Beyond Public Opinion:

Political Determinants of Dutch Government Spending on CSDP Missions (2003–2024)

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Abstract

Under which conditions does the Dutch government respond to public opinion on European defence cooperation? This thesis finds that consistently high public support for defence cooperation among European member states has no statistically meaningful explanatory power for government spending on European crisis and security missions. Although public support has remained consistently high, government expenditure on EU missions falling under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) has fluctuated substantially over time. Drawing on Eurobarometer data, party manifesto data, and Dutch defence budgets, this thesis uses longitudinal OLS regression analysis to assess how public support and domestic political conditions shape CSDP-related expenditure. The analysis shows that spending is shaped primarily by institutionalized political dynamics. While Euroscepticism and coalition complexity have a consistently negative effect on CSDP expenditure, issue salience and electoral timing show no statistically significant effect. Meanwhile, ideological contestation over European integration and military affairs exerts divergent effects. The findings demonstrate that defence cooperation remains characterized by passive acceptance of the public rather than active mass-level pressure, while political elites are more responsive to fears of politicization and electoral punishment than broad public support. Thus, the future of European defence cooperation remains in the hands of political elites rather than their constituencies.

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1. Introduction

Four days after the two-year mark of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (2024) addressed the European Parliament with a sense of urgency: Europe must strengthen its defence in an increasingly volatile landscape and its growing security threats, ranging from Russian aggression and its authoritarian alliances to Europe's economic dependencies on external powers. Moving forward one year, NATO (2025) member countries committed to allocating at least 5% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on defence spending annually from 2035 onward, while the United States published its revised National Security Strategy emphasising "allies to assume primary responsibility for their regions." (The White House, 2025, p. 12)

These recent geopolitical shifts increased the urgency to further strengthen European defence cooperation. However, this is not the first time that the EU faces pressing external threats: the Arab Spring and its ancillary effect of instability in the region, increased terrorist threats, and the vast flow of refugees from the European periphery as well as increased diplomatic tension between the EU and Great Britain after Brexit and the United States during President Trumps first presidency, increased salience towards the matter of European security and defence (Tardy, 2018). Although these events increased the significance, importance and urgency of European defence cooperation and integration, were member states and the CSDP-framework itself ill adapted to the increasing security threats.[1]

The process of integration in the area of European defence is marked by a "a cycle of crisis followed by incomplete institutional reforms" (Bergmann & Müller, 2021, p. 1669) and therefore labelled as a process of failing forward. There is a great body of research on why developments in European defence cooperation remains limited including International Relations theories explanations related to diverging strategic cultures, domestic political constrains, and member states reluctance to transfer sovereignty to supranational institutions (e.g. Haesebrouck, 2015; Piechowicz & Szpak, 2022). Additional explanations are related to the CSDP's intergovernmental character, consensus decision-making in the European Council, and the neo-functionalist notion of suboptimal policy outcomes stemming from diverging member states' positions during negotiations (Bergmann & Müller, 2021).

Together, these perspectives and explanations measure public support or analyse specific institutions and their architecture, while neglecting the complexity and multitude of factors affecting member

[1] Initiatives such as the establishment of the European Defence Agency, the launch of Permanent Structured Cooperation, and the introduction of the European Global Strategy indicate a more central role for the EU in security and defence. However, doubts persist regarding the effectiveness of these developments (Tardy, 2018).

states positions on European defence cooperation and CSDP evolution. Existing research tends to treat member states as unitary actors and public opinion as either a direct constraint or a largely irrelevant background condition. Thus, the continuous process of interpreting public attitudes and its strategic mobilisation by political elites is ignored. In the area of defence policy, where financial costs are high, national (security) interests are of high importance, and political accountability remains national, public support does not translate automatically into government action. Instead, responsiveness is likely to be conditional, shaped by parliamentary contestation, coalition dynamics, issue salience, and electoral incentives. Consequently, when neglecting these domestic dynamics, there is a risk of overstating the explanatory power of aggregate public support while underestimating the role of national political elites in European defence cooperation.

This is particularly problematic in a rapidly changing geopolitical environment, where the European Union faces increasing pressures to enhance its strategic autonomy while relying on member states willingness to commit resources taking political risks. Without an empirical understanding of how domestic political conditions mediate the relationship between public opinion and government responsiveness, explanations of the EU's limited adaptive capacity regarding defence cooperation and its pursuit for strategic autonomy remain incomplete.

1.1 Research goal

This study aims to provide an empirical explanation of the role of domestic preferences related to European defence cooperation, by examining effects of public support under changing political and institutional conditions, on government spending on European led crisis and security operations. The empirical findings contribute to the broader debate on the role of public opinion in European defence cooperation and the European Unions' capacity to adapt to a changing geopolitical environment. To address the gap outlined above, this thesis poses the following research question:

Under what conditions does the Dutch government respond to public opinion on European defence cooperation between 2003 and 2024?

This thesis addresses the following sub-questions:

1. *How has Dutch participation in European defence cooperation evolved between 2003 and 2024?*
2. *How has public support for European security and defence policy evolved in the Netherlands between 2003 and 2024?*
3. *To what degree do the political and institutional conditions vary over time?*
4. *Which conditions affect government responsiveness related to European security and defence?*

To provide an answer to the formulated research questions, both government responsiveness and public opinion theories have been researched. This study employs a longitudinal case study of the Netherlands (2003–2024), combining public opinion data with financial statements of the Dutch ministry of Defence to assess effects of public opinion on government budget allocation regarding CSDP-operations.

1.2 Relevance of the study

Due to increased military activities on the border of Europe and in the Middle East, and the realization that the trans-Atlantic relationship is not as unconditional as assumed, European defence cooperation has become a salient topic in both public and policy debates. While much of the existing literature on CSDP emphasized its development through lenses of International Relations theory, is the role of public opinion defence cooperation less prominent (Pohl et al., 2015; Piechowicz & Szpak, 2022; Haesebrouck, 2015). Scholars have researched the degree of support for EU decision-making in both foreign and defence policy, showing that citizens have exhibited “robust and consistent pro-EU defence attitudes” (Schilde et al., 2019, p. 155) and that Europeans favour an increase in military capacity not only nationally and at the NATO level, but also at within a European context (Wang & Moise, 2023).

However, to my knowledge no scholarly efforts have been made to assess the degree to which government officials are perceptive of public attitudes in this area. This is remarkable given that if the European Union, its member states, and all actors involved wish to become a serious geopolitical factor, accompanied by a reliable defence and security force, actors must have a profound understanding of all mechanisms affecting EU defence cooperation, including the exact role of public opinion and political elites’ behaviour.

Hence, using the Netherlands as the context in which the degree of government responsiveness is to be assessed is both of theoretical and empirical relevance. As one of the EU's founding members, the Netherlands was present during all treaty negotiations, including the Maastricht Treaty which introduced the Common Foreign and Security Policy as the overarching framework of CSDP. This, in combination with that the country is included in all Eurobarometer surveys since its introduction in 1974, provides an empirically rich case related to national attitudes towards European cooperation and integration.

Additionally, the countries' system of proportional representation and its long-standing tradition of coalition building, both of which are known to shape government responsiveness, makes the Netherlands a typical case as most EU-member states have a system of proportional representation and coalition governments (Fourmont, 2017). Moreover, small and mid-sized member states roles are neglected in research on CSDP developments. Scholars tend to focus on Franco-German dynamics and the United Kingdom's ambivalent role in the process of European integration, while IR studies are mostly preoccupied with either great powers or institutions. Thus, it seems to appear that scholars tend to ignore the influence of small and mid-sized member states. Nevertheless, research on government responsiveness among smaller states is of value in an era of increased politicization, the rise of Euroscepticism, and renewed interest in defence cooperation on the continent, as these developments do not solely occur in large member states but affect smaller ones as well.

In sum, the Netherlands provides an empirically rich and relevant case for studying dynamics between public opinion and government behaviour in the context of European defence cooperation.

1.3 Study outline

This chapter introduced the research question, situated the study within the broader debate on European defence cooperation, and established the scientific and empirical relevance of examining conditional government responsiveness to public opinion. The following chapter provides a brief introduction of the Common Security and Defence Policy's institutional and historical development, and the Dutch stance on partaking in crisis and security operations and the country's overall attitude towards European defence cooperation. This provides the necessary context to understand national decision-making in this policy domain. Chapter three develops the theoretical framework integrating literature on government responsiveness and public opinion theories, specifying the conditions under which responsiveness is expected to occur and informing testable hypothesis. Chapter four outlines the research design, data, and methods, explaining how public opinion, conditions of interest, and government behaviour are operationalised and analysed in a longitudinal case study of the Netherlands. Chapter five presents the empirical analysis, examining how public support and domestic conditions evolve and how these relate to government spending on CSDP missions over time. Chapter six concludes by interpreting the findings considering the theoretical framework, discussing its implications for government responsiveness, European defence cooperation, and the EU's capacity to adapt to a changing geopolitical environment.

2. A Brief Overview of the CSDP

2.1 NATO Complementarity and Intergovernmentalism

The development of a common European defence policy has been shaped since its earliest stages by a tension between collective ambition and national control. Early efforts originate in post-war Europe through the Western European Union (WEU), whose founding agreement included a mutual defence clause and positioned the organisation, alongside NATO, as a cornerstone of Europe's security architecture (EEAS, n.d.). Although the WEU provided an initial framework for cooperation, it did not fundamentally alter the primacy of national governments in defence matters.

The 1992 Petersberg tasks marked an important step towards operationalising European security cooperation by defining circumstances under which military force could be employed, including humanitarian operations, crisis management, and peacekeeping operations (European Union, n.d.-a). These tasks later formed the conceptual foundation for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which was strengthened by the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty. While the treaty did not yet establish a defence policy, it formally committed the EU to its progressive development of security and defence policy, without transferring any decision-making authority away from member states (European Union, n.d.-b).

The EU's limited and fragmented response to the Yugoslav crises in the 1990s exposed the strategic shortcomings of this arrangement, increasing renewed political momentum. The 1998 Saint-Malo Declaration, initiated by France and the United Kingdom, called for development of the EU's autonomous military capacity, including the political willingness and institutional capacity to deploy it when necessary (Haesebrouck, 2015). However, later treaty developments, including the Lisbon treaty (2009), reaffirmed that European defence cooperation would remain complementary to NATO rather than competitive with it. This NATO-complementary design preserved member states' freedom to prioritise alliance commitments and reinforced national discretion in decisions on participation and spending, a dynamic particularly evident in countries such as the Netherlands where NATO has long remained its primary security anchor (Koops & Vériter, 2022).

Alongside its NATO-complementary nature, CSDP is characterised by its intergovernmental institutional structure. Decision-making authority rests on bodies composed of national representatives, most notably in the Political and Security Committee (PSC) and the EU Military Committee (EUMC), while the European Defence Agency (EDA) facilitates cooperation without exercising autonomous control over resources or deployments (Penone et al., 2005).

Although these institutions provide the operational foundation of the CSDP, budgetary authority and final decisions on military engagement remain firmly embedded within national political systems.

This institutional framework is reflected in the EU's strategic orientation and early operations. The 2003 European Security Strategy identified terrorism, proliferations of weapons of mass destruction, and failed states as key threats, while the 2008 update included energy security and climate risks (European Union, 2009). Yet, both documents lacked operational clarity and failed to resolve disagreements among member states regarding the need for the EU to participate in world affairs, and the appropriate scope and use of military force (Monteleone, 2016). As a result, early CSDP operations were dominated by civilian missions focused on state-building and rule-of-law promotion, rather than military interventions (European External Action Service, 2019). Consequently, preferences for soft power, combined with political hesitance to employ military force, limited the development of European military capacities and reinforced the central role of national governments in shaping defence cooperation outcomes.

2.2 Policy Consolidation and Strategic shifts

The Lisbon Treaty (2009) formalized the Common Security and Defence Policy within the EU's legal framework, embedding it more firmly in the Unions overarching Common Foreign and Security Policy. The treaty introduced a mutual defence clause, comparable to NATO's Article 5, and laid the foundation for Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), enabling closer defence collaboration among willing member states through binding commitments related to personnel, defence spending, and capacity development (European Union, 2012).

With the adoption of the 2016 EU Global Strategy, the EU moved beyond its traditional emphasis on soft power and embracing a more pragmatic understanding of its security environment. Through the concept *'principled pragmatism',* the strategy acknowledged the EU's need to act more decisively in an increasingly complex geopolitical landscape (European Union, 2016). Around the same period, the European Defence Fund was introduced to promote cooperation within the defence sector by financing joint research and development projects (European Commission, n.d.-a). This development marked an expansion in the role of the European Commission in defence-related affairs. While EU defence was exclusively a European Council affair, the Commission became a more prominent player through its budgetary instruments (Tardy, 2018). Despite this increased involvement, the Commission does not exercise direct authority over defence policy and relies on indirect mechanisms to exert influence.

Subsequent initiatives further reinforced the EU's strategic ambitions. The 2022 Strategic Compass for Security and Defence formulated commitments related to rapid military employment, enhanced intelligence capacities, and strengthened the EU's presence in emerging security domains such as cyber defence and space. In addition, the EU committed to increased investments in critical infrastructure and deeper cooperation with both regional and bilateral partners (Council of the European Union, 2022).

Despite an expansion of the legal framework, strategic doctrines, and coordination mechanisms, the implementation of a coherent and effective CSDP continues to face significant challenges. Divergent national interests, political reluctance to assume military risk, and limited operational capabilities constrain collective action. Consequently, while EU-level ambition and institutional coordination have increased, decisions regarding participation, spending, and political risk-taking remain firmly embedded in national political processes. This reinforces the centrality of domestic political dynamics, and government responsiveness in particular, for understanding variation in member state behaviour within European defence cooperation.

2.3 The Dutch stance

The Dutch position within the EU's security and defence framework is characterised by caution and selectivity. While public support for a stronger European role in security and defence has remained consistently high, political decision-making at the national level has been marked by restraint, particularly regarding military commitments (Knoops & Vériter, 2022).

NATO remains the cornerstone of Dutch security policy, complemented by close bilateral cooperation with partners such as the United Kingdom, Germany, and Benelux countries. Rather than prioritising developing autonomous European military capabilities, Dutch foreign and defence policy has consistently emphasised NATO integration and transatlantic security guarantees, which are perceived as indispensable (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). This orientation is also reflected in Dutch troop contributions: although the Netherlands took part in 46 per cent of all military CSDP operations between 2003 and 2018, personnel contributions remained limited, peaking at around 75 deployed officials (Knoops & Vériter, 2022).

By contrast, Dutch engagement has been more substantial in civilian and police missions, aligning with the EU's early emphasis on crisis management, state-building, and rule-of-law promotion. This preference is mostly linked to enduring cautious domestic sensitivities surrounding the use of military force, most notably as an effect of the Srebrenica trauma of the 1990s, which continues to shape parliamentary caution. Although Dutch troops have engaged in other multilateral missions

after Srebrenica, it was mostly part a strategy aimed at gaining and exerting soft power (Verbeek & Van der Vleuten, 2008). The crash of flight MH17 in 2014 heightened awareness of security threats related to Russia but did not translate into a sustained expansion of Dutch military contributions to CSDP operations. Instead, while the Netherlands has positioned itself as a second-tier PESCO frontrunner, its engagement has focused primarily on supporting institutional cooperation rather than large-scale deployment (Knoops & Vériter, 2022).

Debates on European defence cooperation within the Dutch national parliament further reflect this cautious stance. Discussions are largely confined to specialised committees, with limited broader politicisation and a relatively small group of defence specialists. Meanwhile, national CSDP priorities depend on individual policy makers' attitudes and their ministers' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). This reinforces elite mediation in security policy and limits the direct transmission of public preferences into policy outcomes. Taken together, these dynamics illustrate how NATO complementarity and domestic politics constrain Dutch participation in CSDP, setting the context for assessing conditional government responsiveness to public opinion.

3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter investigates how public opinion constrains government responsiveness in the context of European security and defence policymaking, and particularly regarding the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). It develops a theoretical framework that draws from public opinion research, theories of government responsiveness, and institutional conditions. This contributes to specific hypotheses and a conceptual framework for empirical testing with the goal to answer the research question.

3.1 Government Responsiveness

Government responsiveness refers to the degree to which government officials adjust their policy positions or actions, in reaction to shifting public preferences. The incentive for officials to be responsive is grounded in the concept of anticipatory representation, whereby political elites adjust their behaviour considering expected electoral consequences (Hagemann et al., 2016). In other words, responsiveness stems "from the very 'chance' of being held accountable." (Wratil, 2017, p. 55) Governments aim to minimize the gap between enacted policy and public preferences to avoid legitimacy loss, protest, or electoral backlash (De Bruycker, 2019). Accordingly, government officials are less inclined to deviate from public preferences on CSDP when the chance of electoral punishment is credible.

Anticipatory responsiveness provides a compelling explanation for how public opinion can shape government policy. However, it does not account for all political or institutional constraints. This is especially true in the realm of foreign and defence policymaking, where governments are constrained by several structural and normative factors. These include a country's strategic culture, which is defined as the totality of norms and beliefs related to the question of "what is appropriate, legitimate, or just regarding the goals and modalities concerning the use of force" (Haesebrouck, 2015, p. 11), as well as pre-existing alliances such as NATO, whose institutional structures may undermine deeper EU integration (Wang & Moise, 2023). Additionally, the unequal distribution of power among societal actors involved in foreign policy processes further shapes government decision-making (Pohl et al., 2015).

Hence, these constraints may limit governments' flexibility to respond to public opinion. Moreover, it implies that responsiveness may vary across policy domains. Recognizing these structural constraints is important in evaluating when and how public opinion becomes a constraint to government. Another difficulty is concerned with assessing the degree of government responsiveness to public preferences in the context of European decision-making. It is challenging for governments to

unilaterally align EU policies with domestic preferences, and perhaps it is even more difficult to assess whether this would be the result of government action specifically. Especially given that most proposals brought to vote in the European Council are expected to be approved in advance.

Nevertheless, research on responsiveness at the EU level shows that responsiveness is not confined to domestic policymaking; Government officials take domestic public support into account while engaging in international negotiations as representatives signal alignment with public preferences through their voting behaviour in the European Council (Hagemann et al., 2016). Additionally, legislative output at the EU level tends to decrease when public support for the EU diminishes, while increased support correlates with an increase in policy change (Toshkov, 2011). These findings suggest that domestic public opinion plays a significant role in shaping EU-level negotiations.

There are multiple tools to measure the degree of responsiveness, such as policy output and voting behaviour (e.g. Toshkov, 2011; Wratil, 2017). Another indicator is change in government spending or budget allocation, as illustrated by Wlezien's (1995) thermostatic model, which posits that an increase in public support for a policy area tends to be followed by an increase in spending, and vice versa. Nevertheless, attributing changes in policy output, legislative approval, or budget adjustments specifically to governments' responsiveness to domestic preferences remains methodologically challenging.

Hence, I acknowledge that there may be other factors involved that account for changes in government output, such as priority shifts, the absence of urgency or necessity of change, or something not accounted for. Nevertheless, the degree of anticipatory responsiveness to public attituded related to European defence cooperation is measured through policy output as the total percentage of budget allocated to crisis and security missions employed under the CSDP framework.

3.2 Factors of influence

Eurosceptic political entrepreneurs have been successful in cueing their electorate, while government officials are constrained by public opinion: identity-based fears have been exploited to frame the EU as a threat to national sovereignty (Steenbergen et al., 2007), forcing mainstream parties to awkwardly position themselves more cautiously with public opinion in mind (Hooghe & Marks, 2008). This shows that the mass-elite linkage, the relationship between the two concerning who influences whom, is dynamic, meaning that it is not solely bottom-up or top-down. Instead, "elites simultaneously seek to influence and to respond to the mass public." (Steenbergen et al., 2007, p. 18) However, the degree of the public influencing elites or the other way around depends on factors such as the presence of party conflict, issue salience and the electoral system.

3.2.1 Party conflict

For a long time, public opinion was considered irrelevant in foreign and defence policymaking. This assumption aligns with the 'Almond-Lippmann consensus', which posits that the mass public lacked consistent, structured preferences on foreign policy making it an unreliable foundation for decision-making (Peters, 2014). As a result, integration progressed under a 'permissive consensus'; elite-driven decisions were passively accepted rather than actively encouraged by the public (Oppermann & Höse, 2007). Hence, research on the process of European integration focused on elite behaviour in decision-making, largely ignoring the role of public attitudes (Hooghe & Marks, 2008). However, this account does not fully capture the dynamic of public opinion; European publics hold consistent and informed preferences on defence integration, undermining the assumption of mass ignorance (Schilde et al., 2019), and even publics that are less informed, exhibit stable preferences (Steenbergen et al., 2007).

Nonetheless, foreign policy rarely becomes decisive for the public in the absence of partisan conflict or disagreement among elites. Therefore, political parties were rarely incentivized to consider public attitudes when strategically positioning themselves on EU integration, which was traditionally elite driven and uncontested. This changed with the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, which transferred more power to European bodies on topics such as monetary, migration and foreign and defence policy, directly affecting the lives of citizens and therefore both more salient and controversial (Steenbergen et al., 2007).

Although increased cross-border mobility and social interactions among EU citizens led to an increased sense of a common European identity, progressed the integration more rapidly heightening tensions between European integration and national identities. The widening gap between elite-driven integration and persistent national identities led to an increase in politicization, indicating that the matter of European integration became public salient, while the increasing number of actors involved was accompanied by a multitude of different opinions (De Wilde et al., 2016).

For some parties it was easier to anticipate changing public attitudes than for others. In the post-World War II period, politics was primarily structured around the left-right divide, centered on the question of "who gets what" but this changes in the 1990s, as the question of identity gained prominence and prevailed in discussions about European integration. Traditional, authoritarian, and nationalist (TAN-)parties opposed integration due to concerns of undermining national communities, Meanwhile, green, alternative, and libertarian (gal-)parties were in favour of further integration,

motivated by their pursuit of a multi-cultural European society or the pursuit of economic integration (Hooghe & Marks, 2008).

As political parties adopt increasingly distinct positions on the EU, electoral incentives for differentiation grow, particularly in a context of heightened politicisation (Steenbergen et al., 2007). Partisan conflict signals to voters that party positions are meaningful, increasing the public's potential to influence political elites through their voting behaviour during elections. In this context, elections serve as a channel of influence for publics to constrain political elites (Oppermann & Höse, 2007).

Following the logic of anticipatory representation, politicians adjust their behaviour based on expected electoral consequences. In a competitive environment where distinct partisan alternatives exist, governments can gain electoral advantage by responding to voter preferences, for example trough targeted spending on CSDP operations. Consequently, greater differentiation among party positions on EU and security issues strengthens the mechanism linking public opinion to policy decisions, leading to the expectation that government spending on CSDP missions increases as party positions become more distinct. This motivates the following hypothesis:

H1: As different party positions on the EU and security policy become more distinct, government spending on CSDP missions increases.

3.2.2 Euroscepticism

Not all parties are able to response effectively to the politicisation of European integration: especially mainstream parties were confronted with changes in political debates. The increasing prominence of the gal-/tan- divide prevailed over traditional economic left-right contestation. Party elites were constrained by their party's history and ideology, risking dividing supporters while strategically positioning themselves (Hooghe & Marks, 2008).

Consequently, European integration and EU foreign and defence policy were emphasized predominantly by political entrepreneurs who oppose integration and are located on the periphery of the political spectrum. Younger Eurosceptic parties were able to sense growing tension between integration and identity concerns: they started exploiting identity-based fears framing the EU as a threat to national sovereignty, shaping public opinion in opposition to European integration (Steenbergen et al., 2007). Because pro- and anti-integration preferences are highly responsive to elite cues, Eurosceptic politicians were able to shape public attitudes, whereas mainstream parties generally avoided engaging in the issue (Wratil, 2017). Additionally, citizens' voting behaviour on EU-

related issues often reflects protest-based considerations and is closely tied to their level of government approval (Vasilopoulou & Gattermann, 2020). Consequently, government elites compromising primarily of mainstream parties, may find themselves struggling to respond effectively to the rise of Euroscepticism, while heightened politicisation, strategic mobilization of public opinion, and growing identity-based concerns further affect negative sentiments towards the European Union (Hooghe & Marks, 2008). In the context of European defence cooperation, I expect increasing Euroscepticism to constrain governments' leeway to formulate its own position on CSDP cooperation and expenditure, forcing governments to adopt less ambitious stances on EU security and defence. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: As the presence of Eurosceptic parties in national parliament increases, governments' CSDP expenditure decreases.

3.2.3 Issue salience

That governments composed of mainstream parties act differently on pro- and anti-integration issues compared to left-right economic issues is also reflected in Wratil's (2017) different modes of responsiveness. He distinguishes a systemic mode, in which governments consistently respond to public preferences on traditional left-right economic issues, and a sporadic mode, in which responsiveness occurs irregularly on issues characterized by pro- and anti-integration contestation. Whether government officials are responsive to issues related to European integration depends on the degree of salience, which refers to the significance, urgency and visibility that voters ascribe to an issue during periods of electoral competition, shaping the priorities of political actors both in campaigns and policymaking (Oppermann & Höse, 2007).

Whereas left-right issues tend to be consistently salient during election periods, is the subject of European integration less salient and not necessarily prominent. Therefore, political elites may consider it inefficient to systematically respond to public opinion on EU integration, unless external events or opposition efforts elevate the issue's prominence (Wratil, 2017). Consequently, public opinion constrains government behaviour only when an issue is sufficiently mobilized to influence future voting decisions. However, media salience and public debate remain limited in the absence of elite conflict. This reduces the likelihood that the matters of European integration will become salient, mobilising voters when elections approach.

Thus, responsiveness to pro- and anti-integration issues, such as CSDP, occurs only sporadically, and primarily when salience reaches a high threshold. Governments are likely to align their position more closely with public sentiments due to the increased political costs of neglecting public opinion. Hence, I expect the following mechanism to occur in the context of CSDP:

H3: Higher levels of public salience attributed to European defence cooperation, are accompanied by an increase in government spending on CSDP missions.

3.2.4 Electoral cycle

All hypothesis formulated above have one common denominator resulting in the expectations under which government responsiveness becomes visible, which is that government officials are incentivizes due to the anticipated electoral costs of certain actions. Additionally, the strength of government responsiveness, and the strength of the mass-elite linkage, depends on the domestic electoral context including both the electoral system and election cycles.

The degree of party competition and the level of salience appear to influence the degree of mass-elite linkage, but so does electoral distance: the nearer elections are, the weaker the bottom-up linkage between party elites and their constituencies. As elections approach, party elites tend to include preferences of the median voter in their positioning, not solely the preferences of their supporters. Conversely, right after elections party elites prioritize their supporters' preferences over the median voter (Steenbergen et al., 2007). In the context of Dutch contributions to CSDP operations, the following mechanism is likely to occur:

H4: As national elections draw nearer, expenditure on European crisis and security missions increases.

3.2.5 Coalition complexity

Elections function as a mechanism of accountability, which outcomes may be influenced by elite framing, media coverage and broader protest sentiments, rather than the public's informed preferences on specific policies. Hence, elections function as an institutional tool providing potential, rather than unconditional, channels for responsiveness, depending on both political context and issue salience. Oppermann and Höse (2007) acknowledge that elections become effective as channels of influence for the broader public, only when two conditions are met: parties must offer clear, distinguishable positions (hypothesis 1 and 2), and the issue must be recent and politically salient (hypothesis 3 and 4).

Meanwhile, the system of representation matters as well, having its own consequences for government responsiveness. Proportional representation systems theoretically enhance mass-elite linkage, but its effectiveness is not necessarily guaranteed: Elections in proportional representation (PR) systems, as is the case in the Netherland, result in multi-party parliaments without single parties having a majority, necessitating coalition governments. This affects responsiveness in two major ways.

Proportional systems show, compared to plurality systems, stronger linkages between party elites and their supporters (Steenbergen et al, 2007). In the case of the Netherlands, the PR system translates public opinion into policy through the process of bargaining and negotiating in government coalitions and parliament. Thus, parties within coalition must remain sensitive to electoral dynamics to maintain legitimacy and prevent electoral loss. In practice, government policy should move to the left or right reflecting changes in public opinion, and therefore similar changes in parliament (McGann et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, the complexity of coalition dynamics can constrain government responsiveness. As the number of coalition partners increases, and therefore the number of negotiators from different parties, it becomes more difficult to translate public preferences directly into policy. The diverse electoral constituencies to consider, increase the likelihood that policy positions become more diluted when multiple, ideologically varied parties are involved, forcing negotiators to settle an agreement at a lowest common-denominator policy outcome. (Ferland, 2020).

Thus, while the PR system and coalition dynamics generally increase the channels through which public opinion can exert influence, they may simultaneously complicate or slow down actual policy adjustments on contentious issues like CSDP integration. The following hypothesis builds upon this premise:

H5a: As the number of coalition parties increases, government spending on CSDP missions decreases.

The quantity of participators in a party system is often used to measure the degree of party competition and coalition complexity. However, the quality of party competition, meaning the degree of polarization among political parties or the width of ideological positions among the parties competing, matters as well. Parties are continuously positioning themselves in relation to other parties and voters, which can be both tied to a specific policy or broader ideologies. The distribution of parties' positions in a coalition is at least of the same relevance as the number of parties involved: a high number of parties with a small ideological distribution on a specific policy position would mean less contestation than a smaller number of coalition parties with a larger distribution (Dalton,

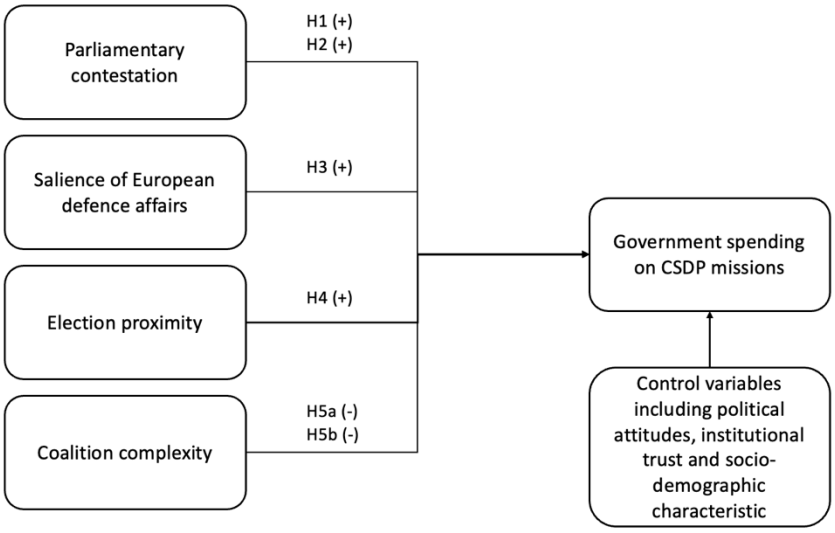
2008). In sum, the degree of polarization in coalition matters since higher party competition in coalition increases complexity. Hence, I formulate a second hypothesis related to coalition complexity:

H5b: Greater ideological polarization within governing coalitions, reduces CSDP-related expenditures.

3.3 Summary

This chapter explored both government responsiveness and public opinion theories to identify the conditions under which government responsiveness is expected to occur or remain absent. These conditions are shaped in three clusters: (1) public attitudes, reflection both public support and salience; (2) political competition factors, including intra-parliamentary contestation, and the degree of Euroscepticism in parliament; and (3) coalition complexity and electoral timing, capturing institutional and strategic incentives shaping budgetary decision-making. This conceptual model (Figure 1) is theorized to affect Dutch CSDP spending between 2003 and 2024.

Figure 1: Conceptual model of government responsiveness to public opinion on CSDP.



4. Methodology

This chapter outlines the research design and method of analysis used to discover under which conditions government responsiveness to public opinion occurs in the context of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

4.1 Research Design

This thesis investigates under which conditions the Dutch government has been responsive to public opinion regarding European defence cooperation and integration. The analysis covers the period from the introduction of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in 2003 until 2024, based on data availability. The study employs a single-country longitudinal study using Eurobarometer survey data for approximately two thousand respondents a year. The pooled Eurobarometer dataset includes around 44,500 respondents across all waves. However, the effective sample size varies across analyses due to item availability and missing responses across Eurobarometer waves, ranging between approximately 17,000 and 29,000 cases depending on the regression model and dependent variable included.

The empirical analysis builds on the concept of anticipatory representation, which posits that policy alignment with public support stems from the very chance of political elites being held accountable (Hagemann et al., 2016). In this study, government behaviour is measured through annual spending on EU-led CSDP operations, compared to the total annual spending on crisis management and security operations.

The study employs an ordinary least square (OLS) regression to assess the degree of government responsiveness and the effects of various contextual conditions. This method allows for estimating direction, strength and statistical significance of the relationship between public support for EU defence cooperation and corresponding policy outcomes. OLS is preferred over logistic regression because the analysis focuses on incremental variations in responsiveness rather than binary outcomes. The research therefore follows an explanatory design is which both causal dynamics and the surrounding political context are central areas of inquiry.

4.2 Case selection and justification

The Netherlands constitutes a theoretically and empirically relevant case for examining government responsiveness in the context of European defence cooperation. As a founding EU member, the country has participated in all major treaty negotiations and ratifications, including the Maastricht Treaty, which introduced the framework for a common foreign and defence policy. The Netherlands is therefore institutionally embedded in European security structures. At the same time, the Dutch case reflects ambivalence towards further integrations.

The Netherlands rejected the Constitutional Treaty in the 2005 referendum and has consistently emphasized NATO as the primary security guardian, often displaying caution towards a more EU-centred defence architecture. Public opinion, however, has been predominantly supportive of deeper EU cooperation, while Eurosceptic representation in parliament has gradually increased in the last two decades (Knoops & Vériter, 2022).

Consistent public support for EU defence cooperation and increasing Eurosceptic representation in parliament in combination with reactive government positions on EU defence suggest the presence of a potentially meaningful gap between elite preferences and public sentiments. Meanwhile, the Dutch case offers sufficient empirical variation to analyse different degrees of responsiveness. Over the period of interest, the Netherlands experiences multiple shifts in coalition composition, and several crises including an economic crisis, pandemic, and escalating external threats including terrorism and increasing Russian aggression. These developments create variations in the political context in which responsiveness may occur.

Additionally, insights derived from the Netherlands extend beyond the national context. The Dutch case represents a typical EU member state in terms of institutional integration and coalition governance, and a consensus-oriented political culture, allowing for analytical rather than statistical generalization. As such, the Dutch case is analytically valuable for informing broader debates on policy responsiveness and European defence integration. The findings are especially informative for research including other Western and Northern European member states that share comparable political and institutional characteristics, where coalition politics and proportional representation similarly shape government responsiveness, such as Belgium, Denmark, Finland, and Germany.

However, the extent to which these results generalize to member states with majoritarian or presidential systems (e.g. France, the United Kingdom before Brexit) or those with less consolidated coalition structures and lower levels of EU institutional engagement (e.g. Hungary or Poland) is likely limited. Differences in political competition, executive autonomy, and public-elite linkages may alter the dynamics of responsiveness (Hobolt & Klemmemsen, 2005). Nonetheless, the analytical framework linking public opinion, salience, party competition, coalition complexity, and policy output provides a transferable lens for comparative analysis across EU member states with similar governance dynamics and roles within EU security and defence cooperation.

4.3 Data collection

This paragraph elaborates on which sources were used to test the formulated hypothesis, what their strengths are for this academic endeavour, and how their weaknesses have been mitigated. The primary data sources used are Eurobarometer, the Comparative Manifesto Project, and annual reports from the Dutch Ministry of Defence.

4.3.1 Standard Eurobarometer

The Standard Eurobarometer survey is a cross-country biannual questionnaire introduced in 1974 that includes several trend questions regarding public opinion towards the European Union, the communities' values, and the policy areas that are of importance to the European public. The Standard Eurobarometer survey, conducted through face-to-face, telephone and web interviewing, allows for the analysis of long-term trends including the subject of European defence. In each wave, approximately 1,000 respondents per country are selected through a randomized selection, ensuring national representation of the population older than 15 years (European Commission, n.d.-b).

This study draws on surveys from wave 59.1 (2003) to wave 101.3 (2024), covering the 21-year period of interest for the case study of the Netherlands. The datasets were accessed through the Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (GESIS), which provides harmonized versions and comprehensive documentation of the results and questionnaires. While Eurobarometer offers a high-quality of consistent cross-country data, the availability of specific questions on European defence varies across time with a lower frequency of related questions during the 2008-2012 economic crisis. Nonetheless, Eurobarometer remains a robust source for assessing shifts in public opinion related to CSDP and its ascribed salience over two decades.

To measure public support for European security and defence policy, and its ascribed salience among Dutch respondents, the final dataset solely includes respondents with the Dutch nationality. Questions related to respondents' positions on European defence integration and the so called most important issue questions on the EU level were included in the datasets.

Additional items were included as well to control for annual variations in respondent composition. Hence, demographic control variables (e.g. age, gender and educational background) as well as political attitudes (e.g. ideology, identity, and EU-trust) were included. These items were identified through a systematic review of codebooks and questionnaires and were selected based on their relevance and frequence throughout the selected waves. An overview of the respondent descriptives is presented in Appendix 1.

4.3.2 Comparative Manifesto Project

The Manifesto Project enables the study of political parties' policy preferences though the analysis of their election manifestos. The project is funded by the German Research Foundation and is located at the WZB Berlin Social Science Centre. The project allows for the measures of political parties' policy preferences covering over a thousand parties for more than 50 countries since 1945, through the collection and the comparative content analysis by its coders. This allows for the analysis of parties' preferences throughout time and the comparison of parties' positions in relation to each other. The coding is done by either group members or hired and trained coders ensuring consistency in the process of coding. This study uses version 2024a (Lehmann et al., 2024a), which includes the relevant data of Dutch political parties participating in the national parliamentary elections between 2003 and 2022, including their positions on the European Union, international cooperation and military force. These positions are particularly relevant for identifying the degree of Euroscepticism, party conflict and the magnitude of coalition complexity.

The Chapel Hill Expert survey (Rovny et al., 2024) was evaluated as an alternative source for measuring party and government positions. Unlike the Manifesto Project data, which derives ideological positions from party programmes and therefore reflects the relative salience that parties ascribe to specific issues, CHES relies on expert evaluations and is less affected by parties' strategic emphasis or issue prioritization. In principle, the use of CHES would therefore mitigate the salience bias inherent in manifesto-bases measures (Toshkov et al., 2018). However, coverage of Dutch parties consistently coded in CHES is limited. Given the fragmented nature of the Dutch party system and the need for comprehensive coverage of governing coalitions and party contestation, the restricted party sample in CHES renders it insufficient for the purposes of this analysis. Consequently, the Comparative Manifesto Project remains the most viable and consistent source for measuring party positions across the full period.

To ensure a research-based and methodologically robust use of the Comparative Manifesto Project by Lowe et al. (2011) was applied. First, all CMP percentages were converted back to absolute quasi-sentence counts, enabling the application of Lowe's confrontation-pair logic for each dimension. For EU integration and military stance, parties' issue positions were constructed using recommended log-odds ratio, where R and L represent the relevant rightist and leftists' positions on the CMP categories, while the 0.5 continuity correction stabilizes estimates with small counts.[2]

[2] Lowe et al. (2011) constructed policy dimensions were used to construct parties' positions on the left-right axis, where negative quasi-sentences related to the military and positive statements linked to the EU and internationalism are associated with "left" positions, while positive military statements and negative quasi-sentences directed to the EU and internationalism indicate "right" positions.

To quantify uncertainty, both the parametric variance approximation and non-parametric BCa bootstrap intervals were applied. This ensures that the resulting indices reflect measurement error inherent in text-bases classifications. Party-level positions were aggregated to the system level using seat-weighted means, while ideological dispersion in parliament and coalitions was captured through seat-weighted standard deviations and range measures respectively. This procedure aligns fully with contemporary best practice, yielding transparent, replicable and theoretically grounded indices derived from CMP data. Full party-level uncertainty estimates, including variance approximations and BCa bootstrap intervals, are reported in Appendix 2.

4.3.3 Ministry of Defence annual reports

Annual and financial rapports of the Dutch Ministry of Defence serve as the primary source for assessing the Dutch government's operational and financial contributions to international security missions, and more specifically its participation in CSDP missions. These reports provide detailed overviews of policy priorities, active operations, and the accompanied expenses. The financial statements specifying the costs allocated to international crisis management operations are of high interest. These include missions in NATO, EU or UN cooperation.

For this thesis, each listed operation between 2003 and 2024 has been examined to determine whether it was conducted within the CSDP framework or alternative partnerships. This enables a more precise analysis of government behaviour in relations to CSDP commitments. To ensure comparison over time, all costs were adjusted for inflation and standardized to the 2024 price point**.** A financial statement covering all operational expenses related to CSDP operations is included in Appendix 3. Additionally, the appendix includes

4.4 Operationalization

This study examines the relationship between public opinion and government behaviour through different sets of political conditions. The following section outlines how key concepts and variables have been operationalized to enable systematic empirical analysis. The paragraph sums up the operationalization with an overview of all variables.

4.4.1 Public support

Public attitudes towards CSDP were measured using Standard Eurobarometer data from the period 2003-2024. The biannual survey includes several trend questions including whether respondents are for or against 'a common defence and security policy among European Union member states.' This question has been included consistently since 2003 with the exception for the questionnaires conducted in 2009 and the first half of 2010. Nevertheless, Eurobarometer is a consistent source of European citizens' attitudes towards CSDP and indicates whether Dutch citizens are in favour of European defence cooperation and integration.

Additionally, to assess the degree of support across different social groups over time, multiple socio-demographic variables were included in the dataset originating the Eurobarometer surveys. These variables are related to respondents age, educational background, and political ideology (left-right dimension) among others. These variables have been carefully selected based on their availability through the whole period of interests and their fit with the regression analysis.

4.4.2 Government behaviour

Government behaviour regarding CSDP operations is measured and quantified using policy output in the form of reporting annual expenditure on international crisis management operations. The Dutch Ministry of Defence's annual reports ensure the concrete and observable measure of output through its budget allocation and clearly distinguishes between operational costs for different partnerships which have been audited before being published. Hence, through identifying all CSDP operations in which the Dutch military participated, it was possible to calculate all operational costs for EU led missions. All costs have been corrected for inflation on the 2024 level, enabling comparison over the years. Government behaviour is expressed as the share of CSDP spending as a part of the total operational budget for crisis management missions minus the cost of contributions to international organizations. This is because the financial statements don't specify the allocation of contributions towards international organizations including the EU, NATO or UN. Additionally, a time lag variable is computed to measure the effects of public opinion on government behaviour up to three years.

4.4.3 Issue salience

Issue salience can be measured through analysing the content and frequency of publications of media regarding the issue of interest or by public opinion polling (Oppermann & Hose, 2007). This study follows the second approach, using Eurobarometer data throughout the period of interest to measure the degree of issue salience related to the EU's safety and security. Although formulations and answer options vary over time, are questions related to respondent's EU priorities consistently included in Standard Eurobarometer surveys.

Through the selection of priority possibilities directly or indirectly related to European defence and security, a variable measuring whether respondents ascribed urgency to defence and security was computed. All question formulations and answer options used to measure salience are presented in Table 1. Salience among respondents is marked whenever one or more priorities related to the EU's safety and security were mentioned.

Table 1: Most important issue answer options related to EU defence and security

Question	Answer options
What should be, for you, the three actions that the European Union should follow in priority?	Worldwide importance, peace, and terrorism
Which aspects should be emphasized by the European institutions in the coming years, to strengthen the European Union un the future?	Defence policy
What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment?	Terrorism, the EU's influence, the international situation, and the war in Ukraine

4.4.4 Party competition

The Comparative Manifesto Project is used to assess the degree of partisan alternatives and the presence of Eurosceptic political parties in parliament. Through the adaptation of the logit-scaling framework (Lowe et al., 2011), party positions and dispersion in parliament were assessed to measure the presence in parliament on three dimensions related to European integration and the military (the importance of external security and defence) (Lehmann et al., 2024b).

The degree of party competition in parliament on both dimensions is measured using the standard deviation for each parliamentary composition, weighted for parties' seats in parliament, where greater deviations indicate greater dispersion in parliament, and therefore distinct electoral alternatives, and vice versa.

The presence of Euroscepticism among parties is measured as the percentage of the total seats in parliament allocated to Eurosceptic parties. Whether political parties were labelled as Eurosceptic was assessed rigorously. While parties' logit scale on their EU position could've been used, it is widely acknowledged that text-based measures of policy positions should come with uncertainty measures. Hence, following the recommendations of Lowe et al. (2011) a Bayesian approach is used to measure party position distributions with a 95% credibility interval.[3] Parties were only labelled as Eurosceptic when their 95% Ci measure on the EU position > 0, indicating a negative position towards the EU.

4.4.5 Proximity of elections

As argued in the last chapter, it is expected that the proximity to national elections increases government responsiveness to public opinion on CSDP. The effect of elections each year is measured through a dummy variable indicating whether a specific years had parliamentary elections.

4.4.6 Coalition complexity

Coalition complexity is measured by the number of parties forming a government coalition, and by the degree of coalition polarization. Coalition parties' positions towards the EU, and military and security affairs, are based on parties' position as expressed in their manifestos and not weighted for their seat in parliament, due to parties' veto power in coalition where each party holds the same amount of leverage when threatening to pull out of a government coalition.

Moreover, instead of measuring coalition polarization through the standard deviation as is done with parliamentary competition, the range is used to measure dispersion in policy position among coalition parties. This is due to the small number of coalition parties compared to parties in parliament, where the standard deviation is highly affected by a small number. Hence, the difference between the most "left" and "right" party positions is used to measure coalition polarization for each dimension.

[3] The exact method of measuring credibility intervals according to Lowe et al. (2011) is presented in Table 3 of Appendix 2.

4.4.7 Variable overview

Table 2 provides an overview of the variables used in the analysis, their operational definitions, measurement levels, and data sources.

Table 2: Variable overview

Concept	Indicator/Operational definition	Measurement level	Source	Use	Score
Government behaviour	Share of Ministry of Defence's annual operational budget allocated to EU CSDP missions, relative to total spending on international crisis management and peacekeeping operations.[4]	Continuous (percentage)	Dutch Ministry of Defence Annual Financial Statements	Dependent variable	%
Public support	Whether a respondent was in favour of "a common defence and security policy among European Union member states" each year.	Dummy	Eurobarometer	Independent variable	1 = Support 2 = No support
Issue salience	Whether a respondent identifying defence and security (or related answers) as one of the most important/urgent problems for the European Union.	Dummy	Eurobarometer	Independent variable	0 = No ascribed salience 1 = Salient issue
Party competition[5]	Percentage of parliamentary seats held by Eurosceptic parties (95% Ci > 0 for EU position)	Continuous (percentage)	Manifesto Project Dataset	Independent variable	%
	Standard deviation of party positions on EU integration, military and internationalism dimensions, weighted by seat share. Reflects presence of partisan alternatives in parliament.	Continuous (index: SD of positions)	Manifesto Project Dataset	Independent variable	SD.

[4] The dataset includes a time lag in government behaviour up to three years to assess the effect of public opinion on future government spending.

[5] The measure of party contestation in parliament and coalition through standard deviation and range respectively, are provided for the EU, military and internationalism individually.

Proximity of elections	Indicated whether the exact year had parliamentary elections[6]	Dummy	Parlement.com	Independent variable	0 = no parliamentary elections 1= Election year
	Number of years remaining until the next (planned and unplanned) parliamentary election.	Continuous (time in years)	Parlement.com	Independent variable	0 = Election year 1 = 1 year 2 = 2 years 3 = 3 years 4 = 4 years
Coalition complexity	Number of political parties participating in the governing coalition each year.	Discrete (count)	Parlement.com	Independent variable	Ranging between 2 and 4
	Difference between most “left” and most “right” position among coalition parties on EU integration, military and internationalism.	Continuous (Range)	Manifesto Project Dataset	Independent variable	Absolute measure

[6] Due to the fall of multiple government coalitions in the years 2006, 2010, 2012, 2021, and 2023 the Netherlands has had multiple parliamentary elections preliminary to the expected ending of the electoral cycle. Hence, it has occurred only once (2012-2017) that the full four-year election cycle had gone through.

4.5 Method of analysis

How public attitudes shape CSDP involvement is an area largely disregarded in the field of defence integration studies. This study is an effort to fill this gap by focusing on the political and institutional conditions in which governments responsiveness on European defence attitudes increases or mitigates. It does so by examining both the degree and development of EU defence support among Dutch constituencies over time, while mapping developments in the Dutch contributions to European crisis and security missions. Next, variations in the political conditions were measured and mapped including both the presence and degree of partisan conflict, Euroscepticism, issue salience, coalition complexity, and the electoral cycle. This results in the analysis and assessment of which conditions affect government responsiveness and to what magnitude.

The analysis begins with a systemic overview of the key variables to establish an empirical baseline. First, the annual share of Dutch defence expenditure allocated to CSDP missions is described using its mean, standard deviation, and year on year changes. This clarifies both the level and volatility of governmental engagement with European crisis and security operations over time, while answering this thesis' second sub-question. For both public support and salience, the proportion of respondents falling into each category is calculated for each year. Additionally, these measures of support and salience are disaggregated by relevant socio-demographic groups to identify underlying patterns in support for EU defence cooperation, while answering the third sub-question. For the political and institutional variables derived from the Comparative Manifesto Project, annual trends are mapped to capture developments in partisan competition, including the rise of Euroscepticism, and coalition complexity. Presenting these descriptives provides insights in the data structure while highlighting the variations over time necessary for meaningful regression analysis.

Because of the longitudinal scope of the research design, the next step is to explore how both public attitudes and political conditions develop over time and how these engage with shifts in Dutch CSDP spending. Line graphs and tables are used to assess trends in the dependent and independent variables, allowing mapping abrupt changes in government spending, salience, and support enabling the identification of external factors or events that have not been included in the theoretical framework. The main analysis consists of a series of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regressions in which the same year annual share of CSDP spending is regressed on public support, issue salience, partisan competition, coalition complexity, and the electoral cycle. Demographic variables were included to control for changes in respondent composition, that may public attitudes. OLS is appropriate given the continuous nature of the dependent variable and the research goal to estimate the magnitude of responsiveness.

4.5.1 Model description

The regression analysis follows a hierarchical modeling strategy in which variables were added in theoretical meaningful blocks. This approach mitigates multicollinearity, while clarifying the independent effects of each predictor.

The regression analysis starts with a baseline model for public opinion which isolates the influence of public opinion on CSDP spending, without institutional or political constraints. Thus, it states whether mass opinion alone has profound explanatory power on the changes in CSDP spending, while considering multiple socio-demographic controls. The second model introduces institutional and political factors such as the electoral proximity and coalition size. Additionally, the model includes parliamentary dispersion on the military and European integration to assess the influence of partisan alternatives on governments' anticipatory responsiveness. Model three isolates the influence of Eurosceptic parliamentary strength, which is of interest for assessing hypothesis 2. Moreover, the percentage of Eurosceptic parties in parliament strongly correlates with both dimensions of parliamentary dispersion and therefore no earlier introduced. Models 4 and 5 introduce coalition-range variables to test the effect of coalition polarization (H5b). These are presented as last since they capture intra-coalition distances measuring the effect of coalition polarization on the military and EU integration respectively, while allowing for the inclusion of Euroscepticism to compare it for variations between multiple models.

This hierarchical design ensures comparability across models, while avoiding overfitting, and allows most hypothesis to be evaluated under conditions of increasing model completeness. The final models represent the most robust specifications accounting for most of the variance in government spending, including broad sets of theoretically relevant predictors while considering collinearity constraint. Thus, these constraints impede the creation of a set including all relevant predictors while offering other possibilities.[7]

[7] In the process of designing the multivariate models, a series of bivariate tests were performed to identify preliminary associations. Pearson correlations were calculated for all dependent and independent variables clarifying which variables display meaningful relationships with CSDP spending, while detecting potential collinearity and redundant predictors. These variables have been identified and segregated into separate multivariate regression models.

4.6 Validity and reliability

The reliability and validity of the research design are anchored by several methodological choices. However, it is acknowledged that inherent limitations remain. The reliability is strengthened using standardized and renowned data sources, including Eurobarometer surveys, the Comparative Manifesto Project and government annual reports, which ensure consistency in the measures over time. Meanwhile, the operationalisation of key variables is transparent and theoretically grounded, while all changes in raw data, financial data of interest, and respondent descriptives are included in the appendix, allowing for replication of the analysis. Additionally, given the time-series nature of the data, robustness checks with lagged independent variables were conducted to reduce concerns about temporal dependence (Appendix 4).

Regarding the research internal validity, government spending on CSDP missions is a conservative yet meaningful measure of national commitments to European defence cooperation. Meanwhile, Individual-level measures of public support and salience directly capture attitudes towards EU security and defence while political and institutional variables are derived from established public opinion and government responsiveness theories. However, the design cannot fully capture symbolic forms of commitment and does not take into account Dutch attitudes in the EU-level decision-making process, and individual-level attitudes on European defence cooperation may not translate directly into preferences on defence expenditure.

Finally, while the single-country focus limits the research's external validity, the Netherlands represents a most-likely case for observing public opinion effects due to its proportional electoral systems, coalition governance, clear parliamentary oversight, and consistent high public support for defence cooperation.

5. Analysis

This chapter elaborates on the findings following the research design presented in the last chapter. It starts with descriptives of the important dependent and independent variables, followed by mapped trends and developments for the variables for the period 2003-2024. Lastly, the chapter presents the results from the regression analysis.

5.1 Descriptives

This section provides an overview of key variables prior to the regression analysis. It first outlines developments in CSDP spending between 2003 and 2024, followed by trends in public attitudes including public support and salience regarding European defence, followed by an assessment of inter-party and intra-coalition divergence. The number of observations varies across variables due to aggregation at different levels (individual-level survey data versus annual country-level indicators) and differences in data availability across years.

CSDP spending constitutes a modest share of Dutch crisis and security expenditure, averaging around 6% over the observed period. The distribution is characterised by considerable volatility (SD = 6,19), driven by two peaks in 2004-2005 and 2013. Figure 2 illustrates this pattern, with a steady decline after 2013. Figure 3 presents absolute domestic CSDP expenditures, which follow a similar trajectory but displays a more gradual year-on-year variation. This distinction is relevant for the subsequent analysis, as it suggests that proportional and absolute trends may respond differently to political or societal factors.

Figure 2: Trend of government expenditure on EU crisis and security operations in the Netherlands (2003-2024)

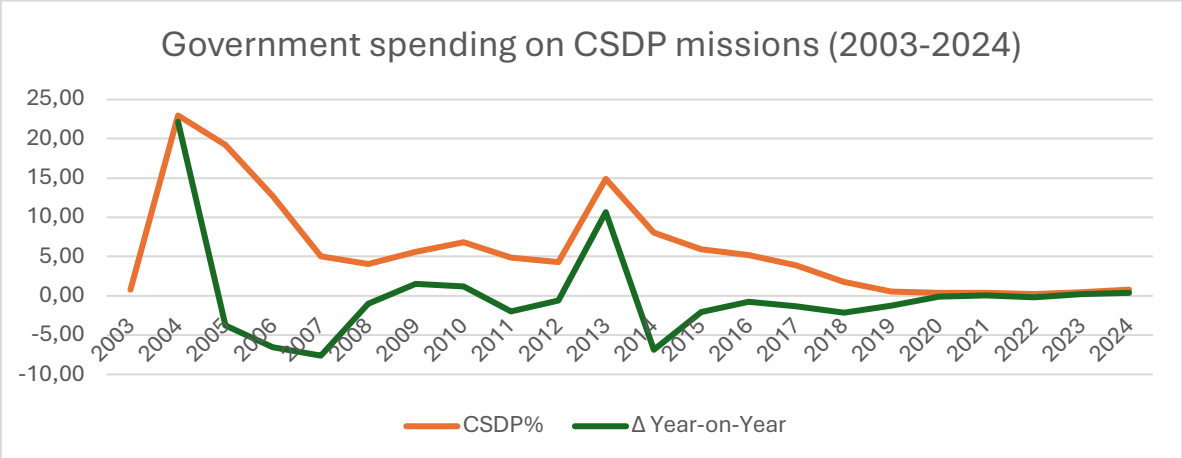
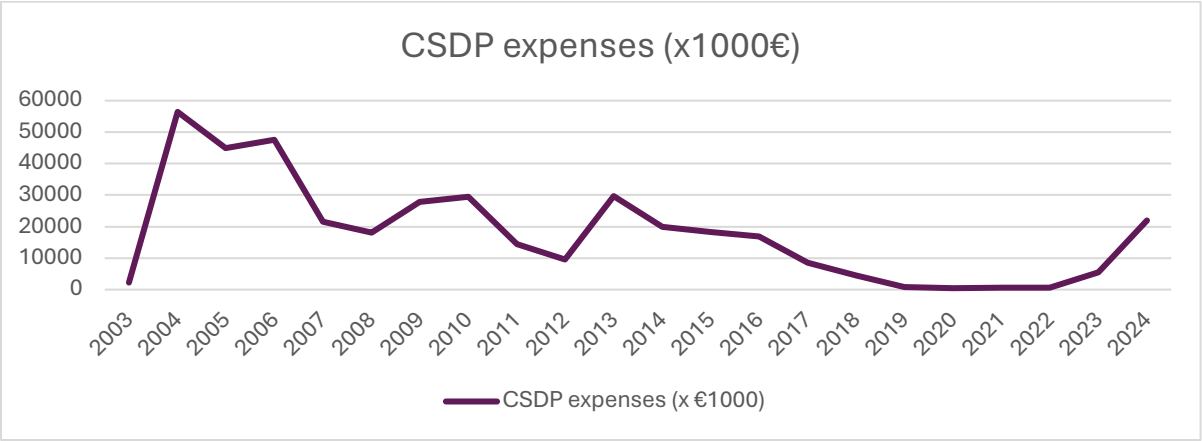
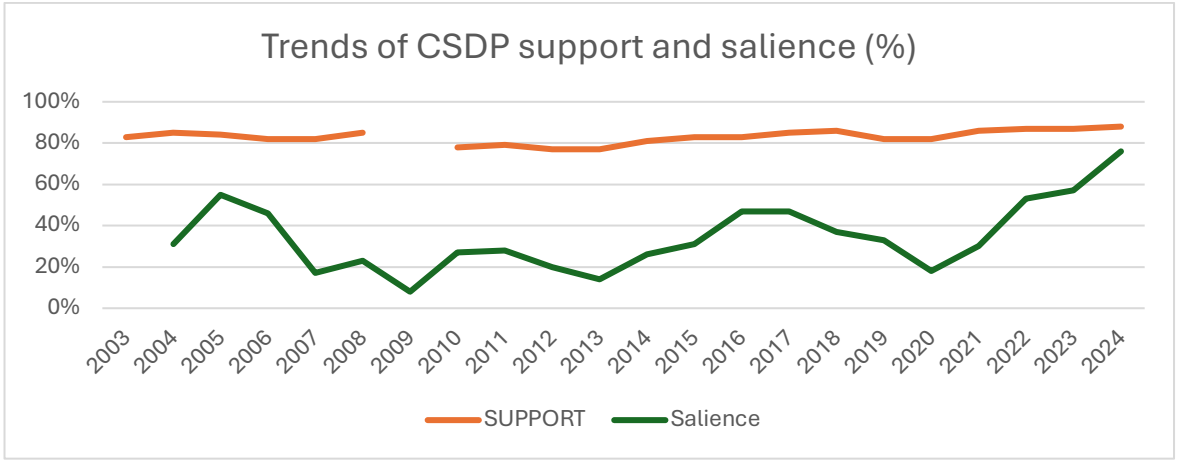


Figure 3: Absolute CSDP spending excluding EU contributions (corrected for 2024 price point)



Public attitudes show greater stability. Support for European defence cooperation remains consistently high, ranging from 77% to 88% (mean = 83% and SD = 0,21), while salience fluctuates more prominently over time (ranging 8%-76% with a SD of 0,21).[8,9] As shown in Figure 4, issue salience follows a more fluctuating pattern than support, which indicates that while favourability for European defence cooperation is structurally embedded, the prominence of the issue shifts in response to external events. The divergence in temporal stability is analytically relevant, as it allows for assessing whether government responsiveness is driven primarily by stable levels of public support or by fluctuations in issue salience in the regression analysis.

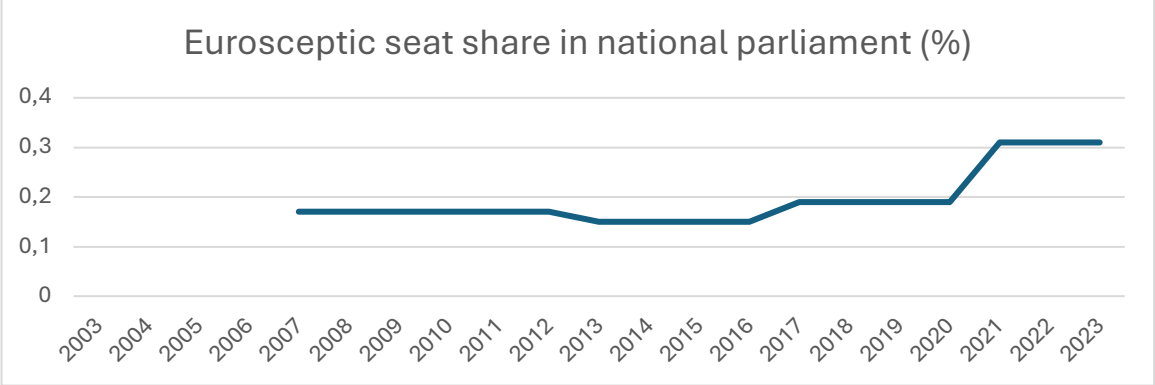
Figure 4: Trends of CSDP support and salience (2003-2024)



[8] The interrupted line for public support is due to missing survey data for the 2009 and first half of 2010 surveys, (Standard Eurobarometer 71-73) regarding public support for EU defence cooperation.
[9] The standard Eurobarometer surveys conducted in 2003 included an 'important issue question' instead of a most important issue question that forced respondents to prioritize issues. Thus, the overall degree of salience is disproportionately higher due to respondents ascribing salience to every issue. Thus, including the 2003 surveys CSDP salience averages around 36% and 34% excluding 2003.

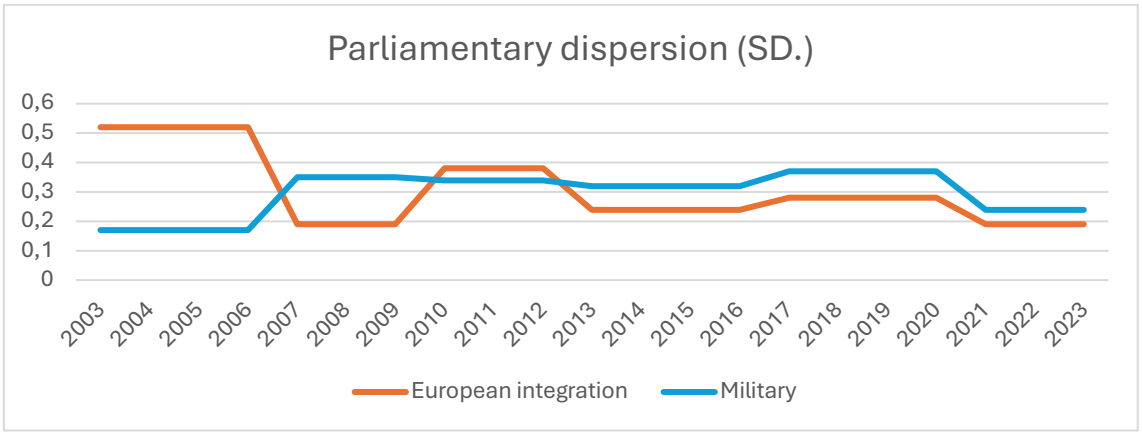
The parliamentary environment exhibits clearer long-term shifts. Eurosceptic parties hold, on average, 19% of parliamentary seats (SD = .555), with a gradual increase from 2007 onwards and a peak of 31% after the 2021 elections (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Trend of Eurosceptic presence in national parliament



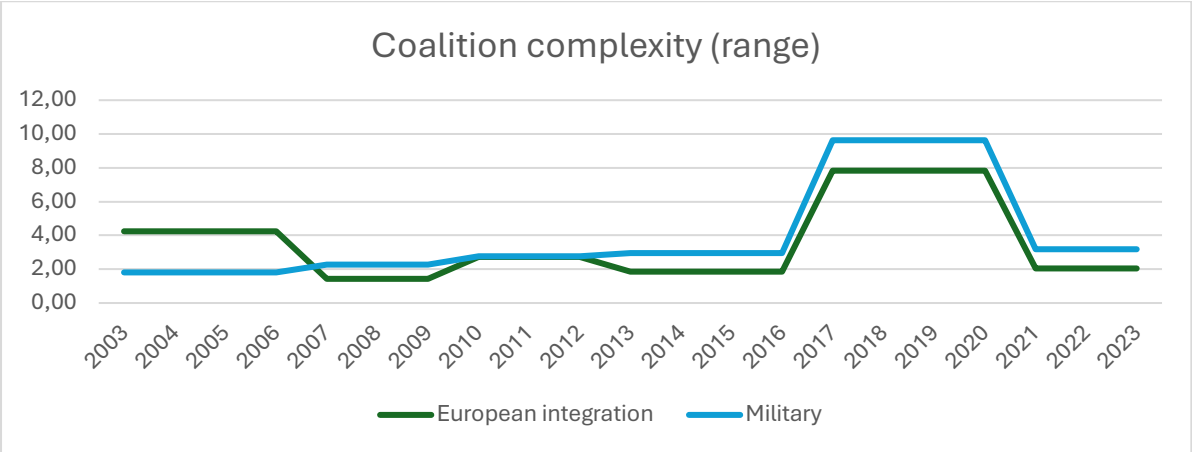
Conversely, inter-party disagreement displays a diverging pattern across the two policy dimensions. Average dispersion levels for European integration (.307), and military policy (.297) are broadly comparable, yet their standard deviations differ modestly. This indicates that while overall levels of disagreement are similar, the degree of volatility varies over time. As illustrated in Figure 6, contestation on military affairs increases steadily, whereas disagreement on European integration shows a declining trend. This divergence is analytically relevant, as it suggests that fragmentation on defence-related issues may exert a stronger constraining effect on CSP spending than contestation on European integration.

Figure 6: Trend of party competition in parliament on European integration, international cooperation and the military



Coalition range indictors reinforce these differences across the two policy areas. Ideological dispersion is lowest for European integration (M = 3.55) and highest for military policy (M = 3.92). While dispersion on European integration shows moderate variation over time (SD = 2.28), coalition disagreement on military affairs is both larger in magnitude and and more volatile (SD = 2.82). These patterns indicate that internal coalition cohesion is more stable on European integration than on defence-related issues. The wide minimum-maximum ranges, particularly for the military dimension (1.81 to 9.63), further suggest alternating periods of low internal disagreement and pronounced ideological divergence (Figure 7). Such fluctuations are analytically relevant, as heightened intra-coalition polarization on military affairs is likely to constrain government coherence and, by extension, government responsiveness in allocating resources to CSDP operations, which is directly examines in the regression analysis.

Figure 7: Trend of internal coalition dispersion (2003-2024):



Taken together, the descriptives emphasize three critical patterns for the regression analysis:

1. CSDP spending is low but highly volatile (Std. deviation = 6.19);
2. Public support is stable while salience fluctuates; and
3. Partisan and coalition dynamics differ substantially across policy dimensions over time.

These differences lay the empirical foundation for assessing how public opinion, party competition, and coalition characteristics shape Dutch CSDP spending over time. The exact descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the independent variables

Independent variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
CSDP spending as % of total crisis and security operations budget	44482	.23	22.97	5.9952	6.18633
CSDP support	40989	1	3	1.21	.464
CSDP salience	44482	0	2	.36	.487
Year to the following elections	44482	0	4	3.02	1.188
% of Eurosceptic seats in parliament	35154	.15	.31	.1945	.05492
Coalition range on EU integration	43409	1.43	7.83	3.5454	2.28432
Coalition range on the military	43409	1.81	9.63	3.9213	2.81766
Parliamentary dispersion on EU integration	43409	.19	.52	.3067	.11875
Parliamentary dispersion on the military	43409	.17	.37	.2969	.07292

5.2 Bivariate correlation analysis

To assess the presence and strength of correlation relationships between the dependent and independent variables, a standard Pearson's r test was conducted. The correlation matrix (Table 4) indicates which independent variables are (strongly) linked with government spending up to three years.

Table 4: Bivariate correlation matrix between dependent and independent variables (Pearson's r test)

	Same year CSDP spending	+1 year	+2 years	+3 years
Public support	.002	-.008	.000	.022*
Public salience	-.066*	.128*	.126*	.086*
Election proximity	.269*	-.074*	-.076*	-.238*
Coalition size	-.413*	-.403*	-.466*	-.488*
Coalition range EU	-.120*	-.137*	-.265*	-.369*
Coalition range Military	-.428*	-.513*	-.549*	-.569*
Eurosceptic seats	-.645*	-.541*	-.424*	-.285*
Sd. par EU	.560*	.693*	.566*	.464
Sd. par Mil	-.463*	-.527*	-.400*	-.274*

*Sig. (2-tailed) <.001

Correlations between public support and government spending are essentially zero in all years, with only a very small positive and significant effect three years later. This indicates that public support does not meaningfully predict same-year or future CSDP spending, and that government decisions are insensitive for fluctuations and overall support. Meanwhile, public salience shows small positive and significant correlation which indicates that salience matters more than support and that decision-makers respond to attention rather than approval regarding CSDP safety and security missions.

Electoral timing shows strong positive correlations in the same year, turning more negatively at longer lags (r between -.07 and -.24). This indicates that governments increase their spending when elections are near, which may be due to electoral incentives in the short term. However, the influence of the electoral cycle normalizes later on.

Coalition characteristics both in size and ranges show consistent large and negative correlations with CSDP allocated spending. Large and consistent negative correlations in coalition size (r from -.40 to -.49) indicate that large coalitions have difficulties committing to higher EU defence budgets. This is supported by both ranges in coalition parties' positions on defence and European integration. Both show strong and consistent negative correlations, with fragmentation in military positions showing particularly decisive (r is up to -.57 compared to max r of -.37 on EU ranges). Thus, broader and ideologically diverse coalitions are barriers to increase expenditure in EU led crisis and security missions.

Meanwhile, parliamentary disparities positioning on the military and European integration show opposing effects on government spending. Intra-party differentiation on the EU and CSDP spending shows strong positive correlations (r ranging between .46 and .69), while disagreement on military policy is negatively correlated (r ranging between -.27 and -.53). The later may indicate that military action and investments are postponed when parliamentary contestation is present. Meanwhile, the positive effect of EU dispersion on spending may be due to opposing parties' being unable to block initiatives or that debates about initiated participation in EU missions is politicized.

Lastly, the greatest negative correlation with same year CSDP spending is the size of Eurosceptic parties in parliament (r is -.645). The correlation weakens over time but remains substantial, indicating that Euroscepticism has a great constraining effect on government in relation to CSDP investments and participation.

5.3 Regression analysis

This section reports the results of five (semi-)hierarchical OLS regression models estimating the relationship between public opinion, coalition characteristics, party contestation, and same year government spending on European safety and security missions falling under the CSDP framework. The regression analysis (Table 5) provides clear evidence regarding the structural and political conditions affecting governmental expenditure on CSDP missions, to identify what empirically influences CSDP interaction if not public opinion.

Hypothesis 1 posits that greater distinctions in party positions on EU and security policy increase CSDP spending. Parliamentary dispersion for both dimensions is included in Model 2, which provides partial support for this expectation. Ideological dispersion on European integration shows a strong positive effect ($\beta = .532$, $p < .001$) indicating that intra-party contestation indeed correlates with higher spending. In contrast, dispersion on military issues is significantly negative ($\beta = -.356$, $p < .001$), indicating that disagreement on military affairs suppresses spending.

Thus, H1 is only partially supported: intra-party contestation on EU affairs boosts government spending, while disagreement on security and defence constrains them.

The second hypothesis assumes that a stronger Eurosceptic presence in parliament reduces CSDP spending. The evidence fully supports this hypothesis. Euroscepticism is included in the Models 3-5 and consistently shows large and significant coefficients (β ranging from -.314 to -.507, all with $p < .001$). This indicates that Euroscepticism is one of the strongest conditions affecting government spending. H2 is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis 3 predicts that higher public salience of European security and defence affairs increases CSDP expenditure. CSDP salience in included in Models 2-5 and shows significance only in Model X, where it exhibits a very small positive effect (β = .., p <…). Although the coefficient is statistically distinguishable from zero, its magnitude is insufficient to state that salience alters spending patterns across the models meaningfully. Due to its weak effect and inconsistent significance, H3 receives limited support at best, and can therefore not be accepted nor rejected.

The fourth hypothesis predicts that CSDP spending increases when national elections approach. Electoral timing is included in Models 2-5 but do not show consistent effects. While Model 2 present a sufficiently positive and strong effect (β = .343, $p < .001$), does the coefficient modestly negative and significant ($p < .001$) in Models 4 and 5 (β = -.035 and β = -.043 respectively). This shift in the later models indicates that the apparent effect of elections disappears when coalition factors are accounted for. Consequently, H4 is not supported. Election proximity does shape spending, but only mildly and not in the hypothesized direction.

Hypothesis 5a predicts that coalitions consisting of more parties reduces CSDP spending. Coalition size presents consistent, robust and significant negative effects ($p < .001$) across all relevant models, with coefficients ranging between -.206 and -.674. Thus, H5a is accepted.

Meanwhile, hypothesis 5b states that greater ideological politization within the governing coalition reduces spending on CSDP missions. Ideological dispersion on the dimensions military affairs and European integration was included in Models 4 and 5 respectively, both showing modest yet significant ($p < .001$) negative effects on government spending (β = -.172 and β = -.176 respectively). This indicates that, as expected, coalitions with internal ideological disagreement on the matters are less capable or less willing to allocate budget to European crisis security and safety missions. Thus, H5b is accepted.

Table 5: OLS Regression results predicting Dutch CSDP spending (% of crisis management budget)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
CSDP Support	-.028*	-.014*	-.005	-.004	-.004
	(.088)	(.051)	(.016)	(.016)	(.016)
CSDP Salience	—	-.100*	.000	.006	.006
		(.045)	(.014)	(.014)	(.014)
Years to next elections	—	.343*	.001	-.035*	-.043*
		(.023)	(.007)	(.008)	(.008)
Coalition size	—	-.206*	-.674*	-.464*	-.462*
		(.029)	(.011)	(.024)	(.023)
Parliamentary dispersion EU (SD.)	—	.532*	—	—	—
		(.234)			
Parliamentary dispersion military (SD.)	—	-.356*	—	—	—
		(.402)			
Euroscepticism (%)	—	—	-.314*	-.495*	-.507*
			(.183)	(.319)	(.320)
Coalition Range EU	—	—	—	/	-.176*
					(.006)
Coalition Range Military	—	—	—	-.172*	—
				(.005)	
Gender	.008	.007	-.001	-.001	-.001
	(.017)	(.044)	(.014)	(.014)	(.014)
Age	-.197*	.016*	-.016*	-.011**	-.012*
	(.003)	(.002)	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)
Age of Finished Full Time Education	-.118*	.006	-.008	-.004	-.005
	(.002)	(.001)	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)
EU Image	-.002	.012	.009	.011*	.011*
	(.050)	(.029)	(.009)	(.009)	(.009)
Trust Nat Gov	.084*	-.002	.003	.002	.003
	(.105)	(.061)	(.020)	(.020)	(.020)
Trust Nat Par	-.052*	-.008	.000	-.002	-.003
	(.106)	(.062)	(.020)	(.020)	(.020)
Trust EU	.050*	.006	-.005	.002	.001
	(.099)	(.057)	(.019)	(.018)	(.018)
Occupational status	.101*	-.017*	-.001	.000	.001
	(.020)	(.012)	(.004)	(.004)	(.004)
Community type	-.028*	-.009	-.005	-.006	-.006
	(.049)	(.028)	(.009)	(.009)	(.009)
Left-right placement	.011	-.010**	.006	.003	.004
	(.020)	(.011)	(.004)	(.004)	(.004)
Adjusted R Square	.032	.676	.843	.849	.850
df	11	16	15	16	16
F	87.278	3796.622	8101.852	7930.999	7971.529
N	29147	29147	22573	22573	22573

Note. *$p < .001$, **$p < .005$.

5.4 Robustness check with dependent time lag variables

To assess whether the above results hold when policy output becomes visible with a time lag, three additional OLS-regressions were performed with dependent variables measured for the three consecutive years after the measurements of the independent variables. The results from the robustness check aligns closely with earlier results, strengthening the findings.[10]

Firstly, the effects of parliamentary contestation largely remain. Ideological dispersion on EU integration shows a consistently positive and strong effect in all lagged models, while dispersion on the military indicates significant and negative coefficients in the +1- and +2-year analysis. Only one model in the +3-year regression shows inconsistent effects, but this disappears when additional independent variables are included. Hence, H1 remains partially accepted: internal dispersion on the EU increases expenditure, while military contestation predominantly reduces CSDP budgets.

Earlier findings regarding the effect of Euroscepticism remain robust and consistent as well. The strongly significant and negative effect of the Eurosceptic presence in parliament remains in all three-time lagged analysis, which confirms H2. Euroscepticism remains one of the decisive political conditions affecting CSDP spending. Nevertheless, the results regarding public salience remain weak. Although some models show significance, the effect remains undecisive both in strength and direction. Hence, H3 can neither be confirmed by the time lagged analysis.

Similarly, the effects of national elections cannot be supported through the lagged analysis. Early models including electoral proximity show positive effects on CSDP spending, but this disappears when measures of coalition complexity are included. Moreover, the coefficients in the +3-year models even show consistent negative and significant effects (β ranging between -.036 and -.178). Thus, H4 remains rejected.

At last, variables measuring coalition complexity show robust and consistent effects. Greater coalitions show consistent negative effects on CSDP expenses, except for the time lagged models including coalition ranges on the EU and military, which may be due to similarities in coalition positions and small inter-coalition ranges. Additionally, inter-coalition disagreement remains significant and strongly negative in all three time-lagged analysis. Hence, both H5a and H5b remain confirmed.

[10] The full regression analysis for the time lagged models +1 till +3 years after the measured independent variables are included in Appendix 4.

In sum, time-lagged analysis shows that the main findings remain robust and substantial: euroscepticism, coalition dynamics and partisan alternatives form the most consistent and significant conditions affecting CSDP expenditure, while public opinion, salience and electoral timing show minimal or inconsistent explanatory power.

6. Conclusion

This chapter concludes the thesis by integrating the main empirical findings and situating them withing the broader scholarly debate on public opinion, domestic political constraint, and European Defence cooperation. It first discusses the implications of the results for understanding government anticipatory responsiveness in the context of the Common Security and Defence Policy. The chapter then reflects on the methodological and conceptual implications of the study. Lastly, it outlines avenues for future research, identifying how later research may further refine and extend the insights generated by this analysis.

6.1 Discussion

The role of public opinion in European defence cooperation and integration has been marginal in scholarly research for a long time. This neglect was traditionally justified by the Amond-Lippmann consensus, which holds that the mass publics lack structured and coherent preferences related to foreign and security policymaking. As a result, European integration in this domain was largely able to proceed through elite-driven decision-making under conditions of the publics' passive acceptance (Peters, 2014). However, growing evidence that this consensus no longer holds, combined with the sustained rise of Euroscepticism, has increasingly constrained elites' room for manoeuvre. This raises the question to what extent governments take their constituencies' preferences into account in shaping their contributions to the Common Security and Defence Policy.

This thesis addressed this question by examining the conditions under which Dutch governments adjusted their financial contributions to EU-led crisis and security missions between 2003 and 2024. While existing research shows that public support for European defence cooperation has remained consistently high, CSDP development and member state participation have progressed unevenly. This suggests that public attitudes alone may be insufficient to explain variations in government behaviour.

The empirical analysis shows that public opinion for CSDP has virtually no explanatory power regarding government spending. Despite consistent levels of high public support among Dutch citizens, fluctuations in CSDP expenditure were substantial and unrelated to changes in approval. It appears to be the case that broad public support for CSDP is insufficiently politicised to be a meaningful constraint on government decision-making. Instead of being confined by publicly set expectations, government officials and policy makers have found

themselves political room to formulate positions on EU defence cooperation independently. Marginal public contestation makes it unlikely that political elites are held accountable. Therefore, public opinion has a minor effect in governments position towards European defence cooperation.

Similarly, inconsistencies in the direction of the effect and magnitude of salience suggest that public attitudes do not meaningfully shape spending patterns. Due to security policies' exceptionalism, decision-making is largely distanced from the normal policy processes, taking place in more shielded interest group arenas. Politicisation is limited as national security and military affairs are out of reach of the mass publics, and therefore it is difficult to evaluate government performance (Legrand, 2022). As a result, salience does not translate into strong signals for policymakers.

By contrast, Euroscepticism in parliament appears to affect government spending on CSDP missions greatly, as it remains one of the most consistent and strongest indicators of expenditure. Rather than responding to widespread pro-European attitudes, governments appear highly sensitive to organised and vocal opposition articulated by Eurosceptic parties. These parties function as transmission belts for broader discontent with European cooperation, even when that discontent is not directly related to defence cooperation. Simultaneously, political parties in favour of closer European defence cooperation may wish to avoid advocating for the issue as it may increase salience while threatening to increase inter-party conflict unnecessarily. As a result, anticipatory responsiveness is driven less by alignment with majority preferences than by the desire to avoid electoral punishment from mobilised minorities. Thus, effectively organised electoral representation is more decisive than broad public sentiments (Hooghe & Marks, 2008).

The analysis further reveals that not all forms of political contestation operate in the same way. Parliamentary disagreement over European integration is associated with increased CSDP spending, whereas disagreement over military affairs has a supressing effect. This reflects the dual nature of CSDP as both a project of European integration and a domain of national security. While EU-related contestation has intensified due to identity concerns, military contestation remains embedded in distinct normative concerns, strategic considerations, and risk aversion. Governments thus navigate competing pressures, corresponding differently to integration-related challenges and military-related deployment risks.

Coalition dynamics constitute another central constraint. Both coalition size and ideological dispersion consistently reduce CSDP expenditure. Larger and more heterogeneous coalitions face higher coordination costs and a greater number of veto players, making policy adjustment more difficult (Ferland, 2020). In such settings, governments are structurally predisposed towards maintaining the status quo rather than expanding commitments in politically sensitive and costly negotiations. Even modest ideological divergence within governing coalitions significantly limits governments' capacity to respond to changing circumstances, leading to a lowest common-denominator policy outcome.

Finaly, electoral proximity does not systematically increase responsiveness. Once coalition dynamics and Eurosceptic pressures are accounted for, elections appear to incentivise caution rather than increased contributions. CSDP remains a low-salience issue with limited electoral rewards, while military engagement and pro-EU attitudes carry substantial political risks. Hence, governments' anticipatory responsiveness aligns more closely with the chance of being held accountable through electoral punishment, rather than electoral incentives to align closer with broad public, yet electorally silent, attituded.

Taken together, these findings indicate that Dutch participation in CSDP is primarily shaped by institutionalised political constraints rather than by public opinion. Anticipatory representation operates through elite perceptions of accountability risks generated by politicisation, coalition bargaining, and Eurosceptic contestation, rather than through direct responsiveness to widespread but passive public support. This has implications for both democratic representation and the future of European defence cooperation. A persistent elite-citizen gap is revealed in which broad public support for European defence integration fails to translate into policy output, while organised elite contestation exerts disproportionate influence.

Consequently, the EU's capacity to advance strategic autonomy is not constrained by a lack of societal legitimacy, but by limited elite willingness shaped by domestic political incentives. European defence cooperation thus remains vulnerable to national coalition dynamics, where fragmentation and ideological diversity hinder continuity and long-term commitments. This suggests that progress in CSDP depends less on mobilising additional public support than on institutional designs that reduce veto points, while stabilising member state positions across electoral cycles. Without addressing these constraints, European defence cooperation is likely to remain reactive, with European strategic autonomy remaining a farfetched pursuit.

6.2 Research limitations

Although the results provide valuable findings in the role of public opinion on the Dutch contributions to European defence and security cooperation. However, this study has its limitations rooted in its operationalization, research design, and case selection.

First, responsiveness is measured through budgetary expenditure on CSDP missions. Although it captures commitment, it does not account for the full spectrum of political engagement in European defence cooperation. Expenditure or budget allocation does not envisage symbolic or diplomatic engagement. It does not account for the role the Dutch military had during the missions they participated in, or whether national diplomats were frontrunners in starting the mission. Additionally, operational expenses do not account for the attitude of government officials in negotiations for regarding the legal side of the CSDP framework. Nor does expenditure indicate whether the Dutch military participates modestly or ambitiously to EU crisis and security measures compared with other member states, and the Dutch direct contributions to NATO, UN, and national initiatives. However, expenditure is a conservative measure which shows that if public opinion does not affect spending, it is unlikely to affect less costly forms of engagement either. After all, financial expenses are perhaps the hardest, most concrete indicator of policy output which show that financial commitments are insulated form mass opinion.

Second, although public support and salience of European security and defence are measures at the individual level, these variables capture attitudes and proxied attention directed towards the EU-level. Since these indicators do not explicitly relate to national budgetary preferences or deployment decisions, support and salience may not translate directly into domestic policy demands. Especially in a policy domain characterised by exceptionalism accompanied by low visibility and high complexity.

Additionally, the observational research design cannot make strong causal claims. Although the analysis was applied to existing data over time, all variations happened naturally, while there are factors not accounted for such as sudden security threats, other pressing demands from international actors such as NATO, and strategic considerations not captured in public data. Hence, there are difficulties to demonstrate clear causal relationships. Accordingly, instead of definitive causal effects, the analysis therefore identifies systematic associations which are theoretically consistent.

Finaly, the single-country focus limits generalisability. Nevertheless, the Netherlands constitutes a most-likely case of observing public opinion effects on expenditure due to its proportional electoral system, strong parliamentary oversight, and consistently high public support for EU defence cooperation. The absence of responsiveness in this context indicates that EU defence policy is insulated likewise in other member states.

6.3 Directions for future research

This thesis' findings expose several possibilities for future research endeavours. A first extension would be comparative to assess whether the findings hold when the analytical framework is applied to other member states. Are coalition dynamics and Euroscepticism as constraining in other member states with varying institutional and party systems? Such research could assess whether the analytical framework holds for the occurrence of anticipatory responsiveness, while clarifying if other factors may account for member states contributions to CSDP operations.

Second, further research could investigate the micro-level mechanisms of EU defence politicization. How is EU cooperation politicized and by which actors? The analysis could investigate parliamentary debates, party manifestos, or media covering instead of quantitative analysis to explain how support is not decisive for expenditure while discontent has a more constraining effect.

Lastly, further research could explore the multidimensional nature of EU defence cooperation by looking into EU attitudes, the public's perception of security threats, and a country's security culture related expenditure, as well as deployment decisions and mission mandates. Combined, these extensions would deepen understanding of the conditions under which domestic politics and public attitudes shape EU defence cooperation, refining theories of public opinion constraints and government responsiveness.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Overview of respondent population characteristics

Figure 1.1: Characteristics of the Standard Eurobarometer Survey respondents

	Frequency	Percentage[11]	Cum.[12]
GENDER			
Male	22500	50.6	50.6
Female	21967	49.4	100.0
EU TRUST			
Very positive	1700	3.8	3.8
Fairly positive	16424	37.1	41.0
Neutral	16622	37.6	75.5
Fairly negative	8013	18.1	96.6
Very negative	1490	3.4	100.0
TRUST IN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT			
Tend to trust	22520	52.4	52.4
Tend not to trust	20440	47.6	100.0
TRUST IN NATIONAL PARLIAMENT			
Tend to trust	24498	57.5	57.5
Tend not to trust	18075	42.5	100.0
TRUST IN EUROPEAN UNION			
Tend to trust	21537	52.7	52.7
Tend not to trust	19319	47.3	100.0
TYPE OF CUMMUNITY			
Rural area of village	17850	40.1	40.1
Small/middle town	16671	37.5	77.6
Large town	9953	22.4	100.0
RESPONDENT OCCUPATION SCALE			
Self-employed	3794	8.7	8.7
Managers	7178	16.5	25.2
Other white collars	7155	16.5	41.7
Manual workers	6015	13.8	55.5
House persons	2796	6.4	62.0
Unemployed	1696	3.9	65.9
Retired	11825	27.2	93.1
Students	3004	6.9	100.0

[11] Percentages are presented of total number of valid cases
[12] Cumulative percentages are presented of the total number of valid cases

LEFT-RIGHT PLACEMENT			
Left (1-4)	15001	39.3	39.3
Centre (5-6)	13421	35.1	74.4
Right (7-10)	9780	25.6	100.0

	Frequency	**Percentage**	**Cum.**
AGE			
15-24	3784	8.5	8.5
25-34	4747	10.7	19.2
35-44	6889	15.5	34.7
45-54	8091	18.2	52.9
55-64	9406	21.1	74.0
64-74	9082	20.4	94.4
75+	2483	5.6	100.0
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND			
Invalid/outliers (age 0-12)	301	.7	.7
Standard completion of initial education (13-19)	18723	42.1	42.8
Completion during further of higher education (20+)	25405	57.2	100.0

Note. N = 44482

Appendix 2: Dataset construction and the use of CMP

This appendix provides full documentation underlying the construction of party-level and system-level issue indices derived from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP). All procedures follow the scaling framework proposed by Lowe et al. (2011), ensuring that the resulting measures of party positions, used to measure party conflict, euroscepticism and coalition complexity, and its uncertainty are transparent, replicable, and theoretically grounded. The appendix includes all computational transformations of CMP-data, the construction of logit-based policy positions, parametric and non-parametric uncertainty estimates, and all aggregation steps at the parliamentary and coalition level. Additionally, tables summarize key outputs such as confidence intervals, bias-corrected accelerated (BCa) bootstrap intervals, weighted parliamentary dispersion, coalition ranges, and derived measures such as the annual share of Eurosceptic seats in parliament.[13]

Table 2.1: Comparative Manifesto Project categories used

Dimension	"Left" position	"Right" position
EU Integration	108: EU Integration (+)	110: EU Integration (-)
Military	105: Military (-)	104: Military (+)

Table 2.2: CMP data transformation overview

Step	Description	Output Variable
Convert CMP percentages to absolute number of quasi senctences	PERxxx × TOTAL / 100	CNT_xxx
Construct R and L	Sum of relevant CNT codes (rename of CNT_xxx)	L_dim, R_dim
Logit position	ln((R+0.5)/(L+0.5))	POS_dim
Calculate variance	(1 / (R + 0.5)) + (1 / (L + 0.5))	VAR_POS_dim
Calculate standard error	SQRT(VAR_POS_dim)	SE_POS_dim
BCa Lower 95% CI	(POS_dim - 1.96 * SE_POS_dim)	POS_dim_Min
BCa Upper 95% CI	(Pos_Int + 1.96 * SE_POS_dim)	POS_dim_Max

[13] Information regarding the delta-method uncertainty per party per year is available upon request.

Table 2.3: Bootstrap summary statistics (per dimension)

Statistic	POS_MIL (N=70)	POS_EU (N=70)	POS_INT (N=70)
Bootstrap Mean	.8679	-.4508	-2.8949
Bootstrap Bias	.0026	-.0036	-.0044
Bootstrap SE	.2956	.3136	-.0044
BCA Lower 95% CI	.2608	-1.0595	-3.2776
BCA Upper 95% CI	1.4849	.1627	-2.4986

Table 2.4: Parliamentary dispersion (seat-weighted SD).

Election Year	Ascribed to years*	Parliament POS_MIL_SD	Parliament POS_EU_SD
January 2003	2003-2006	.17	.52
November 2006	2007-2009	.35	.19
June 2010	2010-2012	.34	.38
September 2012	2013-2016	.32	.24
March 2017	2017-2020	.37	.28
March 2021	2021-2023	.24	.19

*Data for each year reflect the parliamentary composition during the greater part of the year.

Table 2.5: Coalition ranges for each parliamentary composition.

Election year	Ascribed to years*	Coalition_Range_MIL	Coalition_Range_EU
January 2003	2003-2006	1.81	4.25
November 2006	2007-2009	2.27	1.43
June 2010	2010-2012	2.76	2.74
September 2012	2013-2016	2.94	1.85
March 2017	2017-2020	9.63	7.83
March 2021	2021-2023	3.19	2.04

*Data for each year reflect the parliamentary composition during the greater part of the year.

Table 2.6: Eurosceptic seat share per parliament composition (min 95% CI-based)

Election year	Ascribed to years*	Eurosceptic seats	Total Seats	% Eurosceptic
January 2003	2003-2006	0	150	0%
November 2006	2007-2009	25	150	17%
June 2010	2010-2012	26	150	17%
September 2012	2013-2016	23	150	15%
March 2017	2017-2020	28	150	19%
March 2021	2021-2023	46	150	31%

*Data for each year reflect the parliamentary composition during the greater part of the year.

Appendix 3: Overview of Ministry of Defence expenditure on Dutch participation in CSDP missions

This appendix provides full documentation regarding the exact measures of government spending based on Dutch Ministry of Defence's annual reports. All reports between 2003 and 2024 were investigated aimed at identifying the exact European led missions the Netherlands participated in, including the accompanied annual expenses. This appendix first provides the documentation of inflation corrections to the 2024 price point, followed by the percentage of annual CSDP expenditure of the total expenses on crisis and security operations. Thereafter, detailed tables are provided including the exact expenses coming from official ministry publications. The appendix finishes with a complete list of all financial documents used to assess Dutch ministry participation in European led crisis and security operations and its accompanied expenditure.

Although the CPI series is indexed to 2002 (=100), all nominal expenditures were rescaled to reflect constant 2024 euros, which serves as the price reference year. Official data of Statistics Netherlands (2024) were used for the inflation correction.

Table 3.1: Dutch operational defence expenditures and CSDP expenditures adjusted to constant 2024 euros

YEAR	CONSUMER PRICE INDEX	CUMULATIVE PRICE INDEX	TOTAL OPERATIONAL EXPENSES (X1000)	ANNUAL CSDP EXPENSES (X1000)	INFLATION ADJUSTED TOTAL OPERATIONAL EXPENSES (X1000)	INFLATION ADJUSTED CSDP EXPENSES (X1000)
2002	3,4	100	-	-	-	-
2003	2,1	102,1	177286	1442	280062	2278
2004	1,2	103,3252	157416	36151	245725	56431
2005	1,7	105,0817284	152118	29236	233485	44874
2006	1,1	106,2376274	247457	31390	375688	47656
2007	1,6	107,9374295	284141	14411	424588	21534
2008	2,5	110,6358652	303438	12423	442364	18111
2009	1,2	111,9634956	345014	19271	497011	27761
2010	1,3	113,419021	303739	20735	431937	29487
2011	2,3	116,0276585	168308	10368	233964	14413
2012	2,5	118,92835	164762	7033	223449	9538
2013	2,5	121,9015587	150299	22426	198863	29672
2014	1	123,1205743	189772	15258	248604	19988
2015	0,6	123,8592977	236119	14105	307474	18368
2016	0,3	124,2308756	248972	13026	323241	16912
2017	1,4	125,9701079	169574	6663	217119	8531
2018	1,7	128,1115997	198260	3530	249605	4444
2019	2,6	131,4425013	139527	716	171210	879
2020	1,3	133,1512538	99366	371	120365	449
2021	2,7	136,7463377	120711	487	142376	574
2022	10	150,4209715	276332	635	296298	681
2023	3,8	156,1369684	1107774	5342	1144331	5518
2024	3,3	161,2894883	2654856	21918	2654856	21918

Table 3.2: Annual measures of CSDP Government spending

YEAR	CSDP%	Δ YEAR-ON-YEAR
2003	0,81	-
2004	22,97	22,16
2005	19,22	-3,75
2006	12,68	-6,54
2007	5,07	-7,61
2008	4,09	-0,98
2009	5,59	1,50
2010	6,83	1,24
2011	4,88	-1,95
2012	4,27	-0,61
2013	14,92	10,65
2014	8,04	-6,88
2015	5,97	-2,07
2016	5,23	-0,74
2017	3,93	-1,30
2018	1,78	-2,15
2019	0,51	-1,27
2020	0,37	-0,14
2021	0,40	0,03
2022	0,23	-0,17
2023	0,48	0,25

Table 3.3: Dutch Ministry of Defence's operational expenses (2003-2018)

x1000	***2003***	***2004***	***2005***	***2006***	***2007***	***2008***	***2009***	***2010***	***2011***	***2012***	***2013***	***2014***	***2015***	***2016***	***2017***	***2018***
EUPM	1442	1158	0	547	182	194	206	104	44	1						
EUFOR ALTHEA (SFOR)		34993	29236	30843	14229	7905	7291	7281	6105	312	206	234	318	333	64	
EULEX Kosovo						279	379	588	606	501	598	568	289	320	82	36
EUMM Georgia						16	12	4								
EUPOL Afghanistan						42	153	119	98							
EUBAM Rafah						60	37						4			
EUSEC (FIN)						135	169	205	204	31						
EUFOR TCHAD/RCA						3792	5073	1385	14							
EU NAVFOR ATALANTA							5951	11049	3297	6188	21148	13714	12557	9403	4901	2798
EUTM Somalia											372	609	686	837	634	383
EUAVSEC											59	5	0			
EUTM Mali											43	80	73	81	72	20
EUCAP NESTOR												10	0			
EUFOR CAR												38	24			
EUMAM RCA													112	92		
EU NAVFOR MED													36	1943	860	280
EUCAP Sahel Mali													6	17		
EUBAM Libia															50	13
EUCAP Sahel Niger																
EUMAM Ukraine																
Aspides (Ukraine)																
CSDP expenses	1442	36151	29236	31390	14411	12423	19271	20735	10368	7033	22426	15258	14105	13026	6663	3530
Total operational expenses	177286	157416	152118	247457	284141	303438	345014	303739	168308	164762	150299	189772	236119	248972	169574	198260
Corrected for 2024 price point																
CSDP expenses	**2278**	**56431**	**44874**	**47656**	**21534**	**18111**	**27761**	**29487**	**14413**	**9538**	**29672**	**19988**	**18368**	**16912**	**8531**	**4444**
Total expenses of operations	**280062**	**245725**	**233485**	**375688**	**424588**	**442364**	**497011**	**431937**	**233964**	**223449**	**198863**	**248604**	**307474**	**323241**	**217119**	**249605**

Table 3.4: Dutch Ministry of Defence's operational expenses (2019-2024)

x1000	***2019***	***2020***	***2021***	***2022***	***2023***	***2024***
EUPM						
EUFOR ALTHEA (SFOR)				2	4966	13079
EULEX Kosovo	4					
EUMM Georgia						
EUPOL Afghanistan						
EUBAM Rafah						
EUSEC (FIN)						
EUFOR TCHAD/RCA						
EU NAVFOR ATALANTA	186	79	43	43	52	52
EUTM Somalia	5					
EUAVSEC						
EUTM Mali	173	200	420	547	315	12
EUCAP NESTOR						
EUFOR CAR						
EUMAM RCA						
EU NAVFOR MED	185	15	24	43		
EUCAP Sahel Mali	2					
EUBAM Libia						
EUCAP Sahel Niger	161	77				
EUMAM Ukraine					9	4
Aspides (Ukraine)						8771
CSDP expenses	716	371	487	635	5342	21918
Total operational expenses	139527	99366	120711	276332	1107774	2654856
Corrected for 2024 price point						
CSDP expenses	**879**	**449**	**574**	**681**	**5518**	**21918**
Total expenses of operations	**171210**	**120365**	**142376**	**296298**	**1144331**	**2654856**

Reference list of financial statements from the Dutch Ministry of Defence

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Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2013). Jaarverslag en slotwet Ministerie van Defensie 2012 (33 605 X, nr. 1).

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Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2019). Jaarverslag en slotwet Ministerie van Defensie 2018 (35 200 X, nr. 1).

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2020). Jaarverslag en slotwet Ministerie van Defensie 2019 (35 470 X, nr. 1).

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2021). Jaarverslag en slotwet Ministerie van Defensie 2020 (35 830 X, nr. 1).

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2022). Jaarverslag en slotwet Ministerie van Defensie 2021 (36 100 X, nr. 1).

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2023). Jaarverslag en slotwet Ministerie van Defensie 2022 (36 360 X, nr. 1).

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2024). Jaarverslag en slotwet Ministerie van Defensie 2023 (36 560 X, nr. 1).

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2025). Jaarverslag en slotwet Ministerie van Defensie 2024 (36 740 X, nr. 1).

Appendix 4: Regression analysis with time lag

Table 4.1: Regression analysis of the dependent variable: % of CSDP spending +1 year.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
CSDP Support	-.036* (.084)	-.014* (.048)	-.006 (.014)	-.002 (.010)	.000 (.010)
CSDP Salience	—	.063* (.042)	-.022* (.013)	.004 (.008)	.002 (.009)
Years to next elections	—	.229* (.021)	.093* (.007)	-.053* (.005)	-.074* (.005)
Coalition size	—	-.209* (.028)	-.784* (.009)	.068* (.014)	.021* (.014)
Parliamentary dispersion EU (SD.)	—	.507* (.220)	—	—	—
Parliamentary dispersion military (SD.)	—	-.372* (.377)	—	—	—
Euroscepticism (%)	—	—	-.126* (.161)	-.858* (.193)	-.855* (.197)
Coalition Range EU	—	—	—	—	-.668* (.003)
Coalition Range Military	—	—	—	-.698* (.003)	—
Gender	-.004 (.072)	-.005 (.041)	-.005 (.012)	-.002 (.008)	-.002 (.008)
Age	-.284* (.003)	-.066* (.002)	-.024* (.001)	-.002 (.000)	-.007 (.000)
Age education	-.156* (.002)	-.036* (.001)	-.015* (.000)	-.001 (.000)	-.004 (.000)
EU Image	-.026* (.048)	-.002 (.027)	-.015* (.008)	-.004 (.006)	-.006 (.009)
Trust Nat Gov	.094* (.100)	-.001 (.057)	.007 (.018)	.004 (.012)	.006 (.012)
Trust Nat Par	-.016 (.102)	.020* (.058)	.020* (.018)	-.009* (.012)	.007 (.012)
Trust EU	.019 (.095)	-.021* (.054)	-.034* (.017)	-.006 (.011)	-.010* (.011)
Occupations	.128* (.019)	.023* (.011)	-.009 (.003)	-.005 (.002)	-.003 (.002)
Community type	-.022* (.047)	-.002 (.027)	.002 (.008)	.000 (.005)	.000 (.005)
Left-right placement	.043* (.019)	.013* (.011)	.015* (.003)	.004 (.002)	.007* (.002)
Adjusted R Square	.058	.697	.830	.923	.920
df	11	16	15	16	16
F	165.428	4188.604	7358.563	16839.693	16317.660
N	29147	29147	22573	22573	22573

Note. *p < .001, **p <.005

Table 4.2: Regression analysis of the dependent variable: % of CSDP spending +2 years.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
CSDP Support	-.019**	-.003	.010	.015**	.014
	(.071)	(.053)	(.041)	(.038)	(.040)
CSDP Salience	—	.067*	-.038*	-.013	-.023*
		(.047)	(.037)	(.035)	(.036)
Years to next elections	—	.141*	.131*	.003	.039*
		(.023)	(.019)	(.019)	(.020)
Coalition size	—	-.316*	-.656*	.107*	-.202*
		(.030)	(.027)	(.056)	(.056)
Parliamentary dispersion EU (SD.)	—	.432*	—	—	—
		(.257)			
Parliamentary dispersion military (SD.)	—	-.172*	—	—	—
		(.421)			
Euroscepticism (%)	—	—	.073*	-.506*	-.290*
			(.485)	(.759)	(.799)
Coalition Range EU	—	—	—	—	-.386*
					(.014)
Coalition Range Military	—	—	—	-.641*	—
				(.012)	
Gender	-.019**	-.016*	-.011	-.008	-.009
	(.061)	(.045)	(.036)	(.034)	(.035)
Age	-.271*	-.089*	-.061*	-.038*	-.050*
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)	(001)	(.001)
Age education	-.145*	-.048*	-.046*	-.031*	-.039*
	(.002)	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)
EU Image	-.034*	-.018*	-.029*	-.019**	-.024*
	(.041)	(.030)	(.024)	(.023)	(.024)
Trust Nat Gov	.080*	.005	.005	.003	.005
	(.085)	(.064)	(.052)	(.048)	(.051)
Trust Nat Par	-.002	.024*	-.009	-.019	-.017
	(.087)	(.064)	(.053)	(.023)	(.051)
Trust EU	-.017	-.047*	-.043*	-.016	-.028*
	(.080)	(.059)	(.049)	(.045)	(.047)
Occupations	.096*	.026*	.017	.018**	.019**
	(.016)	(.012)	(.009)	(.009)	(.009)
Community type	-.009	.004	.001	-.001	-.001
	(.040)	(.030)	(.024)	(.022)	(.023)
Left-right placement	.059*	.034*	.035*	.024*	.030*
	(.016)	(.012)	(.010)	(.009)	(.009)
Adjusted R Square	.052	.481	.432	.511	.463
df	11	16	15	16	16
F	138.449	1579.433	1051.176	1356.341	1116.121
N	27301	27301	20727	20727	20727

Note. *$p < .001$, **$p < .005$

Table 4.3: Regression analysis of the dependent variable: % of CSDP spending +3 years.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
CSDP Support	.012 (.056)	.018* (.044)	.028* (.052)	.033* (.048)	.032* (.051)
CSDP Salience	—	.032*	-.047* (.047)	-.022* (.044)	-.034* (.047)
Years to next elections	—	-.112* (.019)	-.036* (.023)	-.178* (.023)	-.120* (.025)
Coalition size	—	-.403* (.025)	-.550* (.033)	.236* (.068)	-.164* (.069)
Parliamentary dispersion EU (SD.)	—	.467* (.246)	—	—	—
Parliamentary dispersion military (SD.)	—	.109* (.392)	—	—	—
Euroscepticism (%)	—	—	.072* (.758)	-.423* (1.050)	-.183* (1.105)
Coalition Range EU	—	—	—	—	-.334* (.017)
Coalition Range Military	—	—	—	-.675* (.014)	—
Gender	-.030* (.048)	-.017* (.038)	-.014 (.046)	-.009 (.043)	-.012 (.045)
Age	-.251* (.002)	-.094* (.002)	-.099* (.002)	-.071* (.002)	-.088* (.002)
Age education	-.127* (002)	-.053* (.001)	-.063* (.002)	-.045* (.001)	-.056* (.002)
EU Image	-.050* (.032)	-.038* (.026)	-.044* (.031)	-.032* (.029)	-.039* (.030)
Trust Nat Gov	.101* (.067)	.037* (.054)	.048* (.065)	.046* (.061)	.048* (.065)
Trust Nat Par	.003 (.068)	.013 (.054)	-.015 (.066)	-.028* (.062)	-.023 (.065)
Trust EU	-.053* (063)	-.076* (.050)	-.083* (.061)	-.053* (.057)	-.069* (.060)
Occupations	.075* (.013)	.026* (.010)	.035* (.012)	.035* (.011)	.036* (.012)
Community type	.003 (.031)	.007 (.025)	-.003 (.030)	-.006 (.028)	-.005 (.029)
Left-right placement	.073* (.013)	.048* (.010)	.050* (.012)	.038* (.011)	.046* (012)
Adjusted R Square	.054	.406	.281	.371	.305
df	11	16	15	16	16
F	133.060	1088.005	491.550	695.825	516.899
N	25426	25426	18852	18852	18852

Note. *$p < .001$, **$p < .005$