in Ukraine serves as an example of the conflict being fought in all dimensions of DIME. Wijnen underlines the need for improvements in close combat, fighting deeper behind enemy lines, and the expedited procurement process for drones in the Dutch armed forces (Wijnen, 2023).

These insights suggest that MDO is increasingly recognized as a pivotal operational concept in the Dutch armed forces and NATO, necessitating adaptation and integration of capabilities across multiple domains. The lessons identified from the war in Ukraine highlight the need for doctrinal changes, the readiness to engage in hybrid warfare, and the importance of acquiring necessary weapons and equipment while emphasising perseverance and a "whole of society approach" in the face of prolonged conflicts (The answer is multi-domain operations! - Carré no. 2 - 2023; Wijnen, 2023).

Reijling (2015) research explores the management of complex organisations. The research highlights the inherent tensions that arise during organisational change between top management teams and the operational level. Integrating diverse perspectives within an organisation, particularly when it is part of larger policy networks with conflicting demands, poses a significant challenge. Actors and subcultures within the organisation are influenced by an attempt to incorporate the demands of these networks. Consequently, organisational changes often generate tensions between management, which thinks in terms of texts and intentions, and the operational level, which thinks in terms of actions and work procedures. To mitigate

these tensions, Reijling (2015) suggests developing a strategy to resolve differences of opinion within the organisation, followed by fostering mutual communication to facilitate the process of "structuring." (Reijling, 2015)

Reijling's (2015) study yields insightful conclusions and recommendations for the Dutch armed forces' governance renewal from 2003 to 2014. It reveals that, despite efforts by defence leadership, a unified defence organisation had not been achieved by 2014. Reijling (2015) concluded that the Dutch defence organisation is not actually a hierarchical structure, but rather a network organisation with different branches that have minimal interconnection. The defence structure remained divided into four business units focused on the development and maintenance of core technologies, which define their identity and consequently influence the entire armed forces. Reijling (2015) compares this structure to a corporate divisional model, where each division handles specific areas such as transport, production, and procurement. Similarly, the Dutch defence organisation comprises the army, air force, navy, and military police. Although the goal was to establish a cohesive entity, this objective had not been realised.

Reijling advocates for centralising knowledge development in discussions between policy and executive authorities within the defence organisation. These discussions involve policy authorities, represented by individuals in the CDS staff, and executive authorities, represented by personnel in the military branches. The focus should be on implementing performance management and fostering cost-conscious behaviour, initially on a branch-specific level, and ultimately extending it across the entire defence organisation under the leadership of the CDS. In 2015, Reijling believed that strengthening interconnectivity within the organisation required several recommendations to grant the CDS the position of CEO. Evaluating whether this proposed cohesion has been achieved within the armed forces and examining it in the context of the concept of MDO is scientifically significant. The realisation of MDO depends on effective collaboration among all parties, including the army, air force, navy, cyber, and space, under the leadership of the CDS (Reijling, 2015). Therefore, it is relevant to investigate whether the intended cohesion advocated by Reijling has been successfully implemented within the armed forces.

We therefore want to investigate *“To what extent are the critical factors for successful implementation of Multi- domain operations being fulfilled within the Dutch defence organisation?”* To answer this question, we will use the study conducted by Ates et al. (2020)

to create a conceptual model of how an effective strategy implementation should look like. Furthermore, we will use the studies of , Reiling, 2015; Mantere & Vaara, 2008; Pentland & Feldman, 2008; Pache & Santos, 2013; van der Voet, 2021; Dooley et al., 2000; Kellermanns et al., 2005; Noble, 1999 to explain each of the critical factors for strategic implementation constructed by Ates et al. (2020) more thoroughly. We will use document research to map the current vision of the Dutch defence strategy regarding MDO and interview respondents from the Dutch armed forces on three levels CDS, CLAS and 107ASBT to see how the strategy is implemented by the organisation.

The study of Ates et al. (2020) is about strategic implementation and the link between visionary leadership, strategic alignment, strategic consensus, and strategic commitment. The authors found that the commitment of employees throughout an organisation is crucial to the success of a strategy implementation. The authors argue that visionary leadership plays a significant role in building strategic commitment, but it must be aligned with the company's strategy. The study proposes a moderated mediation model that suggests the effect of team manager visionary leadership on strategic commitment depends on the level of strategic alignment between the team manager and the CEO. Ates et al. (2020) also suggests that the development of strategic consensus, the shared understanding of the organisation's strategy, is essential for improving team strategic commitment. Ates et al. (2020) clarifies this in a conceptual model in their studies. This conceptual model will be used during our study to test the extent to which the Dutch defence organisation has sufficient cohesion to implement a viable new strategy regarding MDO.

## 2. Case description

In this chapter, we will provide a brief explanation and summary of the selected case study to facilitate comprehension of the research. Firstly, we will briefly outline the structure of the Dutch defence organisation, followed by an overview of the current status of Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) to elucidate the current position of the Dutch defence organisation.

### 2.1 Dutch defence organisation

Defence falls under the political responsibility of the Minister of Defence. The State Secretary of Defence provides support to the Minister according to the agreed division of tasks. The Minister and the State Secretary, also referred to as government officials, are accountable to the parliament (Ministerie van Defensie, 2021).

The Secretary-General is responsible for governing all administrative affairs within the ministry. The Secretary-General manages the entire Ministry of Defence. He or she bears the responsibility for ensuring the quality, timeliness, and coherence of the policy-making process, planning, and budgeting. Additionally, the Secretary-General is accountable for maintaining a balance between objectives, activities, and available resources (Ministerie van Defensie, 2021).

The Chief of Defence (CDS) is tasked with overseeing the preparation, execution, and evaluation of all operational deployments, considering the instructions of the Minister. The units deployed fall under the command of the CDS. In addition to the readiness and deployment of the armed forces, the CDS is also responsible for their support, including the provision of personnel and equipment. This entails the comprehensive management of the armed forces, including CZSK, CLAS, CLSK, DCC, NLD SOCOM, DMO, and DOSCO. The CDS has the mandate to provide leadership to these organisations (Ministerie van Defensie, 2021).

As the highest-ranking military officer, the CDS provides direct military advice to the Minister and is responsible for bilateral and multilateral military cooperation within established international policy frameworks. The CDS contributes to policy development and is responsible for the comprehensive assessment of policy, including regulations and guidelines,

for feasibility. Additionally, the CDS is accountable for identifying military capability needs. (Ministerie van Defensie, 2021).

The Director-General Policy (DGB) is tasked with developing the vision and strategy for a modern and future-proof armed forces. Additionally, the DGB is responsible for comprehensive international policy. The DGB also provides administrative support and advice to government officials. It is the responsibility of the DGB to formulate comprehensive and executable defence-wide policies, including internal regulations and framework. Furthermore, the DGB is accountable for evaluating this policy and developing defence-wide plans. (Ministerie van Defensie, 2021).

The commanders/directors of CZSK, CLAS, CLSK, KMar, DMO, DOSCO, MIVD, DCC, NLD SOCOM, and KD have the overall responsibility for the execution within their respective organisational units, in accordance with defence policy, laws and regulations, and the directives of the Secretary-General and the Chief of Defence. They ensure proper collaboration and support among their organisational units, including operational support from Joint Organisational Units (JODs) and assortment managers under their authority. Furthermore, they contribute to the tasks and responsibilities of the aforementioned officials through their advice and specific knowledge and expertise (Ministerie van Defensie, 2021).



field. To counter this, rapid and continuous integration across all domains is necessary to maintain deterrence and engage in strategic competition (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022c).

To achieve this, three fundamental principles for transitioning to MDO have been identified. The first is calibrated force posture, which combines positioning and the ability to manoeuvre over strategic distances. Multi- Domain formations possess the capabilities and capacity to operate in multiple contested domains. Lastly, convergence is required to achieve cross-domain synergy. The integration of domains is now sought during the pre-conflict phase, whereas in the past, the different domains would only interact and rely on cooperation during the conflict phase. To give substance to MDO, emphasis must be placed on experimentation, training, innovation, and operations (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022c).

Due to the emergence of technological advancements in the realm of artificial intelligence (AI), big data, autonomous systems, and hypersonic weaponry, our traditional doctrines are facing significant challenges. As a result, alongside the conventional three domains (land, air, and sea), the domains of cyber and space, which rely heavily on advanced technology, have also become crucial (*Het antwoord is multi-domain operations! - Carré nr. 2 - 2023, z.d.*). These developments have prompted the U.S. Army to make initial strides toward embracing the Multi- Domain Battle concept devised by Perkins. In 2018, the Multi - Domain Battle (MDB) concept, initially focused on land-based operations with added cross-domain capabilities, evolved into the concept of MDO. This shift elevated the notion of Multi- Domain from a land-centric perspective to an overarching concept that transcends traditional domains. Recognizing the significance, NATO has closely followed the U.S. Army's progress and officially adopted the MDO concept (*Het antwoord is multi-domain operations! - Carré nr. 2 - 2023, z.d.*)

An unambiguous definition and uniform understanding of a new concept, such as MDO, are the holy grail in the realm of doctrine. However, practical experience demonstrates that such clarity is often achieved only after the war or conflict has been recorded in the annals of history. Currently, three distinct streams can be identified concerning the MDO concept, namely the holistic vision, system integration strategy, and operational concept.

The holistic vision describes MDO as a doctrine that integrates and synchronises all military activities across the five domains (land, sea, air, cyber, and space) and environments

(physical, virtual, and cognitive) while also incorporating non-military activities. It represents a holistic approach similar to the integrated approach seen in the counterinsurgency (COIN) era. The NATO and the Department of Defence (DoD) have their own interpretations of MDO, with NATO placing more emphasis on integrating military domains and enhancing military combat power through other elements of power. The DoD has officially renamed MDO as Joint All-Domain Operations (JADO), with a focus on military aspects. This is seen as "The new way of American Warfare." (*Het antwoord is multi-domain operations! - Carré nr. 2 - 2023, z.d.*).

The second approach to MDO does not view it as a vision or conceptual doctrine but rather as a system integration strategy. Various countries, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Netherlands, have their own interpretations of MDO. In the UK, the emphasis is on technological integration and modernization of the armed forces. In the US and the Netherlands, MDO focuses on improving and expediting operational processes, such as kill chains. The concept places emphasis on the exchange of information and data between capabilities, enabling rapid collaboration between sensors and weapons. An example of this is the automated assignment of a suitable shooter, such as a smart bomb or a drone, based on automated systems (*Het antwoord is multi-domain operations! - Carré nr. 2 - 2023, z.d.*).

The third approach views MDO as an operational concept. It encompasses the combined use of joint and military capabilities to achieve strategic objectives. It emphasises Unified Action and the creation of a military competitive advantage. MDO recognizes the interdependence of various military domains and emphasises the value of complementary threats. Instead of technological superiority, MDO focuses on intelligently combining multiple dilemmas to gain the desired advantage across multiple domains (*Het antwoord is multi-domain operations! - Carré nr. 2 - 2023, z.d.*).

The implication of MDO is that land units can no longer operate solely within their own domain. Land operations require collaboration and operations in other domains. This means that the land component cannot independently guarantee dominance in its own domain for the joint forces. It is crucial for the land component to remain aware of what it can no longer achieve independently and how it can contribute to the effects in other domains. This change necessitates a new mindset and has implications for the education, training, and readiness of

personnel and capabilities within the army (*Het antwoord is multi-domain operations!* - Carré nr. 2 - 2023, z.d.).

The second approach, focused on system integration, faces a similar challenge. Not all branches of the military and partner countries are capable of delivering a greater technological effort than before. Joint operations, both within the military and with international partners, are already challenging. Each branch of the military has its own vision of warfare and the required resources. Additionally, it is likely that during wartime, the Dutch army will not operate in an integrated manner with the Dutch air force and Navy, as Dutch army brigades are integrated into German divisions. Ultimately, NATO determines which units are assigned to which regions when developing regional plans. Therefore, it is important for countries to avoid significant discrepancies in their technological efforts at the international level (*Het antwoord is multi-domain operations!* - Carré nr. 2 - 2023, z.d.).

### 2.2.1 Definition MDO

Since May 2019, NATO has adopted the MDO strategy within the NATO framework. MDO has been identified as a priority topic for further development. An initial alliance concept for MDO, known as the I-CMDO concept, has been formulated, outlining a vision for MDO. The problem statement for MDO is as follows: "*Challenges occur in an increasingly complex, hyperactive, urbanised, and interconnected battlespace that transcends geographical boundaries, with contested domains across all levels of command. While MDO development is taking place at the national level, NATO has not yet provided a clear description of its interpretation and plans for MDO, nor has it articulated its rules for MDO during competition, crisis, or conflict. Without an effective NATO MDO approach, credible deterrence and warfighting advantage are at risk*" (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022c: 6).

Based on this problem definition, a provisional MDO vision has been formulated: "*NATO enables, prepares, plans, orchestrates, and executes and/or supports synchronised activities across all domains and environments, at speed and scale, in collaboration with partners, other stakeholders, and instruments of power. This delivers tailored options at a time and place of choosing, building advantages across the spectrum of competition in order to*

*decisively influence the attitudes and behaviours of adversaries and connected audiences"* (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022c: 7).

While this NATO vision primarily focuses on the activities and effects within the five military domains, it also acknowledges the relevance of other external factors, such as economic and political instruments of power, that play a role in MDO. Based on the problem statement and vision, the following definition has been formulated for MDO: "*The orchestration of military activities, across all domains and environments, synchronised with non-military activities, to enable the alliance to deliver converging effects at the speed of relevance.*" (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022c: 7).

### 3. Theoretical framework

In this chapter we will elaborate and deepen the model by Ates et al. (2020) with relevant additional insights specific to this case. By the end of this chapter, we will establish starting points to develop a conceptual model, and subsequently, we will formulate an expectation based on that model.

#### 3.1 Strategic implementation by Ates et al. (2020)

Ates et al. (2020) suggests that successful implementation of a new strategy within an organisation requires alignment between the CEO and the team manager regarding the company's strategy. Additionally, the team manager must display visionary leadership to their team members. Consequently, there should be a shared collective understanding of the strategy within the team, in other words, there should be consensus among team members about the strategy. Finally, individual team members must be willing to act as part of the team based on shared understanding. The four components of the concept explained by Ates et al. - strategic alignment, visionary leadership, strategic consensus, and strategic commitment - will be further elaborated to provide a clear understanding of the importance of bringing the different perspectives of different levels within an organisation together to achieve a strategic implementation.

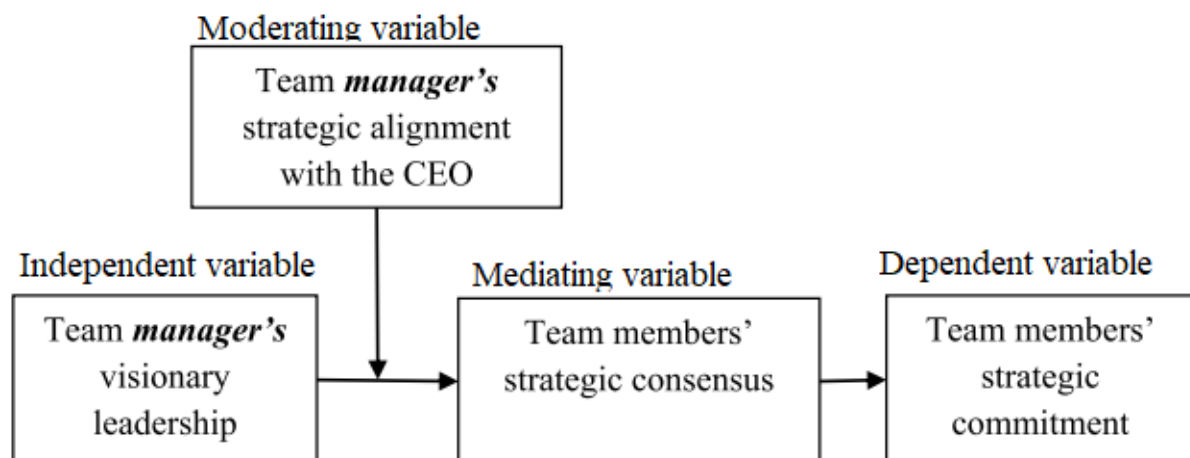


Figure 2: Strategic implementation model by Ates et al. (2020: 641). Modified by author for clarification purposes.

Ates et al. (2020) state that any strategy implementation, no matter how well formulated, is ineffective without people throughout the organisation putting the strategy into practice. Ates et al. (2020) developed a concept for a viable strategic implementation. It is important for this conceptual model to have an interdependence between its components. Ates et al. (2020) discusses strategic alignment, visionary leadership, strategic consensus, and strategic commitment. The authors argue that visionary leadership is a skill required for managers at all hierarchical levels. According to the model by Ates et al. (2020) the impact of team manager visionary leadership on strategic commitment, mediated by strategic consensus, depends on the moderating influence of team manager strategic alignment with the CEO. This influence can be positive when the team manager is strategically aligned with the CEO, but it can also have a negative effect when the team manager is not aligned with the CEO. When the team manager and the CEO are not strategically aligned, the team members do not share a similar understanding of the strategy due to differences between the CEO and the team manager's strategic ideas. Consequently, the level of strategic consensus (shared understanding of the organisational strategy) among the team members decreases. This, in turn, leads to a lower level of strategic commitment, with team members being less willing to act as a cohesive unit based on the strategy (Ates et al., 2020). Conversely, when the CEO and the team manager are strategically aligned, a shared understanding of the strategy emerges, resulting in greater strategic consensus among team members and higher levels of strategic commitment (Ates et al., 2020).

However, Ates et al. (2020) state that their hypothesis assumes that team managers consistently use their visionary leadership to cultivate consensus within their teams based on the strategy formulated by top management. In reality, this may not always be the case, as team managers often have different perspectives on the strategy compared to top managers. The proximity between a team manager and their team members also creates an opportunity for the manager's visionary leadership to influence the team's strategic understanding based on their own opinions of the strategy, rather than aligning with the strategy as formulated by the CEO and other top managers. Therefore, the seemingly straightforward relationship between team managers' visionary leadership, strategic consensus, and team strategic commitment may not always hold true due to potential misalignment between the manager and CEO in terms of their strategic views.

### 3.1.1 Strategic alignment

Ates et al. (2020) discusses the importance of the shared understanding of the strategy in time and place amongst the CEO and the team manager for effective strategy implementation and consensus building within teams. The authors define team manager strategic alignment as the similarity of perceptions of the importance of strategic priorities between an individual team manager and the CEO. In other words, the team manager's strategic understanding should reflect top management's strategic understanding. When a manager is strategically aligned with the CEO, their visionary leadership will align with strategic messages from top management (Ates et al, 2020).

Middle and lower-level managers play an active role in helping their teams understand and interpret the organisation's strategy. They are not merely conduits for transmitting orders from upper management to subordinates. Team managers have the discretion to shape their team's understanding of the strategy and its implications. While they may aim to create a shared understanding of the strategy as envisioned by top management, they also have the freedom to use visionary leadership to persuade their teams about alternative strategies that deviate from the views of top management (Ates et al, 2020).

This is not a hypothetical scenario. Team managers may have different understandings of the strategy compared to top management due to their daily operational experiences, their focus on their own interests or their team's interests, or the variations in their interactions with top management. Additionally, the ambivalence or lack of clarity in top management's strategic initiatives allows middle managers to interpret and prioritise strategies differently. Therefore, the authors propose that the effectiveness of team manager visionary leadership in fostering team strategic consensus depends on the level of alignment between the manager and the CEO in terms of their strategic understanding (Ates et al, 2020).

Strategic alignment between the team manager and the CEO means that their perceptions of the importance of strategic priorities are similar. When a team manager is strategically aligned with the CEO, their visionary leadership acts as a facilitator of the strategy, promoting strategic consensus within the team. In such cases, the manager's visionary leadership aligns with the strategic messages from top management (Ates et al, 2020). However, when there is a lack of strategic alignment between the team manager and the CEO,

team manager visionary leadership that focuses on alternative strategic priorities (misaligned visionary leadership) can undermine strategic consensus. In these situations, the manager attempts to build consensus around a strategy that is not aligned from the one defined by top management. This misalignment invites resistance to the strategic vision of top management and may lead to initiatives that are not in line with the strategy, potentially slowing down or sabotaging strategy implementation. The presence of conflicting messages about the strategy from the manager and top management creates confusion within the team and diminishes the effectiveness of both messages. As a result, team strategic consensus is lower when team manager visionary leadership is based on a misaligned understanding of the strategy compared to the CEO's understanding (Ates et al, 2020).

Reijling (2015) discusses the internal communication environment. After identifying the drivers behind the need for organisational change and determining a change strategy, the organisational leadership must engage in active dialogue to promote collective learning on all levels of the organisation. The author uses the concept of discourse, as described by Mantere and Vaara (2008), as a specific vocabulary developed by actors in which opinions on core values, interrelationships, and norms are defined. Terms used in such discourse, such as "strategy" or "leadership," acquire meaning for the members of the organisation, improving communication among parties as they better understand each other. Mantere and Vaara (2008) identify six strategies or discourses used to implement organisational changes. These six strategies are listed in Table 1a and 1b. The discourses are further explained below the tables.

| Non-participative discourses   | Mystification                                                                                                                                                         | Disciplining                                                                     | Technologization                                                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Conception of strategy process | Strategy process is driven by visions, missions and other strategy statements not to be questioned or criticised – that provide the basis for organisational activity | Strategy is linked to effective organisational discipline and command structures | Strategy process is driven by a specific system                  |
| Subject positions              | Top managers are given a central role as leaders defining the key strategies                                                                                          | Top managers are seen as the key strategists. This often involves                | Specific people – usually top managers – define the system to be |

|                                   |                                                                                                   |                                                                                      |                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                   |                                                                                                   | “responsibility” but also heroification                                              | used                                                                                                                   |
| Linkage to other social practices | Strategies are often crafted in closed workshops                                                  | Strategy work is closely linked to organisational control mechanisms                 | Access to information is controlled                                                                                    |
| Effect on participation           | The exclusive right of top managers to define strategies and withhold information is legitimised. | Other organisational members can only participate in ways defined by their superiors | Legitimises the use of specific systems, often effectively limiting the ability to bring up new perspectives or issues |

Table 1a: Non-participative ‘discourses’ (Mantere & Vaara 2008, From: Reijling, 2015: 68).

With mystification, the development of strategy and vision is done by top management's "inner circle," who then pass it down to the rest of the organisation. The idea is that top management is better equipped to come up with the vision because they have more information and experience. This process creates a clear structure and strengthens the position of those in the inner circle. The rest of the organisation is responsible for implementing the vision. It's like a waterfall that moves downstream, where the strategy starts at the top and trickles down to the rest of the organisation (Mantere & Vaara, 2008).

Disciplining is a method in which top managers assign specific responsibilities and authorities to themselves and their subordinates, creating a hierarchical structure within the organisation. Decisions are made by the top management, and the employees are expected to follow these decisions without question. This approach tends to discourage employee participation and involvement in decision-making, as they are viewed as mere objects who need to carry out orders obediently (Mantere & Vaara, 2008).

Technologization refers to using systems, such as reporting, performance measurement, or workflow systems, to guide the actions of employees in an organisation. The personnel are expected to follow the prescribed procedures and feed information into these systems. However, this approach can limit employee participation at the operational level, according to (Mantere & Vaara, 2008) Furthermore Pentland & Feldman. (2008) argue that designing routines in organisations requires a different approach. They suggest developing "living,"

"generative systems" based on interdependent actors rather than "dead" systems or artefacts. The latter reinforces a misunderstanding of routines as things and relies on technological determinism, which assumes that technology alone drives organisational processes.

| Participative discourses          | Self-actualization                                                                              | Dialogization                                                                                                  | Concretization                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Conception of strategy process    | Strategy process is about finding meaning in organisational activities                          | Strategy process involves dialectics between top- down and bottom-up processes                                 | Strategy process is seen as a natural, almost mundane part of organisational decision-making               |
| Subject positions                 | All organisational members can in principle participate in strategizing                         | All actors that have a vested interest are to participate in strategy processes                                | The role of top managers as key strategists is not questioned but expected to follow joint rules           |
| Linkage to other social practices | Strategy work is linked to micro level (unit or group) strategy workshops and meetings          | Strategy work is linked to concrete negotiation processes involving various internal and external stakeholders | Strategizing is intimately linked to normal organisational decision-making                                 |
| Effect on participation           | Legitimises separate group and individual level strategizing efforts and even conflicting ideas | Legitimizes top managers special status as key strategists but not independently of other groups               | Call for clear-cut and transparent rules helps to demystify strategizing and legitimise wide participation |

Table 1b: Participative ‘discourses’ (Mantere & Vaara 2008, From: Reijling, 2015: 69).

"Dialogization" refers to integrating both top-down and bottom-up approaches to strengthen support for potential changes within an organisation. According to Mantere & Vaara (2008) this approach aligns with modern views on collaboration in organisations. When dialogization is implemented, the executive units recognize the value of the guidelines provided by leadership as long as they can still make adjustments to their implementation. In this approach, strategy development is viewed as an iterative and collective process.

By “concretization” the focus is on finding specific processes and actions that lead to

the implementation of strategic goals on the operational level. According to Mantere & Vaara (2008), concretization is conceptually opposed to mystification. Strategy development is seen as an integral part of the organisation's operations, where vision and practical procedures are continuously connected. While the role of top management in driving vision development is not denied, every member of the organisation is considered a strategist within their own context and work environment.

Self-actualization is a perspective on strategic management that focuses on individuals' ability to create their own goals as part of the strategy-making process. According to Mantere & Vaara (2008), strategic management is a form of collective mapping that values personal initiative and mutual trust. This approach sees strategy-making as a process of collective meaning-making within the broader context of the organisation and its environment. The top management is responsible for creating the right conditions for employees to have a personal and meaningful approach to their responsibilities. A shared reflection on the identity of the organisation is also essential. In contrast to mystification, concepts such as "vision" and "mission" are important in self-actualization but are not the starting point for further implementation by the executing units. Rather, they are the result of a collective search and learning process. Therefore, strategy and vision development are seen as a shared responsibility that is not solely the responsibility of top management. Mantere & Vaara (2008) also found that self-actualization was implemented in organisations as a counterbalance to overly directive impulses from top management.

### 3.1.2 Visionary leadership

Ates et al. (2020) emphasises the importance of visionary leadership. This type of leadership involves the leader effectively communicating a compelling vision of the future for both the team and the organisation. The goal is to persuade others to actively contribute to making that vision a reality. A leader who demonstrates visionary leadership has the ability to clarify the strategy from the CEO to their team members in a daily context, which results in lower resistance and complacency. Leadership plays a fundamental role in mobilising and motivating followers toward collective goals, and visionary leadership specifically embodies this idea (Ates et al., 2020). In the context of strategy implementation, visionary leadership is crucial because it involves effectively communicating a strategic vision. The intention is to inspire and

convince employees to actively participate in realising that vision. Visionary leadership is highly relevant to the strategy process because organisational strategy represents the desired future state of the organisation and the path to achieve it. Visionary leadership aims to motivate and mobilise followers, guiding them towards attaining that future state. The communication and persuasion aspects of visionary leadership closely align with the concept of strategic commitment. Building commitment to the strategy requires effectively communicating the strategy in a way that persuades employees to invest effort in its implementation (Ates et al, 2020).

With previous studies on strategy, CEO visionary leadership have been linked to organisational growth and innovation (Ates et al, 2020). It is generally regarded as a positive factor in various aspects. If we extend these positive findings to the context of strategy implementation, it would imply that visionary leadership from managers who are not in the top executive positions should also contribute to fostering team strategic commitment. However, it is important to question this intuitive assumption. While the CEO holds decision-making authority over the company's strategy, it cannot be automatically assumed that their visionary leadership aligns perfectly with the company's strategy. This assumption does not hold true for middle and lower-level managers, as they do not possess decision authority over the company's strategy. In fact, it is quite common for team managers to have disagreements with the company's strategy. The literature on the strategy process has highlighted that team managers often hold different perspectives on strategy compared to top managers. In some cases, these differing views can even lead to actions by managers that hinder the implementation of the strategy. Therefore, we cannot assume that team manager visionary leadership alone will ensure the team's commitment to the organisational strategy, without considering the degree to which team managers align with the CEO in their understanding of the organisation's strategy (Ates et al, 2020).

Pache and Santos. (2013) argue that hybrid organisations are emerging and have a significant advantage over traditional, more homogeneous organisations in that they can draw from a rich range of methods and perspectives to meet the demands of their environment. As mentioned, such organisations face a managerial challenge in effectively guiding organisational changes, considering that change strategies in "loosely" and "tightly coupled" organisations fundamentally differ. In this context, Furthermore the authors emphasise that leaders, more than ever before, need to reflect on the degree of goal achievement and the impact of

implemented measures rather than rigidly adhering to predetermined paths. They state: "Most of the existing research focuses on diagnosing and correcting breakdowns in implementing a model of change in the action strategy. Far less attention has been given to the reflection strategy of revising one's conceptual model to fit the people and organisation undergoing change. We argue that the effectiveness of the action strategy without reflection is limited and sometimes self-defeating. In other words, instead of 'swimming upstream,' the skillful change agent reconceptualizes the situation in order to 'go with the flow.' Switching mental models to better fit changing circumstances, of course, implies that the change agent has a repertoire of several mental models" (Reijling, 2015: 72).

Reijling (2015) emphasises in this regard that, in the pursuit of balance in organisations, agreement between actors is more important than effectiveness. Reijling (2015) advocates for a type of leadership that views diversity in an organisation as a strength rather than a weakness. Hogg, Knippenberg & van Rast (2012) refer to this as "intergroup leadership," which focuses on the development of an "intergroup relational identity" rather than a "shared superordinate identity." (from Reijling, 2015: 72) He highlights that the development of a shared superordinate identity can lead to winners and losers, thereby creating additional resistance. Attention to relationships does not necessarily impede the development of a shared superordinate identity, as long as there is room for diversity. "Teacher-student" or "coach-player" relationships only hold meaning when there is an understanding of the inherently different roles that both actors must play in maintaining the relationship. Intergroup leaders do not identify solely with their own group but rather focus on the relationship between diverse groups and subcultures within the organisation. In this context, Reijling (2015) views leaders as "entrepreneurs of identity", who, through their approach and vision, can influence group members' perception of their own identity. However, they acknowledge that further exploration is needed to determine how to effectively implement such intergroup leadership. One element they identify is the appointment of "boundary spanners" who have the explicit task of bridging existing differences without eliminating them. "Boundary spanning is defined as a situation in which someone has one or more relationships that bridge two otherwise unconnected social networks. Boundary spanners are group members who have strong links and significant interactions with outgroup members and, thus, are potentially able to defuse intergroup conflicts and facilitate smooth intergroup interactions." (Reijling, 2015: 73).

Additionally, van der Voet et al. (2021) discusses the role of visionary leadership in team innovation within the context of collaborative government and post-bureaucratic organisational arrangements. The authors define visionary leadership as providing a future image of a collective with the intention to persuade others to contribute to its realisation. It involves communicating abstract higher-level goals that reflect uncertain and open-ended outcomes, providing followers with a sense of identity and purpose. Visionary leadership is seen as a motivator for change and innovation, energising the collaboration process, challenging conventional wisdom, and providing new and bold ideas (van der Voet et al., 2021).

Visionary leadership is linked to team innovation and creativity. Visionary leaders stimulate team innovation by promoting work-focused visions or missions that enhance creative efforts. They contribute to creating a psychologically safe environment for team members to experiment, take risks, cooperate, and exchange ideas. By attaching shared meaning to team goals, visionary leaders can contribute to team cohesion among diverse team members and unleash their innovative potential (van der Voet et al., 2021). Visionary leadership also plays a crucial role in facilitating team processes, particularly in multidisciplinary teams that operate in collaboration with other actors. It helps establish personal and social identification between followers and collective goals, building collective confidence and creativity. Visionary leadership can strengthen team cohesion, which provides a psychologically safe environment for innovation. Additionally, visionary leadership can facilitate boundary management, enabling effective collaboration and information exchange with external stakeholders. This external collaboration enhances innovation by exposing team members to new perspectives, cross-fertilization of ideas, and access to diverse resources (van der Voet et al., 2021).

### 3.1.3 Strategic consensus

The authors define strategic consensus as “the shared understanding of strategy among team members in its daily context, strategic consensus reduces the pursuit of subunit goals over organisational goals” (Ates et al, 2020: 641). When team members share a common understanding of the strategy, it provides them with a sense of validation and confidence. This strategic consensus influences their perception of the strategy's desirability and feasibility,

which in turn leads to increased strategic commitment. Furthermore, strategic consensus has a positive impact on strategic commitment by reducing the uncertainty associated with strategic change. Uncertainty can elicit negative responses and resistance to change, while reducing uncertainty is linked to greater support for change. By reducing uncertainty and enhancing the perceived feasibility and desirability of strategic objectives, strategic consensus plays a crucial role in fostering strategic commitment. Thus, we propose that this applies not only to the top executives but also to teams throughout the organisation (Ates et al, 2020).

Strategic consensus is a positive influence on strategic commitment because it may reduce the uncertainty associated with strategic change, and shared understanding among team members gives them confidence in the strategy (Ates et al, 2020). Moreover, Ates et al. (2020) note that managers have substantial discretion in what they envision and communicate to their teams about the strategy. In some cases, managers may even instruct their teams to carry on as usual or to counteract strategic changes imposed by the organisation. Managers may have different understandings of the strategy than top management, based on their daily operations, personal or team interests, or their interaction with top management (Ates et al., 2020).

Visionary leadership from team managers has the potential to foster a shared understanding of the strategy within a team and, consequently, enhance team strategic commitment. This is particularly relevant because, during the process of forming consensus, team managers not only convey their own interpretation of the strategy to their subordinates but also address their concerns and issues related to the strategy. When these concerns are effectively addressed, team members tend to develop a higher level of commitment to the strategy (Dooley et al, 2000). Team managers, being physically and personally closer to their team members compared to the CEO, have a better ability to motivate their teams towards achieving the organisation's strategic vision. Hence, it is reasonable to hypothesise that strategic consensus among team members serves as a mediating factor in the relationship between team manager visionary leadership and team strategic commitment (Ates et al, 2020).

Kellermanns et al. (2005) discusses the importance of shared strategic understanding at all levels of an organisation in order to effectively implement strategic plans. While top management teams (TMTs) are often seen as the primary source of consensus, this focus on the TMT alone ignores the fact that implementation requires shared strategic understanding at all levels of the organisation. Without this understanding, managers at lower levels may not be

able to fill in important details or respond to unforeseen events in a coherent way, potentially limiting the effectiveness of the organisation's strategic plans (Kellermanns et al., 2005). The author suggests that the optimum level of consensus falls somewhere between complete agreement and complete disagreement and varies from organisation to organisation and, within a particular organisation, over time. The achievability and desirability of consensus are, therefore, likely to vary over time, and lower consensus early in the decision process may prevent premature closure and encourage the expression of diverse opinions, which, in turn, can increase decision quality and improve organisational performance (Kellermanns et al., 2005).

Kellermanns et al. (2005) discusses the topic of strategic consensus and the accumulated research on its effects on organisational performance. The underlying premise is that strategic consensus enhances organisational performance by improving dialogue, coordination and cooperation within the organisation. Researchers have studied the subject from various theoretical and empirical perspectives, with the aim of gaining a better understanding of its effects on organisational outcomes. The literature on strategic consensus reveals conflicting findings, with some studies showing a positive relationship between strategic consensus (e.g., Homburg et al., 1999; Iaquinto & Fredrickson, 1997; Rapert, Velliquette, & Garretson, 2002), partially supportive (e.g., Bourgeois, 1980; Knight et al., 1999), while others show no relationship (e.g., West & Schwenk, 1996; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990) (Kellermanns et al, 2005). This inconsistency may be due to differences in the conceptualization and measurement of strategic consensus among researchers. Kellermanns et al. (2005) reviews the literature on strategic consensus and proposes a definition that reflects recent thinking and provides a basis for synthesising prior research. The outcomes of strategic consensus can include improved coordination, increased commitment to the organisation's goals, and higher levels of organisational performance. The inconsistent findings in the literature may also be due to differences in the measurement of strategic consensus. Researchers have used various methods, such as surveys, interviews, and archival data, to measure strategic consensus. The study suggests that researchers need to develop a standardised measure of strategic consensus that can be used across studies to enhance comparability (Kellermanns et al., 2005).

### 3.1.4 Strategic commitment

Ates et al. (2020) defines strategic commitment as the shared voluntary effort, cooperation, and support for the strategy within an organisational unit (Ates et al, 2020: 639). The successful implementation of a strategy hinges on the unwavering commitment of teams throughout the entire organisation (Noble, 1999). Strategic commitment, a fundamental concept in this process, is characterised by the willingness to act individually as a team member based on shared understanding. It goes beyond a mere positive attitude towards the strategy; instead, it encapsulates the wholehearted dedication of employees who recognize that their individual efforts are integral to the organisation's overall success in executing the strategy. Committed employees willingly engage in extra role behaviour, actively collaborate with others, and demonstrate a reduced inclination towards self-serving interests. Strategic commitment encompasses not only a mindset but also the willingness to exert substantial effort in implementing the strategy (Ates et al, 2020).

Despite its importance, ensuring strategic commitment from teams during the strategy implementation phase presents a significant challenge. Scholars have observed instances of employee resistance and complacency towards strategic change efforts within organisations. (Ates et al, 2020). To deal with this problem middle and lower-level managers emerge as key figures in addressing resistance, overcoming complacency, and ultimately ensuring strategic commitment within their respective teams. These managers hold a critical role in interpreting the strategy within the context of daily operations, identifying the specific actions required for successful implementation, and effectively communicating and clarifying the underlying logic of the strategy to their subordinates. By actively engaging with their teams, these managers can bridge the gap between the strategy's formulation and its execution, cultivating a sense of purpose and commitment among employees. Through their guidance and support, middle and lower-level managers foster an environment that encourages strategic commitment and aligns individual efforts with the organisation's strategic objectives (Ates et al, 2020)

Furthermore Noble (1999) states that strategic consensus and strategic commitment share striking similarities in their influence on successful strategy implementation. Both concepts revolve around a collective understanding and wholehearted dedication to a strategic directive within an organisation. While strategic consensus emphasises a shared agreement and alignment among team members regarding the strategic direction, strategic commitment goes

beyond mere consensus by emphasising the voluntary effort and cooperation for the strategy (Noble, 1999). Although the conventional belief has been that higher levels of consensus lead to improved firm performance, a more comprehensive understanding of these concepts has emerged. Both strategic consensus and strategic commitment have been found to offer a range of benefits beyond performance outcomes. They foster employee commitment, dedication, and a sense of ownership in the strategic process. Moreover, they contribute to reducing uncertainty and ambiguity within the organisation. By promoting both strategic consensus and strategic commitment, organisations can create an environment where employees share a common understanding and exhibit a strong willingness to exert effort in implementing the strategy. This shared commitment and consensus not only enhance employee engagement but also align individual actions with organisational objectives (Noble, 1999).

### 3.2 Conceptual model

This study presents the following research question: *“To what extent are the critical factors for successful implementation of Multi- Domain Operations being fulfilled within the Dutch defence organisation?”* For this purpose, we will incorporate the model of Ates into the Dutch defence organisation.

Given the issues outlined by Reijling (2015), the emphasis is expected to be on vertical communication. In this study, vertical communication is referred to as strategic alignment, the mediator variable, occurring between the Commander of the Armed Forces as the CEO and the Army commander as one of the team managers. Additionally, visionary leadership, with two aspects, plays a role. Firstly, it aims to bring together the different domains with different tasks and perspectives, which is referred to as intergroup leadership. Secondly, it addresses how the team manager translates the strategic vision from the CDS to its daily context for the team members. We anticipate that, considering the transition the current defence organisation is undergoing, strategic alignment (vertical leadership) in combination with visionary leadership (horizontal leadership) will determine the level of strategic consensus and, thus, strategic commitment. Strategic alignment and visionary leadership are the focal points of this study, as they play a crucial role in determining strategic consensus and strategic commitment. Since strategic

consensus and strategic commitment are outcomes resulting from the presence of strategic alignment and visionary leadership, and the study by Kellermanns et al. (2005) has shown conflicting findings regarding the definition and measurement of strategic consensus, we have integrated strategic consensus and strategic commitment into a unified framework. Throughout the remainder of this study, we will treat them as one variable.

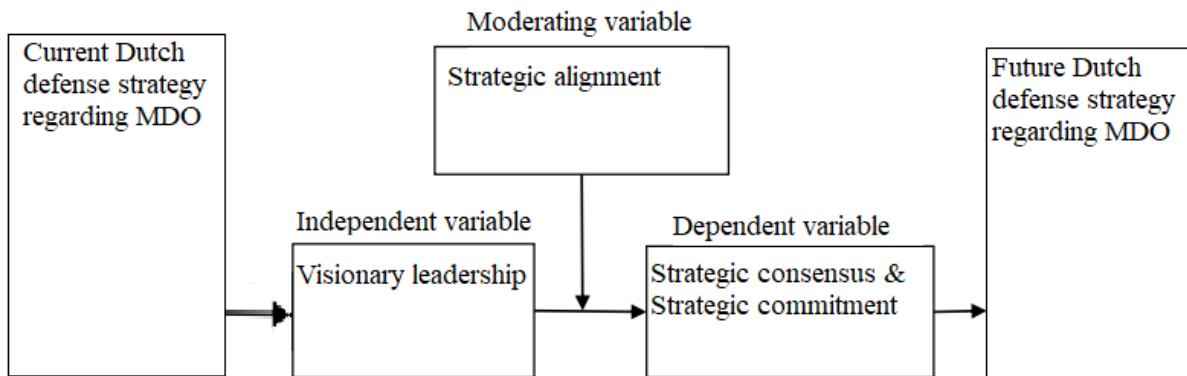


Figure 3: Conceptual model

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Research Design

We choose a qualitative case study because it offers several advantages in line with our research question. Firstly, it allows for a comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon by capturing complex dynamics and interplay of factors. Document analysis and interviews enable a deep understanding of coherence. Secondly, document analysis helps understand formal policies and strategic documents, providing a baseline for comparing with actual practices. Thirdly, interviews at various levels offer diverse perspectives, contributing to a holistic view of coherence. Finally, the focus on a specific case facilitates a deep contextual understanding of the organisation (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

#### 4.1.1 Case-selection.

In this study, we will apply the conceptual model developed by Ates et al. (2020) to the Dutch defence organisation, as illustrated in Figure 1. This figure focuses on the main structure of the defence organisation and does not take into account the level of operational units, below the mentioned operational commanders. In order to answer the RQ we will need to get insight in 3 organisational levels; i.e. the CEO, the team manager and the team members. CDS assumes the role of the CEO in Ates' model. Upfront it remains unclear which position corresponds to the MDO team manager. The CLAS can be regarded as a potential team manager; therefore, we have chosen to focus on the CLAS in this research. So, the Commander of the Army corresponds to one of the team managers in Ates' model. Furthermore, we will examine an operational unit under the CLAS that is not included in the primary structure of the Dutch defence organisation. This unit is known as the 107 Air Surveillance Battery (107ASBT), and it has been included in Figure 1 for clarification purposes. The selection of this unit is based on its engagement in joint operations, which is expected to provide valuable insights into the collaboration between different domains. The decision to focus on specific organisational elements such as CDS, CLAS, and the 107ASBT is driven by the need to effectively address the research question. Due to the scope of this research, we have chosen not to focus on all branches of the military, namely CZSK, CLAS, CLSK, KMAR, but solely on the CLAS. This should not pose a problem for our research because the concept of MDO remains consistent

across all branches of the armed forces. Therefore, the conclusions drawn from this research can also be applied to the other branches of the armed forces. Initially, we will provide an explanation of how these three levels of the Dutch armed forces will be analysed within the framework of the conceptual model developed by Ates et al. (2020).

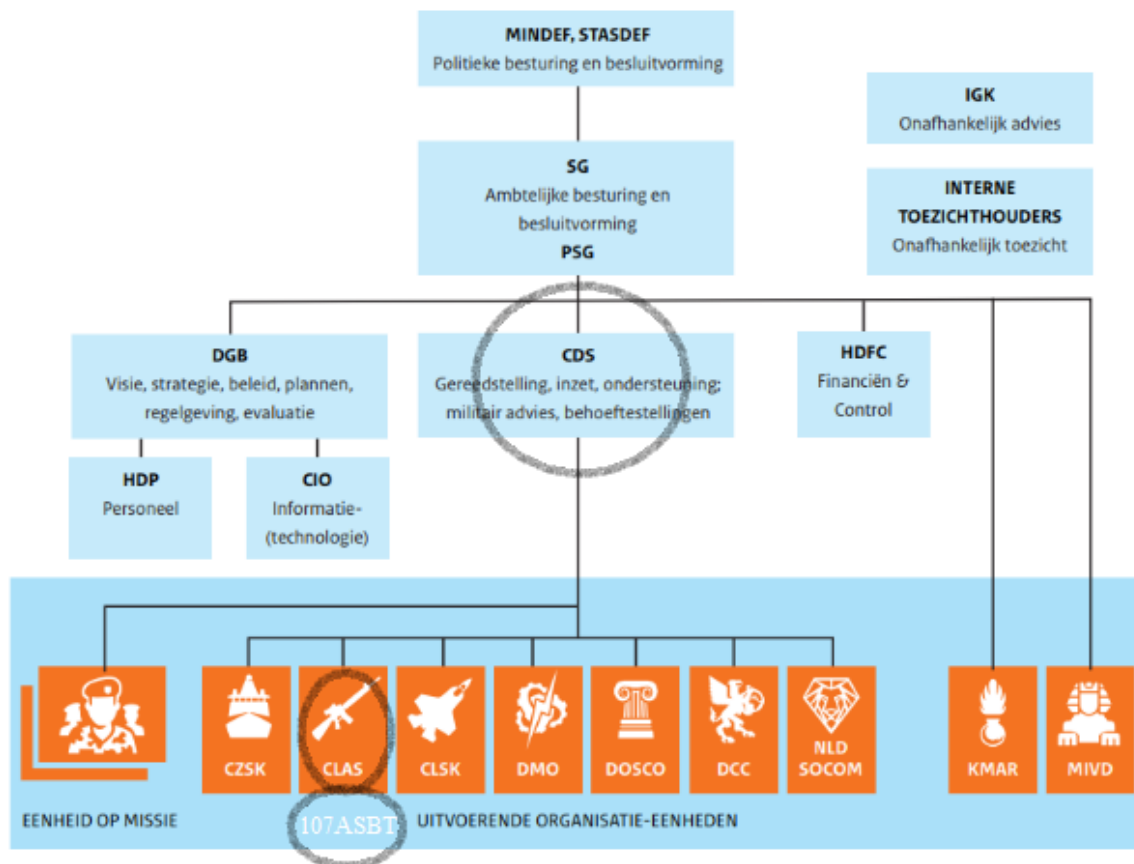


Figure 1: The Dutch Ministry of Defence Organisation. Modified by author for clarification purposes.

#### 4.2 Data-collection with document analyses and semi-structured interviews.

During this study, we will use two different methods of data collection. Data will be collected from two sources: first, through document examination; and second, through interviews with respondents. The document examination will involve a study of parliamentary documents, the Dutch Defence Doctrine, Defence White Paper 2022, Defence Vision 2035, Future Army Vision and military documents pertaining to the defence strategy on MDO by the CDS-staff and the CLAS-staff. This will offer insight into the formal position on how the strategy is

intended and how it should be implemented. Through interviews with respondents at three different levels (CDS-staff, CLAS-Staff, and the 107ASBT), we will try to determine their perception of the formal documents. Acquiring documentation from the operational unit thus, 107ASBT, is constrained. Many documents, such as annual plans and training schedules, are classified, and as a result, we do not have access to them. Consequently, the emphasis at the operational level is on conducting interviews, during which respondents can provide a simplified, unclassified representation of the practices. To present a comprehensive picture nonetheless, we rely on doctrine documents that offer a general overview of the objectives in the execution.

Given that the defence organisation is a large entity and, as a consequence, identifying appropriate respondents can be challenging, we have opted to conduct an initial interview with a representative from the Netherlands Defence Academy (NLDA). Through this approach, we aim to acquire scholarly insights into the defence organisation as a whole and gain a clear understanding of the academic discourse surrounding MDO. Subsequently, we were influenced by the Lieutenant-colonel to employ a snowball sampling technique, commencing at the CDS level. This method enabled us to identify new relevant respondents at a progressively lower level through each successive interview. The outcome of this process led to the compilation of the following list of respondents.

| Respondents                   | Date        | Function                                                                |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lieutenant-colonel Sellmeijer | 24th of May | Lecturer in Land Operations at the NLDA and Project Leader for the NDD. |
| Colonel Loukes                | 30th of May | Project officer operational headquarters MDO                            |
| Colonel van der Valk          | 2nd of June | DGB head department integrated plans                                    |
| Colonel Grijpstra             | 8e of June  | DGB department of operational policy                                    |
| Colonel Postma                | 12e of June | Author Operational design MDO and head Taskforce MDO                    |
| Colonel van der Linden        | 30e of June | Commander land warfare                                                  |

|                               |             |                                           |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------------|
|                               |             | centre CLAS                               |
| Lieutenant-colonel van Daalen | 30e of June | Future commander land warfare centre CLAS |
| Respondent x <sup>1</sup>     | 7th of July | Lieutenant platoon 107ASBT                |

Tabel 2: List of respondents

### 4.3 Data analysis

In this research, my focus will be on three components indicated in the conceptual model, namely: strategic alignment, visionary leadership, and strategic consensus and commitment. To examine strategic alignment, I will investigate the commander's intent, the Dutch Defence Vision 2035, and the Defence White Paper 2022 to determine how the CDS describes the strategy regarding MDO. This will be considered as the documented perspective of the CDS regarding the concept of MDO. Subsequently, through interviews, I will ascertain whether the plans outlined by the CDS are effectively implemented. To examine visionary leadership, I will investigate the Future Army Vision to see what their documented perspective is about MDO and leadership between and inside the different branches of the military. Furthermore, through interviews with CLAS and 107ASBT, we will check if the documented perspective about MDO and the way of leadership fits in the principles of a visionary leader. To measure strategic consensus & commitment we will look at the doctrine for land operations as the documented perspective. And once again through interviews we will check if the documented perspective about strategic consensus & commitment stated by the doctrine for land operations is implemented.

The interview questions have been developed based on the operationalization tables of strategic alignment, tables 1a and 1b, visionary leadership table 3, and strategic consensus & commitment, table 4, as elaborated below. The core of the interviews is documented in the Appendix A, the interview protocol.

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<sup>1</sup> Respondent x wanted to remain anonymous but his transcript was offered to the thesis supervisor

#### 4.3.1 Strategic alignment

Strategic alignment refers to the vertical communication from the CEO to the team manager. In the case of this study from the commander of the armed forces to the commander of the army. As explained by Ates et al. (2020), it is important that CDS and CLAS are aligned in strategy implementation as it is a moderating variable for visionary leadership, strategic consensus, and strategic commitment. Therefore, in this research, we aim to assess the level of strategic alignment using the internal communication discourse model of Mantere & Vaara (2008) to test the degree of alignment.

CDS to CLAS in ways of internal communication.

| Non-participative discourses      | Mystification                                                                                                                                                          | Disciplining                                                                                              | Technologization                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Conception of strategy process    | Strategy process is driven by visions, missions, and other strategy statements not to be questioned or criticised – that provide the basis for organisational activity | Strategy is linked to effective organisational discipline and command structures                          | Strategy process is driven by a specific system                                                                        |
| Subject positions                 | Top managers are given a central role as leaders defining the key strategies                                                                                           | Top managers are seen as the key strategists. This often involves “responsibility” but also heroification | Specific people – usually top managers – define the system to be used                                                  |
| Linkage to other social practices | Strategies are often crafted in closed workshops                                                                                                                       | Strategy work is closely linked to organisational control mechanisms                                      | Access to information is controlled                                                                                    |
| Effect on participation           | The exclusive right of top managers to define strategies and withhold information is legitimised.                                                                      | Other organisational members can only participate in ways defined by their superiors                      | Legitimises the use of specific systems, often effectively limiting the ability to bring up new perspectives or issues |

Table 1a: Non-participative ‘discourses’ (Mantere & Vaara 2008, From: Reijling, 2015: 68).

| Participative discourses          | Self-actualization                                                                              | Dialogization                                                                                                  | Concretization                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Conception of strategy process    | Strategy process is about finding meaning in organisational activities                          | Strategy process involves dialectics between top- down and bottom-up processes                                 | Strategy process is seen as a natural, almost mundane part of organisational decision-making               |
| Subject positions                 | All organisational members can in principle participate in strategizing                         | All actors that have a vested interest are to participate in strategy processes                                | The role of top managers as key strategists is not questioned but expected to follow joint rules           |
| Linkage to other social practices | Strategy work is linked to micro level (unit or group) strategy workshops and meetings          | Strategy work is linked to concrete negotiation processes involving various internal and external stakeholders | Strategizing is intimately linked to normal organisational decision-making                                 |
| Effect on participation           | Legitimises separate group and individual level strategizing efforts and even conflicting ideas | Legitimizes top managers special status as key strategists but not independently of other groups               | Call for clear-cut and transparent rules helps to demystify strategizing and legitimise wide participation |

Tabel 1b: Participative ‘discourses’ (Mantere & Vaara 2008, From: Reijling, 2015: 69).

#### 4.3.2 Visionary leadership

Visionary leadership refers to the horizontal communication between commander of the army and the commanders of other domains. And the vertical communication to its operational units, in other words, the extent to which CLAS is able to clarify the strategic vision from the CDS to its daily context for the 107ASBT. Ates et al. (2020) and van der Voet et al. (2021) both used an extensive survey where respondents filled out a 5-point Likert scale on various questions such as: "My team leader concretizes a clear vision," "My team leader has a clear sense of where he/she wants our units to be in 5 years," and "Strives to get the team to work

together in the direction of the vision." Because our study is rather small and based on qualitative research, we'll try to combine the most important aspects of visionary leadership. Based on the literature from van der Voet et al. (2021) and Ates et al. (2020), we will measure visionary leadership using the following table (Table 3).

| Non- visionary leadership                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Bad- visionary leadership                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Moderate- visionary leadership                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Good leadership                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Visionary leadership                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>CLAS, as one of the team managers, doesn't have an idea where the implementation of the MDO concept should be in five years, doesn't concretize the strategy to the operational units, and doesn't strive to clarify for the team members how they can contribute to achieving the strategic vision goals.</p> <p>The team manager doesn't respect the other domains and solely focuses on his own domain which results in a superordinate identity, thereby creating additional resistance.</p> | <p>CLAS has an idea of where the team should be in five years but doesn't concretize the strategy to the operational units and doesn't strive to clarify for the team members how they can contribute to achieving the strategic vision goals.</p> <p>The team manager communicates with team managers from other domains but doesn't respect the diversity of the groups resulting in a superordinate identity, thereby creating additional resistance.</p> | <p>CLAS has an idea of where the team should be in five years and concretizes the strategy to the operational units but doesn't strive to clarify for the team members how they can contribute to achieving the strategic vision goals.</p> <p>The team manager communicates with team managers from other domains. They respect each other's domain but rather focus on their own domains. This doesn't create additional resistance but also doesn't stimulate an intergroup relational identity</p> | <p>CLAS has an idea of where the team should be in five years and concretizes the strategy for the operational units. They strive to clarify for the team members how they can contribute to achieving the strategic vision goals. But it doesn't stimulate creative thinking about the strategy vision.</p> <p>The team manager does not identify solely with their own domain but rather focus on the relationship between different domains. Which results in an intergroup relational identity</p> | <p>CLAS has an idea of where the team should be in five years and concretizes the strategy to the operational units. They strive to clarify for the team members how they can contribute to achieving the strategic vision goals and stimulate creative thinking about their vision of the strategy.</p> <p>The team manager does identify with his own domain and focus on the relationship between all the other domains. They agree on the strategy vision from the CDS. Which results in an intergroup relational identity with</p> |

|  |  |  |  |                    |
|--|--|--|--|--------------------|
|  |  |  |  | Boundary spanning. |
|--|--|--|--|--------------------|

*Table 3. Operationalization of visionary leadership*

#### 4.3.3 Strategic consensus & commitment

Strategic consensus & commitment refers to the shared understanding of strategy among team members in its daily context and a shared voluntary effort, cooperation, and support for the strategy implemented by the commander of the armed forces within the 107ASBT. Ates et al. (2020) uses an extensive survey where respondents filled out a 5-point Likert scale. Because our study is rather small and based on qualitative research, we'll try to combine the most important aspects of strategic consensus & commitment. Based on the literature from Ates et al. (2020), Noble (1999), Kellermanns et al. (2005) and Dooley et al. (2000). We will measure strategic consensus & commitment using the following table (Table 4).

| Non consensus & non commitment                                                                                                                                        | Vague consensus & non commitment                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Vague consensus & vague commitment                                                                                                                                                                                           | Strategic consensus & vague commitment                                                                                                                                                      | Strategic consensus & commitment                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Team members haven't heard anything about the strategy regarding MDO from their team manager. Therefore, they are not willing and able to put effort into the concept | Team members have heard a about the strategy regarding MDO from their team manager but there is no consensus regarding to the subject amongst team members, Therefore they are not willing and able to put effort into the concept. | There is a shared understanding amongst team members about the strategy regarding MDO but not in its daily context. Team members are willing to put effort into the concept but are not able because MDO is not concretized. | There is a shared understanding amongst team members about the strategy regarding MDO in its daily context and therefore team members are willing and able to put effort into the strategy. | There is a shared understanding amongst team members about the strategy regarding MDO and the team managers concretized educational and training programmes with lessons learned included for individual team members |

*Table 4. Operationalization of strategic consensus & commitment*

#### 4.4 Reliability and validity

This study possesses high validity and reliability for several reasons. Firstly, I employed a conceptual model proposed by Ates et al. (2020) as the framework for my research. This model has been widely acknowledged and utilised in the field, providing a solid theoretical foundation for my study. By aligning my research with this model, I ensured the validity of my study's conceptual framework. Furthermore, we deliberately opted for the selection of the CDS, the CLAS, and the 107ASBT to encompass all levels relevant to the implementation of the MDO strategy. Considering the interconnectedness of these three levels both horizontally and vertically, we assume that the CLAS commander is linked to their counterparts in the other branches of the armed forces, just as operational units are interlinked. As a result, the selection

made in this study is a robust representation of the prevailing dynamics at these levels. Secondly, to gather data, I conducted a comprehensive document study, examining a variety of relevant sources such as doctrines, government documents, and military documents. This approach ensured that I obtained a diverse range of information from authoritative and reliable sources. Furthermore, I enhanced the reliability and validity of my study by incorporating primary data through interviews. These interviews allowed me to directly engage with all the levels within the Dutch defence organisation, obtaining firsthand insights and perspectives. Moreover, my study's reliability is supported by its replicability. I have provided a clear and detailed description of my research methods, allowing other researchers to replicate the study and assess its findings independently. This transparency contributes to the overall reliability and validity of my research. Lastly, the combination of document study and interviews allowed for a triangulation of data sources, mitigating potential biases, and providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. By incorporating different perspectives and types of data, I enhanced the reliability and validity of my study's findings.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Strategic alignment

For strategic alignment, we analyse the vision at both the political and military levels. The Dutch Defence Vision 2035, the Dutch Defence White Paper 2022, and the commander's intent have encompassed a range of discussions concerning MDO. These documents contain valuable insights and analyses pertaining to MDO, underscoring its significance within the defence discourse. We regard these documents as documented perspectives regarding strategic alignment. To evaluate the implementation of these ideas, we will examine the perspectives of respondents within the Dutch defence organisation. Their views represent the perceived truth regarding strategic alignment.

#### 5.1.1 Vision on political level

The white paper 2022 states that there is a need for prompt action to achieve tangible results, while acknowledging that recovery and rebuilding of the armed forces also require time. Sustained political commitment over multiple years remains necessary to realise the initiated changes for the long term (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022b). Therefore, in defence investments, we prioritise capabilities that provide added value within collaborative frameworks. This prioritisation is based on their alignment with our strengths and the needs of NATO or the EU (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022b). According to Colonel Grijpstra,

"The Dutch armed forces are always dependent on our allies and cannot engage in MDO independently, as reflected in the Defence Vision 2035 and Defence White Paper 2022. However, there are also instances where the Dutch armed forces need to be capable of conducting MDO on their own, such as in the protection of the Caribbean region, which falls under our kingdom, or the transit of military goods from the United States to Ukraine" (P. Grijpstra, personal communication, June 8, 2023).

Consequently, the colonel suggests that we should strive to adopt the NATO definition of MDO as much as possible, although nothing has been officially documented thus far. It is possible

that in the next defence note, an official MDO definition for the Dutch armed forces will be introduced (P. Grijpstra, personal communication, June 8, 2023).

The white paper also emphasises the need for a central MDO operational headquarters. Defence will invest in improving the quality of command and control in the coming years by adopting a more information-driven approach. To better manage MDO in a hybrid context, the Défense Operations Centre will be reinforced and established as a permanent operational headquarters (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022b). Colonel Grijpstra emphasises the necessity of an overarching Warfare Center for the effective implementation of MDO and for fostering collaboration among the involved branches of the armed forces.

"Each branch currently has its own warfare centre, but these are designed to solely focus on their respective branches. It is crucial that we have a comprehensive warfare centre that fully embraces MDO thinking and brings together all branches of the armed forces" (P. Grijpstra, personal communication, June 8, 2023).

However, the CLAS is not in favour of this approach, as lieutenant-colonel van Daalen argues,

"We have different headquarters within the various operational commands that are well-equipped to lead MDO operations under different circumstances. I do not believe a central headquarters is necessary. Instead, we need to train the current headquarters in MDO thinking" (A. van Daalen, personal communication, June 30, 2023).

Colonel van der Linden adds,

"At the CDS level, there are plans to establish a permanent national-level headquarters. This could be suitable for Task 3, national operations, to enable MDO. However, I only see this role for that purpose. When it comes to fighting on the eastern flank, the CDS will inform the NATO commander about the available units, and the CDS will no longer have control of them" (H. van der Linden, personal communication, June 30, 2023).

### 5.1.2 Vision on military level

During the Defence Summit 2021, the Chief of Defence, Onno Eichelsheim, stated in his commander's intent that MDO operations are one of his four focal points in the transformation of the armed forces. This implies that the different branches of the military should not be seen as separate entities but as a unified whole. Eichelsheim emphasised the need to "detach the colours of our uniform from our thinking." Additionally, the Chief of Defence highlighted that there has been excessive contemplation about Cyber and Space as secondary aspects, something that followed after our primary weapon systems. According to the commander, this approach no longer aligns with the strategic competition we find ourselves in (Ministerie van Defensie, 2023).

There is evidently still a discrepancy between understanding what is beneficial for the entire armed forces and actually implementing it when it comes to the collaboration between different branches of the armed forces. Lieutenant-colonel van Daalen emphasises that in the current era of warfare, it is crucial to operate under the assumption of conducting MDO, as it is simply not feasible to defeat the adversary with a single means or domain.

"We must realise that the enemy is so formidable that we cannot overcome them with only one capability or domain. We need overwhelming force from every domain (tank battalion, cyber operations, F35, Tomahawk missiles, jammers) to find a breakthrough. We require everything" (A. van Daalen, personal communication, June 30, 2023).

However, Colonel van der Linden states that, in practice, things often unfold differently,

"Each branch of the armed forces is convinced that they have endured significant budget cuts and therefore require additional resources to regain strength. This occasionally results in difficulties in looking beyond one's own military branch and acknowledging that another branch may benefit more. There is no room for second place on the battlefield; every branch of the military aims to prepare themselves professionally to the best of their ability, but requesting everything is not feasible. The MDO concept is embraced, and there is an awareness within the army that we need the whole of the armed forces. However, implementing this in practice can be challenging" (H. van der Linden, personal communication, June 30, 2023).

Colonel Postma working at Task Force MDO within the CDS-staff is the author of the Operational Design regarding MDO. The operational design translates the long-term perspectives outlined in the Defence Vision 2035 into a more tangible desired situation, specifying what they entail for the development of defence in conjunction with the measures already included in the Defence White Paper 2022. The operational design encompasses six operational lines. The desired situation, strategic objectives, and operational lines collectively depict an idealised vision of how defence should function and operate in 2035, based on current knowledge. This desired situation intentionally sets high standards, as many of the desired effects require considerable time to materialise. Over the next five years, emphasis will be placed on four key pillars: personnel and mindset, technology, data and information management, and innovation. The most significant transformation will occur within our own minds and those of our colleagues. MDO necessitates a mindset shift that enables us to fully leverage the opportunities offered by digitization, thereby ensuring success on today's and tomorrow's battlefields. Investments will be made in education and training through adaptations of curricula for initial and advanced courses (Postma, 2022). Colonel Van der Linden indicates that the CLAS and other branches of the armed forces are allowed to contribute to the CDS's thinking on the MDO concept.

"Currently, there is a program underway at the CDS-staff where they are developing an operational design for MDO along six lines of operation. This is being done at the CDS level with input from the OPCOs. The OPCOs are encouraged to contribute, and this is indeed crucial, as the CDS level does not possess in-depth expertise on how the OPCOs function. Joint thinking is required for this" (H. Van der Linden, personal communication, June 30, 2023).

However, the colonel asserts that this primarily occurs at a high level and emphasises the importance of the MDO mindset for every military personnel.

"Many people within the CLAS-staff contemplate and discuss MDO. It is not yet set in stone. It is mainly the higher echelons who ponder over it. Understanding MDO should be important for every soldier" (H. Van der Linden, personal communication, June 30, 2023).

Lieutenant-colonel van Daalen contributes, the vision of the CDS is currently not or scarcely translated into the daily context.

"We will only implement something in training once there is consensus and agreement in the doctrine. There is still much discussion about the level at which this lies and who will be responsible for what exactly. Until the discussion is crystallised, we will not proceed with training and education on the MDO concept. However, we can conduct experiments during the training sessions, where the training platform is used as an experimental space" (A. van Daalen, personal communication, June 30, 2023).

### 5.1.3 Resulting communication strategy

The CDS is in the process of developing an operational design for MDO to concretize the concept for the team managers. However, the specifics of what exactly needs to be done have not yet been sufficiently clarified to the team managers, impeding their ability to take appropriate action. The team managers, in the case of this study, the commanders of the various branches of the armed forces, are involved in the operational design and the future operating concept. This is a step in the right direction and resembles dialogization described by Mantere & Vaara (2008), table 1b, but it's not yet concretization which is explained as integrating both top-down and bottom-up approaches to strengthen support for potential changes within an organisation. Mantere & Vaara (2008) also argue that concretization is successful when the executive units recognize the value of the guidelines provided by leadership while still being able to make adjustments in their implementation. In this approach, strategy development is seen as an iterative and collective process. Therefore, we can infer that there is no manifestation of concretization but rather a process of dialogization, as conversations occur between the CEO and team managers, yet these discussions do not yield tangible concrete outcomes, thus lacking strategic alignment in that regard.

Additionally, interviews with Colonel Postma, Colonel Grijpstra, and Colonel Van der Linden reveal that the team manager disagrees with the CDS's strategy, particularly regarding the permanent joint headquarters. The concerned CLAS has expressed its disagreement, but the CDS has not taken any further action and has pushed the strategy forward. This indicates a communication strategy of mystification, which is explained by Mantere & Vaara (2008) as a

non-participative discourse where the top management's "inner circle" develops the strategy and vision, based on the belief that they possess superior knowledge and experience. They then cascade this vision down to the rest of the organisation for implementation. This approach creates a hierarchical structure, reinforcing the inner circle's authority, and resembles a waterfall model, with the strategy originating at the top and flowing down through the organisation. Mystification is contradictory to concretization and signifies misalignment. Without parties adopting a communication strategy of concretization, strategic alignment cannot be achieved.

## 5.2 Visionary leadership

To assess visionary leadership, we analyse the communication between the CLAS and other branches of the military, as well as between the CLAS and their operational units. We consider the Future Army Vision as the documented perspective on visionary leadership. The army faces various challenges for future land operations, including: 1) Complexity and unpredictability of future conflicts. 2) Hybrid confrontations, necessitating simultaneous deployment on multiple fronts and domains. 3) The importance of technological superiority. 4) The need for advanced sensors and systems capable of faster, more precise, and lethal operations over longer distances (Ministerie van Defensie, 2018). To evaluate the implementation of these ideas, we will examine the perspectives of respondents within the Dutch defence organisation, as their views represent the perceived truth regarding visionary leadership.

### 5.2.1 Communication between different team managers

The challenges pointed out by the Future Army Vision have implications for land operations. Firstly, hybrid threats, unpredictability, and complexity require the army to be more agile and capable of balancing between robustness and flexibility. This necessitates continuous learning at all levels, rapid innovation, and ongoing refinement of operational concepts. To achieve this, the army needs to undergo a fundamental reorganisation and transform into an open organisation that is agile, collaborative, and emphasises innovation at all levels, particularly at the operational level (Ministerie van Defensie, 2018).

Secondly, future conflicts demand an integrated approach. Land units are an integral part of this approach and always operate in cooperation with international and domestic security partners. Furthermore, land units closely collaborate with naval and air units at all levels, which has given rise to the concept of MDO, embraced by the army as its operating environment. The vision acknowledges that the MDO concept is still evolving and requires a high degree of interoperability, cross-domain training, and joint development of operational concepts (Ministerie van Defensie, 2018). However, despite the army's vision stating that the MDO concept is evolving and necessitates cross-domain training, Lieutenant Colonel Van Daalen presents an opposing view. He asserts that cross-domain training will only commence once the MDO concept is clearly defined and implemented into the doctrines.

"We will incorporate training elements only after achieving consensus and agreement within the doctrine about MDO. Currently, there are ongoing discussions regarding the level at which MDO falls and the exact responsibilities of each party involved. Until these discussions are finalised, we will not proceed with training" (A. van Daalen, personal communication, June 30, 2023).

To shape the second line of development, the army aims to enhance joint training and coordination of procedures with strategic partners. Given the involvement of multiple partners across different domains, the principles of simplicity, security, and versatility are applied to enable collaboration with these partners in all aspects. Furthermore, the vision states that the future army endorses the MDO concept and recognizes the inseparable interconnection of land operations with airborne combat and reconnaissance systems, GPS satellites in space for naval fire support, and cybersecurity against hacker attacks in the cyber domain. Therefore, the army strives for networked cooperation at all levels across all domains (Ministerie van Defensie, 2018).

To shape the fourth line of development, the army is investing in training for conducting high-tempo combat over long distances in a hybrid context. This entails joint exercises with other branches of the military at the lowest levels, integrating intelligence, fire support, and protection (Ministerie van Defensie, 2018). In practice, however, not much has been achieved yet in terms of this intended collaboration. Colonel van der Linden states that:

"Training with the Air Force has been happening for years, and we collaborate during deployments. For land units, it's no longer possible to do it alone. Having air support is incredibly valuable. However, this support from the Air Force to the Army is specific to the land component. MDO is something different. In MDO, we work together in planning and execution, thinking holistically about the effects we want to achieve and utilising all domains. It's not just about temporarily supporting each other in our respective domains. Currently, we are collaborating with other OPCOs in terms of MDO, especially when it comes to operational design. There is involvement in further deepening the understanding of MDO. However, we don't have extensive collaboration with the other domains yet." (H. Van der Linden, personal communication, June 30, 2023).

#### 5.2.2 Communication from the team manager to its team members

The future army vision states that superior technology is decisive in future scenarios. For instance, a threat can be identified by a drone and subsequently neutralised by a precision-guided long-range system, which was detected by an unmanned aerial system. Land units must also be able to operate in situations where there is no technological advantage and where units may be cut off from communication, for example. In order to make independent decisions, leaders need to be well-trained. Therefore, excellent education and training, individual development, team building, and leadership development remain of paramount importance (Ministerie van Defensie, 2018). In the document, it is clearly indicated that education, training, and leadership are highly significant for future scenarios. However, the interviews reveal that little progress has been made regarding training and education implementation regarding MDO

To implement the first line of development, the army aims to create more space for development and experimentation (CD&E). Innovation primarily occurs at the lowest levels, where operational challenges intersect with young, creative thinkers. The vision also emphasises that it is the responsibility of commanders to stimulate and facilitate innovation and problem-solving capabilities at the lowest levels (Ministerie van Defensie, 2018). However, according to Colonel Van der Linden, while the future army vision states that innovation should occur at the lowest levels, there is currently no input at those levels regarding the MDO concept.

"Contributions are always welcome, but lower-level units have other priorities at the moment. Due to substantial budget cuts, they have had to contend with non-operational vehicles for a while. Their focus now lies on their primary task. They are working diligently and training hard to execute land operations effectively how they used to do it" (H. Van der Linden, personal communication, June 30, 2023).

To shape the third line of development, the army is investing in training and educational techniques that better align with the younger generation. The army is committed to lifelong learning and, therefore, invests in strategic thinking, scientific education, critical and problem-solving skills, and reflection. This is expected to make our leaders more effective both operationally and administratively. The vision emphasises that leaders who are creative and innovative will be decisive in combat. They must be capable of enabling their personnel to operate as a cohesive team with strong problem-solving abilities" (Ministerie van Defensie, 2018). However, Colonel Van der Linden argues that teaching the MDO concept to young officers at the KMA does not provide additional value. He states that

“the NLDA adapts its curriculum and lessons to incorporate MDO thinking. However, the initial roles following graduation from the KMA involve tactical positions, where MDO is not extensively encountered. It is only when individuals join a staff position, which typically occurs around 10 years into their careers, that they begin to engage with MDO. Consequently, it may not be practical to introduce MDO thinking during the initial educational programs, but it could be more suitable for inclusion in career development programs for individuals who aspire to advance later on”. (H. van der Linden, personal communication, June 30, 2023).

To shape the fourth line of development, the army is investing in training for conducting high-tempo combat over long distances in a hybrid context. This entails joint exercises with other branches of the military at the lowest levels, integrating intelligence, fire support, and protection (Ministerie van Defensie, 2018). However, Colonel van der Linden states that, in practice, things often unfold differently:

"Each branch of the armed forces is focussed on its own branch. This occasionally results in difficulties in looking beyond one's own military branch and acknowledging

that some tasks are better performed by another branch or that we need each other to get a desired outcome.”(A. van Daalen, personal communication, June 30, 2023).

When we look into the future according to both gentlemen, they suggest that there will likely be much more clarity. Colonel van der Linden states,

"I believe that within five years, many uncertainties will have been eliminated. We will know where we operate, what the field looks like, and which dimensions we are discussing. We will also have a better understanding of the military applicability of technological developments such as AI. And we will have a clearer understanding of the context in which we conduct our operations; I think there will be much more clarity within five years for the Army" (H. van der Linden, personal communication, June 30, 2023).

Lieutenant-colonel van Daalen believes that there will not be significant changes at the lower levels of the armed forces, but rather the change will predominantly occur at the higher staff level.

"When we consider the capabilities of the barracks, I do not expect much change within five years. However, I anticipate significant development in terms of brigade, division, and corps staff. For example, there will be an increase in joint operations and international collaboration; much will happen in terms of MDO over the next five years" (A. van Daalen, personal communication, June 30, 2023).

### 5.2.3 Sub Conclusion Visionary leadership

The interviews with Colonel Van der Linden and Lieutenant-Colonel Van Daalen indicate that no concretization is taking place from the CLAS to the operational units. However, this is not surprising. As explained in Chapters 3 and 4, visionary leadership requires strategic alignment between the CEO (CDS) and the team manager (CLAS). There is no strategic alignment but rather misalignment. Since strategic alignment acts as a moderating variable, it is also impossible for team managers to demonstrate visionary leadership to their team members. The colonel and lieutenant-colonel argue that clarity in doctrine is needed before they can begin

training, exercising, and educating in the MDO mindset. In other words, the CDS must first establish a clear strategy so that it can be implemented and concretized to the lower levels.

Moreover, there is also little to no intergroup leadership taking place. As stated by the colonel and lieutenant-colonel, each branch of the armed forces wants to receive as much funding as possible and considers itself to be the most important branch. It is mentioned that each branch strives to prepare itself as professionally as possible and, as a result, believes that they deserve more investments than the others, which is naturally understandable. However, this mindset does not align with the MDO perspective. MDO views the armed forces as a single entity operating in all domains, so an investment in the Air Force is inherently beneficial for the Army as well. Unfortunately, this way of thinking has not yet emerged within the CLAS.

If we examine Table 2, we can infer that this falls under the category of "bad visionary leadership". Because the team manager communicates with team managers from other domains but doesn't respect the diversity of the groups resulting in a superordinate identity, resulting in no intergroup leadership, and thereby creating additional resistance. When looking at the communication to its team members then the CLAS has an idea of where the team should be in five years but fails to concretize the strategy to the operational units in a daily context and therefore also neglects to clarify how team members can contribute to achieving the strategic vision goals.

### 5.3 Strategic consensus & commitment

Strategic consensus & commitment refers to the shared understanding of strategy among team members in its daily context and a shared voluntary effort, cooperation, and support for the strategy implemented by the CDS within the 107ASBT. We analyse the doctrine for land operations and consider it as the documented perspective for strategic consensus & commitment. We will examine the perspectives of respondents within the Dutch defence organisation, as their views represent the perceived truth regarding strategic consensus & commitment.

Paragraph 1606 states that military capability encompasses the intellectual, physical, and moral components. The intellectual component includes aspects such as education and

innovation, lessons learned, and an understanding of conflict and context. The physical component encompasses training, the development of military capabilities, equipment, and sustainment. The moral component involves values and ethics, leadership, and motivation. These three components overlap and mutually influence each other. The effective functioning of a military unit relies on its ability to effectively integrate and synchronise these components, even in challenging circumstances, to convey its intentions to the environment and/or the adversary. Achieving proficiency in harmonising these components is crucial for successful military operations. (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022a).

In this paragraph, a concise summary of what Ates et al. (2020) seeks for strategic consensus & commitment is presented. However, when considering the perceived reality, this is not always the case. For instance, respondent X asserts that,

“At the moment, we are truly struggling with communication. Our systems are not aligned. These are significant issues within the armed forces, and I don’t think we have even addressed them yet. In my opinion, this needs to be resolved before we can even engage in MDO.” (Respondent x, personal communication, 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2023).

Furthermore, respondent X also points out that there is currently no training conducted with all branches of the armed forces regarding MDO. The lieutenant states,

“Sometimes we train with another branch of the armed forces, but we have been doing that for years. We do not train to operate in MDO scenarios with all the branches of the armed forces.” (Respondent x, personal communication, 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2023).

Additionally, the lieutenant highlights,

“Very large-scale exercises at division level, which could involve the Germans, for example, do not actually take place.” (Respondent x, personal communication, 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2023). In contrast to training for MDO, the lieutenant even observes a recent trend of the opposite. “What struck me is that the exercises we have conducted recently were not large-scale, but rather small-scale ones.” (Respondent x, personal communication, 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2023).

Paragraph 2202 emphasises the importance of manoeuvring, striking, and safeguarding in military operations. It highlights the need to traverse the ground while ensuring defence and logistical support to reach a position for decisive actions. This often requires controlling and protecting specific terrain. Operating in a hostile environment without protection and integrated offensive capabilities will likely lead to defeat. These capacities cannot be assembled last-minute. Effective manoeuvring with combined arms requires expertise, integration, and rigorous training (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022a). The ability to apply force effectively requires integration, coordination, and synchronisation of various military capabilities within a cohesive organisation. This is called joint operations, which maximises own strength and minimises vulnerabilities. The ability to operate with joint units forms the foundation of military capability. To win the fight, our personnel, equipment, training, and manner of operation must be organised in such a way that all available capacities effectively come together and enhance one another (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022a: 2203). Furthermore paragraph 7101 states that the design, coherence, and objectives of an operation must be clear. This provides insight into what needs to be achieved through the activities. A tactical operation is a cohesive set of activities aimed at achieving specific effects. During the planning and execution of the tactical operation, the commander and their staff must establish and maintain coherence among the building blocks of the operation, the tactical activities. It is essential to recognize that each tactical operation contributes to a larger whole. Therefore, a tactical operation is a building block within a larger operation. Without the mentioned coherence and awareness of the bigger picture, there is a high likelihood that the tactical operation will not yield the desired results (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022a).

These two paragraphs once again highlight the importance of strategic consensus & commitment or in the context of the doctrine, understanding of the bigger picture, the integration, coordination, and synchronisation of military capabilities to act jointly in this context. MDO operations take this a step further than joint operations, making these aspects even more crucial. However, respondent X believes that they still face significant challenges in implementation. He states that in practice, there are still substantial differences between the various branches of the armed forces.

“You simply notice in practice that the interests of the operational commands differ greatly from each other. When you look at the different visions of the armed forces, you see that they are all focused on their own domains, generating effects, while we

should be looking at how we can generate effects together in all domains.” (Respondent x, personal communication, 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2023).

Furthermore, the respondent asserts that some systems are simply too outdated to meet certain prerequisites for MDO.

“I was on exercise for the past three weeks, and we really tried to operate based on information, as we are an intelligence unit. But you can clearly see that our systems are so outdated that it is very challenging to obtain data and information from different players and that is a problem because we’re an intelligence unit.” (Respondent x, personal communication, 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2023).

Unity of effort is essential for achieving optimal synergy among the various elements within the organisation. To achieve this, a commander must, based on their understanding of the situation, determine their priority, and align the allocation of resources accordingly. Additionally, a commander must ensure that the intent of their higher commander is clearly understood by their subordinates (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022a). Unity of thought is an important prerequisite for unity of effort. Unity of thought is formed through the use of common doctrine and tactics, consistent terminology, and a high level of joint training. Unity of purpose stems from a clearly formulated intent, clear mission orders, and the designation of priority or main effort. Unity of thought and unity of purpose together lead to unity of effort (Ministerie van Defensie, 2022a).

Here, the concept of visionary leadership is once again brought up. it is crucial for the team manager to ensure that the CEO’s strategy is understood by the team members. However, in this research, we discovered that the CDS wants an operational headquarters for MDO, but the CLAS disagreed, suggesting that one of the headquarters of one of the branches of the armed forces could fulfil this role. Nevertheless, the team member disagrees with the team manager, stating,

“If we consider the permanent joint headquarters for MDO, I believe it should be above the operational commands. It is inherently MDO, so one operational command cannot take charge of it; otherwise, we would remain stuck in our current siloed thinking. However, there should also be a competent staff with expertise in MDO. I think it would

be very complex to establish.” (Respondent x, personal communication, 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2023).

Additionally, respondent X argues,

“In my view, you should simply dissolve all the operational commands and create a unified entity. Look at the USMC, for example; it is a unit that can do everything. All levels are integrated here and centrally managed.” (Respondent x, personal communication, 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2023).

This is a clear manifestation of misalignment between the CDS and the CLAS. The 107ASBT receives divergent ideas from both the CDS and the CLAS, leading to a disagreement with the CLAS. Resulting in a lack of consensus and commitment amongst the 107ASBT

When we asked the lieutenant about his opinion on the MDO strategy, it became evident that there is no consensus, and there is even a lack of understanding regarding the strategy. He states,

“I have done some reading on MDO since you mentioned it would be the topic of our interview, but I didn’t know much about it. I believe the joint functions of the armed forces come together in an operation.” (Respondent x, personal communication, 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2023).

Furthermore, the lieutenant adds,

“Within my unit, there is no discussion about MDO.” (Respondent x, personal communication, 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2023).

Additionally, the lieutenant expresses the opinion that, in his view, the defence organisation is not ready for such a significant strategy implementation at the moment.

“To be honest, I don’t think the defence organisation is ready for such a major strategy implementation at the moment. From a doctrinal perspective, I believe that the culture within the armed forces is not yet prepared to do it well. They really need to integrate

it more into, for example, the educational programs. It is already happening to some extent, but not nearly enough.” (Respondent x, personal communication, 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2023).

Respondent X further states that nothing is communicated to their unit regarding the MDO strategy,

"CLAS actually doesn't communicate anything about MDO to us. Only sporadically through the doctrine, if there are any changes, they are sent to the units. The recent change related to MDO is that we are transitioning from main task 2 (missions in Mali) to main task 1 (conventional combat)." (Respondent x, personal communication, 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2023).

Furthermore, the lieutenant observes that there are statements made at the political-strategic level that are simply not yet feasible,

"You can now see a difference between the political necessity to engage in conventional combat while we have actually become somewhat unaccustomed to it." (Respondent x, personal communication, 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2023).

#### 5.3.1 Sub conclusion strategic consensus & commitment

Based on the findings from 5.3, it becomes evident that there is no strategic consensus & commitment among the team members regarding the MDO strategy. This is not surprising, as explained in Figure 3 in subsection 3.2, where strategic consensus & commitment are the dependent variables in our model. Since there is no evidence of strategic alignment, which acts as a moderating variable, and no presence of visionary leadership, it follows that there can be no occurrence of strategic consensus & commitment. While certain sections of the land operations doctrine do emphasise the importance of effectively conveying the intentions of higher command to the operational units and achieving a shared understanding of the strategy, the interview clearly reveals that this is not happening. The operational units do not receive any information about MDO from the CLAS, MDO is not discussed within the unit, and there is even a belief that they are not ready for a strategy implementation regarding MDO. Referring

back to Table 3 in subsection 4.3.3, we can determine that there is a state of non-consensus & non-commitment. This indicates that team members have not been informed about the MDO strategy by their team manager. Consequently, they are neither willing nor able to invest effort into the concept.

#### 5.4. Conclusion and answer to the RQ

From our research, we can conclude that: 1) there is no concrete and shared vision regarding MDO from the CDS to the CLAS, 2) there is no leadership style focused on collaboration among the different branches of the armed forces, and 3) there is no practical implementation focused on the application of the MDO strategy.

When examining the strategic alignment in the Dutch armed forces, it has been revealed that the CDS does not yet have clarity regarding the MDO strategy. While discussions about MDO take place with the different branches of the armed forces, there is evident diagonalization in this regard. However, as indicated in the interviews, little action is taken to address the criticisms received from the different branches of the armed forces. Consequently, this results in a communication strategy of mystification, which contradicts a communication strategy of concretization. Concretization is crucial for achieving strategic alignment. Given the presence of mystification between the CDS and the CLAS, we can conclude that there is no strategic alignment but rather misalignment between the CDS and the CLAS within the Dutch armed forces.

When examining visionary leadership, we assess the communication between the CLAS and the other branches of the armed forces, as well as the communication pertaining to MDO from the CLAS to the 107ASBT. From the interviews, it has become apparent that the different branches of the armed forces do not view each other as equal entities essential for MDO operations. Each branch primarily focuses on its own interests and perceives its own sector as the one deserving the most funding, investments, and importance. We can conclude that there is no intergroup leadership between the CLAS and the other branches of the Dutch armed forces. Furthermore, the interviews revealed that the CLAS does not effectively translate the MDO strategy of the CDS into the daily context for the 107 ASBT. There are no ongoing efforts towards training and collaborations at the MDO level because the CLAS maintains that they need to first gain clarity in the CDS's doctrine regarding MDO before proceeding.

Considering the absence of intergroup leadership and the failure to translate the MDO strategy into daily contexts by the CLAS, we can conclude that there is bad visionary leadership within the CLAS of the Dutch armed forces.

When examining strategic consensus & commitment, we can conclude that there is no evidence of such coherence among the 107ASBT. Strategic consensus & commitment are dependent variables from strategic alignment and visionary leadership in our research. Since we have already determined the absence of these two concepts, there can be no occurrence of strategic consensus & commitment. While the doctrine for land operations highlights the significance of strategic consensus & commitment for the operational units of the CLAS and thus the 107ASBT, we observed no implementation of these principles in daily practice concerning MDO. This indicates that team members have not been informed about the MDO strategy by their team manager. Consequently, they are neither willing nor able to invest effort into the concept. Therefore, we can conclude that there is a state of non-consensus and non-commitment within the 107ASBT of the Dutch armed forces.

With this information, we can address the research question, which was: *"To what extent are the critical factors for successful implementation of Multi-Domain operations being fulfilled within the Dutch defence organisation?"* The critical factors for successful implementation of Multi-Domain operations, thus strategic alignment, visionary leadership and strategic consensus & commitment are not being fulfilled within the Dutch defence organisation. Consequently, the Dutch defence organisation is currently unable to implement a strategy concerning MDO.

## **6. Reflection and recommendation**

### **6.1. Reflection on the answer to RQ.**

Based on the gathered data we formulated a conclusion that was not in line with our expectation. Since it does not illustrate a strong connection between all the elements of the defence organisation. This is undoubtedly a result of a 30-year period of budget cuts, followed by the expectation of achieving a defence organisation capable of conducting MDO within half the time. Therefore, I would like to add a slight nuance to the conclusion of the research question. The defence organisation is incredibly complex and still heavily impacted by a prolonged period of budget cuts. The fact that there is now increased funding does not necessarily mean that everything will immediately improve. From all my interviews, it became evident that there is a willingness to build a reliable organisation capable of conducting MDO, but this process is incredibly complex and time-consuming.

In 2014, Reijling noted that the Dutch defence organisation cannot be considered as a single cohesive entity; rather, it comprises different branches with minimal interconnection. He concluded that in 2014, a unified defence organisation had not yet been achieved, and the structure remained divided into four distinct business units. In Chapter 1, we indicated that this serves as a solid starting point for our study since the MDO mindset holds significant importance in the thinking of NATO militaries in the current era. It was thus scientifically relevant to investigate whether the Dutch defence organisation has now attained unified status, capable of fully executing MDO. However, our research findings in 2023 reveal that a unified defence organisation has not been established. Instead, the defence structure continues to be divided into four distinct business units, each focusing on the development and maintenance of core techniques that define their identity and significantly influence the entire armed forces.

I believe that studying this topic was a justified decision, given the evident disparity between the political sphere's aspirations - particularly the rapid implementation of MDO - and the current state within the defence organisation. This disparity is evident from the views expressed by individuals within the defence organisation, with some stating that MDO implementation is premature. Moreover, Reijling's observations in 2014, advocating for a more cohesive defence organisation functioning as a unified entity, remain unaddressed, despite being crucial, especially for the effective execution of MDO. It is noteworthy that these observations were

made 8 years ago, and it is concerning that no progress has been made to resolve this well-known issue.

## 6.2. Reflection on conceptual model and methodology

The model proposed by Ates et al. (2020) is essentially one-dimensional, where a CEO introduces a strategy and communicates it to subordinates who then pass it down to lower units. However, our research has revealed that this model is not well-suited for the multi-dimensional nature of MDO. One limitation is the absence of a singular team manager in the Dutch defence organisation. Therefore, a more appropriate approach for further investigation would involve adopting a network model. This shift also alters the selection of respondents, as studying the Dutch defence organisation through a network model allows for examination of all military branches instead of selecting only one. Consequently, the research becomes broader and delves deeper into the subject matter. Reiling (2015) highlights in chapter 1 that the Dutch defence organisation is not actually a hierarchical organisation but rather possesses a network structure where knowledge centres communicate with one another. From this perspective, the model proposed by Ates is not at all suitable for the Dutch defence organisation. As a result, the requirement for a network approach to study the Dutch defence organisation may uncover more tensions that might not have been fully apparent during this study of a single military branch. Because network structures bring tensions during organisational change between top management and the operational level, and integrating diverse perspectives within larger policy networks with conflicting demands presents its challenges. Consequently, actors and subcultures within the organisation are influenced by and respond to the demands of these networks.

These limitations aside, I think that the decision to appoint the CDS as the CEO is, of course, self-evident. However, I believe it was also a good choice to select the CLAS as one of the team managers. My thesis is simply too concise to investigate all branches of the armed forces and considering that the CLAS is the largest and already collaborates the most with other branches, I think it was a good choice to select the CLAS as one of the potential team managers. At the operational level, it is, of course, very challenging. Within the CLAS, there are numerous units, each with different tasks, but ultimately, all of them must be capable of conducting MDO. Therefore, I think every unit would be suitable. However, during my research, I discovered that

almost nothing had been concretized to its daily context, and some units had not even heard of MDO. Many lower-level units did not want to be interviewed simply because they had no idea about the MDO strategy. I believe that the 107ASBT is a very good unit because they already collaborate extensively with other branches, giving them some idea of what MDO at that level would look like. Although one could argue that my research was conducted too early, and therefore the conclusion was predetermined, I strongly disagree. As we have seen in the Defence Vision 2035 and the Defence White Paper 2022, there is a strong political-strategic outcry to transform the armed forces and be capable of conducting MDO. However, we have not progressed much beyond an operational design MDO-IGO, and there is still no alignment within the organisation regarding the MDO concept. Therefore, I believe that my research is timely and can serve as a catalyst for a faster cultural change within the armed forces.

### 6.3. Recommendation for policy

At first, I would recommend to the political level that it is wise to take a step back and not assume that by 2035, the defence organisation can engage in both national and international MDO operations. After a 30-year period of budget cuts, such an expectation is simply unrealistic. First and foremost, the focus should be on restoring the strength of the defence organisation and ensuring that the three brigades are fully operational. As demonstrated in my study, there is still much to be done, and the defence organisation is not ready to conduct MDO.

I therefore propose that, at this moment, the CDS incorporates the MDO concept into the military doctrine and includes it in the Defence Note of 2023. Furthermore, the NLDA can immediately integrate the MDO mindset into the core curriculum. This means that officers and non-commissioned officers undergoing training at the KMA and KIM, as well as the KMS, will be educated together throughout the entire study period. They will also undertake internships at different branches of the armed forces and participate in joint training and exercises with all branches. This approach will instil the MDO thinking early on in young leaders and potential future team managers, and perhaps even CEOs. Additionally, I suggest establishing an operational headquarters focused on MDO, as proposed by the CDS. Within the Dutch defence organisation, a dedicated MDO team manager should be appointed to ensure proper alignment of initiatives for the implementation of the MDO concept in the Dutch armed forces.

#### 6.4. Recommendation for study

As mentioned in subsection 6.2 I believe it is crucial to conduct further research on the Dutch defence organisation and the MDO concept. It is of great importance, especially considering the war in Ukraine, where we have seen that the danger can come very close. A deeper and broader study that encompasses the entire defence organisation seems suitable to understand how individuals at every level perceive MDO. This will enable the identification of necessary adjustments and provide insights into the areas of concern. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to emphasise a network approach that aligns better with MDO than the linear approach presented by Ates et al. (2020). Especially since Reijling already stated in 2014 that the Dutch defence organisation essentially exhibits a network structure rather than a hierarchical one, and we have once again come to the same realisation in this study. Ates views it as a straightforward process, with a CEO expressing their desires, leaders executing them, and team members carrying them out. However, the MDO concept entails much greater complexity. To effectively implement it, studying the organisation through a network approach, rather than the linear approach presented by Ates, would be advantageous.

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## **Appendix A interview protocol in Dutch**

### **Interview CDS**

- Wat betekent het concept Multi-domein operaties (MDO) optreden binnen de defensieorganisatie?
- Heeft de Russisch-Oekraïense oorlog invloed gehad op de gedachten rondom MDO?
  - Zijn er lessons identified voor de Nederlandse krijgsmacht op gebied van MDO als er wordt gekeken naar de oorlog in Oekraïne
- Hoe communiceert het CDS een dergelijke strategie (voorkeur MDO) naar de betrokken defensieonderdelen? (in het bijzonder naar CLAS)
  - Gebeurt dit concreet met oefenschema's en trainingsvereiste of mag de CLAS daar een eigen invulling aan geven
- Praten de krijgsmachtdelen (voorkeur CLAS) mee met de CDS over de invulling van MDO?
- Uw document: Operational design MDO daar stond dat het zou worden voorgelegd aan de krijgsmacht raad, wat was hun reactie hierop?
  - Hebben eventuele opmerkingen ook tot aanpassingen geleid?
- Kunt u aangeven langs welke weg (overleg) de gedachtenvorming rond MDO wordt geconcretiseerd.
- Hoe zorgt het CDS ervoor dat de bedoelde strategie omtrent MDO ook wordt begrepen en overgenomen door de C-LAS?
- Worden MDO-operaties altijd geleid vanuit CDS, zowel t.a.v. oefenen en trainen als bij inzet?

### **Interview CLAS**

- Wat betekent het concept MDO binnen de CLAS?
- Hoe communiceert het CDS de strategie of visie omtrent MDO richting de landstrijdkrachten in de dagelijkse context.
  - Mogen jullie meedenken over het concept MDO?
  - Krijgt de CLAS concreet oefenschema's en trainingsvereisten of mag de CLAS daar een eigen invulling aan geven?

- Kunt u aangeven langs welke weg (overleg) de gedachtenvorming rond MDO wordt geconcretiseerd.
- Heeft u enig idee waar de landmacht staat over 5 jaar op gebied van MDO?
- Hoe en of in welke mate werkt de landmacht samen met de andere krijgsmachtdelen in algemene zin en wellicht op gebied van MDO als dat al gebeurt
  - Worden er samen oefeningen en trainingen gehouden?
  - Zo ja, wie heeft de leiding over deze oefeningen?
- Hoe gaan toekomstige MDO missies aangestuurd worden? Onder leiding van de CDS of 1 van de krijgsmachtdelen of wellicht op een andere manier?
- In de defensie-visie 2035 en de defensienota 2022 staan grote plannen. Onder andere dat de Nederlandse krijgsmacht zelfstandig en in internationaal verband Multi-domein moet kunnen optreden. Is dit haalbaar, denkt u op nationaal en internationaal niveau?
- In de toekomstvisie van de koninklijke landmacht staat dat de samenwerking met internationale partners wordt geïntensiveerd, hoe gebeurt dit? Heeft u voorbeelden?
- Staan zowel de landmacht als de andere krijgsmachtdelen open voor samenwerking en wordt er naar elkaar gekeken als evenredige componenten in het multidomein optreden?

#### Interview 107ASBT

- Wat betekent het concept MDO voor jou?
  - Wordt er binnen jouw eenheid gesproken over het concept MDO
- In de defensie visie 2035 staat dat er wordt gestreven naar een krijgsmacht die volledig MDO denkt en niet meer denkt aan de kleuren van ieders uniform. Denk je dat dit haalbaar is in de dagelijkse context?
- Communiceert het land warfare centrum of de CLAS-staff iets over MDO richting jullie?
- Wordt er iets geconcretiseerd voor jullie? Moeten jullie bijvoorbeeld trainen en oefenen met andere krijgsmachtdelen?

- Staat jouw eenheid als landmacht eenheid open voor samenwerking met de andere krijgsmachtdelen?
- Denk je dat de defensieorganisatie klaar is voor zo'n grote strategie implementatie?  
Moet er eerst misschien focus komen om de defensieorganisatie eerst weer op sterkte te laten komen na een periode van 30 jaar bezuinigen