



# GLOBAL GOVERNANCE INSTITUTE

## National Backgrounders – European Foreign Policy

### Country Profile

#### *The Netherlands*

<b>Capital:</b>	Amsterdam
<b>Geographical Size:</b>	41 540 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Population:</b>	16 829 289 (2014)
<b>Population as % of total EU population:</b>	3.3% (2014)
<b>GDP:</b>	€ 602.658 billion (2013)
<b>Defense Expenditure:</b>	€ 7.702 million (2013)
<b>Official EU language(s):</b>	Dutch
<b>Political System:</b>	Parliamentary constitutional monarchy
<b>EU member country since:</b>	1 January 1958
<b>Seats in European Parliament:</b>	26
<b>Currency:</b>	Eurozone member since 1 January 1999
<b>Schengen area member?</b>	Schengen Area member since 26 March 1995
<b>Presidency of the Council:</b>	11 times between 1960 and 2004 (Next in 2016)

Source: Europa.eu

## GGI National Backgrounders – European Foreign Policy 2015

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## a. Political System

The politics of the Netherlands take place within the framework of a parliamentary and constitutional monarchy. The current constitution was issued in 1815, establishing a constitutional monarchy. A revision in 1848 instituted a system of parliamentary democracy. The Constitution prohibits the judiciary to test laws and treaties against the constitution, as this is considered a prerogative of the legislature. There is no constitutional court in the Netherlands. However, the Constitution itself prescribes that international treaty provisions and international organizations' decisions become immediately binding after their publication, overruling *de facto* the Dutch law and the Constitution<sup>1</sup>. The constitution of the Netherlands is only applicable in the European part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Kingdom as a whole (Caribbean Island of Aruba, Curaçao, Sint Maarten and *Caribisch Nederland*, the islands Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, and Saba) has its own Statute.<sup>2</sup>

The current monarch is Willem-Alexander. Constitutionally, the King is the head of state and must sign every law to validate it. The monarch appoints the prime minister (usually the leader of the majority party or coalition), as well as the Council of Ministers (the Cabinet). Yet, monarchy in the Netherlands is largely ceremonial; its residual political role of mediating coalition talks on government formation was eliminated in 2012. Generally speaking, the monarch never interferes in daily policy-making.<sup>3</sup>

The Dutch Parliament is called “The States General” and is bicameral. The House of Representatives (*Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal*) is elected every four years in a direct national election and consists of 150 members, while the members of the provincial councils vote for the Senate (*Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal*), consisting of 75 members who approve or reject all laws of the Netherlands without the right of amendment<sup>4</sup>. During the 2012 General Elections, the VVD (People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy) took 41 seats to PvdA’s (Labour Party) 40 seats in the lower chamber, with both parties gaining 10 seats after the 2010 election. The primary losers were the Freedom Party, headed by the far-right populist Geert Wilders, which shrunk from 24 to 13 seats, and the Christian Democrats, the traditional powerbrokers of Dutch politics, who collapsed from 21 to 13 seats<sup>5</sup>.

The government of the Netherlands constitutionally consists of the King and the cabinet of ministers. The ministers together form the Council of Ministers. Because of the multi-party system of the Netherlands, no single party has ever had a majority in parliament since 1900,

<sup>1</sup> Van Der Schyff G., Meuwese A., “Dutch Constitutional Law in a Globalizing World”, *Utrecht Law Review*, Vol. 9, Issue 2 (March 2013): 1. Web. Accessed October 8, 2015. <http://www.utrechtlawreview.org/index.php/ulr/article/view/221/218>.

<sup>2</sup> “Kingdom of the Netherlands: One Kingdom – Four Countries; European and Caribbean”, *Government of the Netherlands*, Last modified June 5, 2015. Web. Accessed October 5, 2015. <https://www.government.nl/binaries/government/documents/leaflets/2015/06/05/kingdom-of-the-netherlands-one-kingdom-four-countries-european-and-caribbean/the-kingdom-of-the-netherlands-4-pager-eng.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> “Netherlands”, *Freedom House*, Last modified July 31, 2015. Web. Accessed October 4, 2015. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/netherlands>; “Système politique néerlandais”, *Élections en Europe*, Last modified September 27, 2014. Web. Accessed October 5, 2015. <http://www.elections-en-europe.net/systeme-politique-neerlandais/politique-neerlandais/>.

<sup>4</sup> “Democracy in the Netherlands”, *Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal*, Last modified April 22, 2015. Web. Accessed on October 4, 2015. <http://www.houseofrepresentatives.nl/how-parliament-works/democracy-netherlands>.

<sup>5</sup> Trainor I, “Dutch Election: pro-EU parties come on top”, *The Guardian*, September 12, 2012. Web. Accessed October 4, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/12/holland-new-coaliton-eu-caution>.

and formation of a coalition of two or often three parties is always necessary<sup>6</sup>. The Christian Democrats (uniting Catholics and Protestants) governed without interruption until the 1990s, alternating coalitions with either the socialists on the left or the liberals on the right, and thus preventing drifts to either side of the political spectrum. As a consociational state, politics and governance in the Netherlands are traditionally characterised by a common striving for broad consensus on important issues, within both the political community and society as a whole<sup>7</sup>. On October 29, 2012 the VVD and the PvdA concluded a coalition agreement. Mark Rutte from the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD, liberal) is at present the Prime Minister of the Netherlands<sup>8</sup>.

## b. Foreign Policy

The foreign policy of the Netherlands is characterised by four key features: Atlantic Cooperation, European Integration, International Development Cooperation and the strengthening of International Law. The foreign policy tradition in the Netherlands has long been characterised by a simultaneous promotion of economic interests and normative convictions. The Dutch government promotes sustainable economic growth in developing countries, works towards global stability and security, and fosters human rights around the world. Four topics are part of the Dutch development cooperation policy: water management, security and rule of law, sexual and reproductive rights, and food security.

The Netherlands **water sector** is of particular importance (given the country's geographic position). The Dutch have a water sector “top team” that allows formal cooperation between the private sector, government, think tanks, and universities. Through cooperation, new commercial opportunities for the private water sectors are being created<sup>9</sup>. In September 2014, the Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte offered help to the Pakistani Prime Minister Sharif on water management after a dike was breached, forcing over 700,000 Pakistanis to leave their homes. Moreover, the Netherlands focuses on improved water management in international river basins of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. In doing so, the Netherlands cooperates with international financial institutions such as the World Bank. The Dutch budget for water in 2014 was \$208 million.<sup>10</sup>

The **Netherlands-Russia** year, held in 2013 to celebrate 400 years of diplomatic ties, highlighted the long-standing economic and cultural relations between the two countries. The Dutch have constantly combined excellent economic relations with Russia with a broader critical dialogue, which has included discussions on human rights (including LGBT rights) and rule of law conducted by the Dutch parliament. This reflects the strong tradition of support for international and humanitarian law in Dutch politics. So, when the crisis between EU and Russia began, Dutch diplomats took a moderate approach to applying sanctions against one of the country's most important trade partners<sup>11</sup>. But since the downing of

<sup>6</sup> “Système politique néerlandais”. Last modified September 27, 2014. Web. Accessed October 5, 2015. [elections-en-europe.net/systeme-politique-neerlandais/](http://elections-en-europe.net/systeme-politique-neerlandais/).

<sup>7</sup> Ottense N., “Longing for consensus: The Dutch Mentality”, *The Atlantic Sentinel*, August 14, 2014. Web. Accessed October 4, 2015. <http://atlanticsentinel.com/2014/08/longing-for-consensus-the-dutch-mentality/>.

<sup>8</sup> “Coalition Agreement”, *Government of the Netherlands*. Web. Accessed October 4, 2015. <https://www.government.nl/government/contents/coalition-agreement>.

<sup>9</sup> n.a. “Water Management a Keystone of Dutch Foreign Policy”, *World Politics Review*, November 6, 2014. Web. Accessed October 6, 2015. <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/trend-lines/14382/water-management-a-keystone-of-dutch-foreign-policy>.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Pardijs D., “Scorecard 2015: The Dutch remain pragmatic in an emotional year”, *European Council on Foreign Relations*, February 13, 2015. Web. Accessed October 8, 2015.

the Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 (presumably caused by pro-Russian separatists) over Eastern Ukraine in July 2014, causing the death of 193 Dutch citizens, the Dutch seem to have shifted to a more “classical” foreign policy style; they now look more willing to sacrifice economic gains for **increased security** and are more interested in using the EU as a vehicle to strengthen that security. In February 2015, Foreign Minister Bart Koenders stated: “realism has returned to Europe”<sup>12</sup>. According to the European Council on Foreign Relations’ *Foreign Policy Scorecard 2015*, when other countries agreed on a strong OSCE condemnation, a Security Council resolution calling for access to the crash site and for international research, and support for accelerated sanctions, the Netherlands was one of the leaders on this issue.<sup>13</sup>

Given its small size and dependence on stronger neighbours for its economic well-being and security, the Netherlands remains a relatively open and internationalist nation. Ties are especially strong with Germany and the UK. Dutch opinions of the United States are generally favourable; American culture pervades the country where English is a widely spoken second language. The US is traditionally considered a key ally, and the Atlantic cooperation, as already said, is one of the top priorities in Dutch foreign policy.<sup>14</sup>

### *European Union (EU)*

Size is a crucial factor when it comes to **European Integration**. The Netherlands, as a small European state, played a proactive role in this sense. Its openness is explained, in particular, by the need to boost domestic economy through fostering international trade. It is clear that for the Netherlands, a stronger European integration is the only way to enhance its aspirations and capabilities at the international level. This is why the Dutch are not ready to consider ‘Brexit’ as an option. Not only is the UK a key EU player alongside France and Germany, but also a divided Europe is envisaged by Russia who is trying to break the European front on sanctions. Sanctions are a powerful tool only if applied by the whole EU; the Netherlands on its own could never be credible. Despite ruling out the old federalist aspiration for Europe, Dutch Foreign Minister Koenders recently called for a stronger and more effective Europe. In his view, this can be translated into reality by reforming the governance between national and EU level, in order to create “a smart combination of nation state and Europe.” Better governance (both at the national and European level), in turn, is the key to a return to prosperity.<sup>15</sup>

Nonetheless, European integration has become **unpopular** in the Netherlands. It is one of the founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, always respectful of the rules, often quick to implement common European policies, and keen to promote itself as

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[http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_scorecard\\_2015\\_the\\_dutch\\_remain\\_pragmatic\\_in\\_an\\_emotional\\_year42](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_scorecard_2015_the_dutch_remain_pragmatic_in_an_emotional_year42)

<sup>12</sup> Van Schaik L., Drent M., “Letter from The Hague”, *Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe*, Carnegie Europe, July 17, 2015. Web. Accessed October 5, 2015. <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=60756>; Van Der Togt T., “How Should we Respond to Russia? The Dutch view”, *European Council on Foreign Relations*, February 25, 2015. Web. Accessed October 10, 2015.

[http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_how\\_should\\_europe\\_respond\\_to\\_russia\\_the\\_dutch\\_view311233](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_how_should_europe_respond_to_russia_the_dutch_view311233).

<sup>13</sup> Pardijs D., “Scorecard 2015: The Dutch remain pragmatic in an emotional year”, *European Council on Foreign Relations*, February 13, 2015. Web. Accessed October 8, 2015.

[http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_scorecard\\_2015\\_the\\_dutch\\_remain\\_pragmatic\\_in\\_an\\_emotional\\_year42](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_scorecard_2015_the_dutch_remain_pragmatic_in_an_emotional_year42)

<sup>14</sup> Ottense N., “Longing for consensus: The Dutch Mentality”, *The Atlantic Sentinel*, August 14, 2014. Web. Accessed October 4, 2015. <http://atlanticsentinel.com/2014/08/longing-for-consensus-the-dutch-mentality/>.

<sup>15</sup> Koenders B., “Renewing the European promise”, *Speech given by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Leiden*, March 30, 2015. Web. Accessed October 9, 2015. <https://www.government.nl/documents/speeches/2015/03/30/renewing-the-european-promise-speech-by-minister-koenders-on-the-european-union>.

a model to other countries. However, the bailouts for weaker states in the periphery of the Eurozone has created the perception that hardworking Dutch taxpayers are footing the bill for spendthrift Greece and Portugal. As in neighbouring Germany, the European budgetary rigour tends to be seen in the Netherlands more as a moral than an economic duty. The claim that different cultures could converge in a complete political and trade union has been called into question, and in 2014, more than a third believed that Netherlands would be better off outside the European Union.<sup>16</sup>

To conclude, a **new sense of realism** has entered Dutch foreign policy for the above-mentioned reasons. The current government is rather constructive when it comes to strengthening the EU's diplomatic aspirations and policies. Nevertheless, a key issue is whether the Dutch truly believe that the EU can further affirm its 'actorness' without the United States being involved<sup>17</sup>.

### c. Peace & Security Policy

Dutch prosperity largely depends on international trade and thus on a stable international environment. Besides the protection of Dutch territory, one of the constitutional missions of the Dutch Armed Forces is to contribute to international law and order. That is why the Dutch security policy has a strong emphasis on **international cooperation** with NATO, the EU, the United Nations, and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Of these, NATO is still seen as “the cornerstone” for ultimate military security in Europe. In 2014, The Hague decided to slightly increase the country's defence budget and reverse cuts to the funding of the intelligence service from 2015 onward. Another increase in defence spending is expected for 2016<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, the Netherlands has already made many steps forward in permanent military cooperation with other countries: the Naval HQ BENELUX, the UK/NL Amphibious Force, the Netherlands-Germany High Readiness HQ and the Dutch Air Mobile Brigade under permanent German division command. The Netherlands is a member of the C-17 Strategic Airlift Capability, the European Air Transport Command and the European Gendarmerie Force and is the lead nation for the European Air-to-Air Refuelling project. It is important to clarify that these are all examples of a kind of permanent structured cooperation that does not fall under the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon<sup>19</sup>. In addition, the three Benelux countries agreed in March 2015 to share surveillance and protection of their air spaces, in the first agreement of its kind among EU countries. Starting from 2017, Belgian and Dutch air forces will be committed to monitor the Benelux airspace. Luxembourg will only have to open its airspace to its neighbours' jets, since the country has no military air force<sup>20</sup>.

Regarding the fight against the Islamic State, the Dutch have contributed six F-16s, 250 military personnel, and 130 trainers in Iraq. On the humanitarian and political side, the Netherlands is the twelfth largest donor in Syria and the tenth in Iraq. Like their colleagues in other European countries, Dutch politicians have been more cautious about a possible military intervention in Syria; the debate on foreign intervention is still influenced by the reaction to

<sup>16</sup> Ottense N., “Longing for consensus: The Dutch Mentality”, *The Atlantic Sentinel*, August 14, 2014. Web. Accessed October 4, 2015. <http://atlanticsentinel.com/2014/08/longing-for-consensus-the-dutch-mentality/>.

<sup>17</sup> Van Schaik L., Drent M., “Letter from The Hague”, *Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe*, Carnegie Europe, July 17, 2015. Web. Accessed October 5, 2015. <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=60756>

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Van Osch T., “The Netherlands and the CSDP”, *European Geostrategy*, December 23, 2014. Web. Accessed October 12, 2015. <http://www.europeangeostrategy.org/2014/12/netherlands-csdp/>.

<sup>20</sup> Maurice E., “Benelux countries sign air defence pact”, *EU Observer*, March 5, 2015. Web. Accessed October 11, 2015. <https://euobserver.com/news/127885>.

the Iraq War in 2003. That year, the Dutch government gave its political support to the United States, a decision that was strongly condemned by a Dutch parliamentary investigatory committee in 2010 because of the questionable legal foundations in support of the war<sup>21</sup>.

### *European Union (EU)*

The Dutch government seems to be quite aware of the changing geopolitical context. The Netherlands recognises the shifting global balance of power, with some sort of multi-polar or even ‘post-polar’ world order in the making. New great powers rivalry are causing a return of geopolitics: various regions in the east and to the south-east and south of Europe find themselves in grey zones between war and peace, where state and non-state actors interact in new complex ways in clashes of interest and struggles for power. Moreover, the US are focusing on Asia more than before, hoping that Europe is grown enough to gradually play its role at the international level. Although the idea of a European army was ruled out by Foreign Minister Koenders<sup>22</sup>, it is within this context that the Netherlands has stressed that Europe should take more responsibility for its security and is prepared to do its part in order to strengthen the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). The Dutch government acknowledges that the EU is best equipped to face up to the new challenges, given the Union’s ability to reconcile **defence, diplomacy, and development**. Although the Netherlands was initially sceptical about the necessity to draft a new European Security Strategy to replace the original 2003 document, the Netherlands now hopes to play a role in the process toward a new security strategy in view of its presidency of the EU in the first half of 2016; this mind-changing occurred after the rapid deterioration of the security situation at the EU’s southern and eastern borders<sup>23</sup>.

### *North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)*

The percentage for Dutch Defence expenditure goes under 1% of GDP, so far below the NATO agreed 2% objective (NATO's indirect funding)<sup>24</sup>. For the period 2014-2015, the Netherlands is contributing to more than 3% of the NATO common-funded budgets and programmes<sup>25</sup>. Recently, Dutch Foreign and Defence ministers and the Defence Chief recently expressed their support for the Supreme Allied Commander for Europe's (SACEUR) efforts to improve NATO’s capability to respond quickly to threats. Emphasis was also placed on the great importance of NATO cooperating with the EU. There can never be a purely military solution, thus it is very important for NATO’s political and military influence to be used in conjunction with the EU’s political instruments.

<sup>21</sup> Pardijns D., “Scorecard 2015: The Dutch remain pragmatic in an emotional year”, *European Council on Foreign Relations*, February 13, 2015. Web. Accessed October 8, 2015. [http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_scorecard\\_2015\\_the\\_dutch\\_remain\\_pragmatic\\_in\\_an\\_emotional\\_year42](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_scorecard_2015_the_dutch_remain_pragmatic_in_an_emotional_year42)

<sup>22</sup> Koenders B., “Renewing the European promise”, *Speech given by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Leiden*, March 30, 2015. Web. Accessed October 9, 2015. <https://www.government.nl/documents/speeches/2015/03/30/renewing-the-european-promise-speech-by-minister-koenders-on-the-european-union>.

<sup>23</sup> Van Schaik L., Drent M., “Letter from The Hague”, *Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe*, Carnegie Europe, July 17, 2015. Web. Accessed October 5, 2015. <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=60756>

<sup>24</sup> Van Osch T., “The Netherlands and the CSDP”, *European Geostrategy*, December 23, 2014. Web. Accessed October 12, 2015. <http://www.europeangeostrategy.org/2014/12/netherlands-csdp/>.

<sup>25</sup> “NATO Common-Funded Budgets & Programmes”, *The North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, Web. Accessed September 22, 2015. [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2014\\_06/20140611\\_20140601\\_NATO\\_common\\_funded\\_budgets\\_2014-2015.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2014_06/20140611_20140601_NATO_common_funded_budgets_2014-2015.pdf)

At last year's NATO Summit in Wales, the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) was adopted, which contained measures to enable a rapid, flexible and effective response to threats at the periphery of NATO's territory. One measure was the establishment of a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). The Netherlands, along with Germany and Norway, is providing interim capacity for the VJTF in 2015 and is working closely with SACEUR on further developing the VJTF concept<sup>26</sup>.

#### *United Nations (UN)*

The Netherlands is one of the 51 founding members of the United Nations. It contributes to 1.65% to the whole UN Peacekeeping Budget<sup>27</sup>, while as of September 2015 it had 540 troops, 16 military experts and 27 police personnel engaged in peacekeeping operations around the world (MINUSMA in Mali, UNAMA in Afghanistan, UNMISS in South Sudan, UNDOF in the Golan Heights and UNTSO observation mission in the Middle East)<sup>28</sup>. Moreover, the Netherlands is a candidate for a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council (UNSC) for the 2017–2018 term<sup>29</sup>. The International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court are notably situated in the Dutch city of The Hague, which makes its one of the various UN hubs worldwide.

#### *Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)*

The Netherlands joined the then *Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe* (CSCE) in 1973. It contributed to 3.9% of the OSCE budget (€ 5,512,905)<sup>30</sup> and had 6 nationals involved in its staff in 2014<sup>31</sup>.

#### *Council of Europe (CoE)*

The Netherlands is a founding member of the Council of Europe (1949). In 2015, it has contributed to 2.59% of the organisation's budget (€10,785,559)<sup>32</sup>. In 2014, the European Court of Human Rights dealt with 798 applications concerning the Netherlands, of which 795 were declared inadmissible. With regard to the other 3 applications, the Court found at least one violation of the European Convention on Human Rights<sup>33</sup>. Recently, the Council of Europe reaffirmed for the second time a decision that the Netherlands must offer decent humanitarian conditions to rejected asylum applicants until they leave the country. The

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<sup>26</sup> n.a. "Netherlands contributes to NATO deployability and responsiveness", *Government of the Netherlands*, Last modified March 23, 2015. Web. Accessed October 11, 2015.

<https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2015/03/26/netherlands-contributes-to-nato-s-deployability-and-responsiveness>.

<sup>27</sup> United Nations General Assembly, "Implementation of General Assembly resolutions 55/235 and 55/236", *Report of the Secretary General*, December 27, 2012: 3. Web. Accessed October 13, 2015.

[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/67/224/Add.1](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/67/224/Add.1).

<sup>28</sup> "UN Mission's Summary detailed by Country", *United Nations Peacekeeping*, September 30, 2015. Web. Accessed October 13, 2015. [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2015/sep15\\_3.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2015/sep15_3.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Kingdom of the Netherlands, *Kingdom of the Netherlands United Nations Security Council Candidate 2017-2018*, n.d. Web. Accessed October 13, 2015.

[http://www.netherlandsmission.org/binaries/content/assets/postenweb/v/verenigde\\_staten\\_van\\_amerika/the-permanent-mission-to-the-un/20141107-eng-bladerversie-flyer---def.pdf](http://www.netherlandsmission.org/binaries/content/assets/postenweb/v/verenigde_staten_van_amerika/the-permanent-mission-to-the-un/20141107-eng-bladerversie-flyer---def.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> "The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), *Annual Report 2014*, July 2015. Web. Accessed October 13, 2015. <http://www.osce.org/secretariat/169971?download=true>.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>32</sup> "The Netherlands", *The Council of Europe*. Web. Accessed October 14, 2015.

<http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/netherlands>.

<sup>33</sup> European Court of Human Rights Press Unit. "The Netherlands". Last modified July 1, 2015: 1. Web. Accessed October 14, 2015. [http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/CP\\_Netherlands\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/CP_Netherlands_ENG.pdf).

majority coalition announced a week later that Liberals and Labour had reached a deal within the Cabinet: the shelters for rejected asylum-seekers would be restricted to the Netherlands' five largest cities; asylum-seekers could stay as long as they showed they were finding a way to leave the country, otherwise they would be kicked out after two weeks<sup>34</sup>.

### *Strategic Culture*

Since the Netherlands believes that a credible, collective defence largely depends on the transatlantic link and NATO is instrumental to the interoperability of allies' armed forces, **NATO** will always remain a cornerstone for national security. There is an increasing importance given to the **CSDP** and to European Integration. The Netherlands strongly supports the EU's concept for a **Comprehensive Approach** to crisis management, especially for prevention, peacekeeping, and post-conflict stabilisation. This does not exclude the use of the military for higher intensity options if member states so decide, but military actions must always be framed in a broader political strategy<sup>35</sup>. CSDP will however never duplicate nor replace NATO, it must operate in a complementary fashion<sup>36</sup>. According to Louise van Schaik and Margriet Drent's *Letter From The Hague* for Carnegie Europe, the main problem with Dutch foreign policy is that despite its good intentions, the country lacks a well-thought-out vision on key security issues and on ways to mitigate risks. It has **limited military capabilities**, but also lacks the necessary political will to scale up funding to the levels that the country realistically needs to face up to the current security challenges<sup>37</sup>.

### **d. Economic Policy**

#### *European Union (EU)*

In its 2015 Stability Programme, the Government plans a gradual improvement of the headline deficit to 1,8 % of GDP in 2015 and further to 0,7 % of GDP in 2018. The Government plans to attain the objective of a structural deficit of 0,5 % of GDP throughout the programme period. The debt-to-GDP ratio is expected to peak at 68,8 % in 2015 and to gradually decline to 66,1 % in 2018. The Council of the European Union is confident that the Netherlands will be able to comply with the provisions of the Stability and Growth Pact. Yet, public expenditure on research and development has continually declined since 2014, while private R&D spending remains low. The Council recommends shifting public expenditure towards innovation and research, as well as delivering structural reforms to unlock private investment in R&D that would help enhance the long-term growth potential of the Dutch economy<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> n.a. "Bed, bath, and begone", *The Economist*, April 23, 2015. Web. Accessed October 14, 2015.

<http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21649614-netherlands-stumped-rejected-asylum-seekers-who-refuse-leave-bed-bath-and-begone>.

<sup>35</sup> Van Osch T., "The Netherlands and the CSDP", *European Geostrategy*, December 23, 2014. Web. Accessed October 12, 2015. <http://www.europeangeostrategy.org/2014/12/netherlands-csdp/>.

<sup>36</sup> Koenders B., "Renewing the European promise", *Speech given by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Leiden*, March 30, 2015. Web. Accessed October 9, 2015.

<https://www.government.nl/documents/speeches/2015/03/30/renewing-the-european-promise-speech-by-minister-koenders-on-the-european-union>.

<sup>37</sup> Van Schaik L., Drent M., "Letter from The Hague", *Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe*, Carnegie Europe, July 17, 2015. Web. Accessed October 5, 2015. <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=60756>

<sup>38</sup> "Council Recommendation on the 2015 National Reform Programme of the Netherlands and delivering a Council opinion on the 2015 Stability Programme of the Netherlands", *Official Journal of the European Union*, C272/84 (July 14, 2015). Web. Accessed October 14, 2015.

[http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2015/csr2015\\_council\\_netherlands\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2015/csr2015_council_netherlands_en.pdf).

The Dutch economy shrunk by 3.8% in 2009. To recover, the government boosted the domestic economy, which led to a budget deficit of 5.1% of GDP in 2010. The government had to implement austerity measures in 2011. The Dutch GDP expanded by 0.2% in the second quarter of 2015, better than a preliminary estimate of 0.1%, but below 0.6% reported in the last quarter of 2014. The Netherlands is the fifth largest economy in the Eurozone and the third largest exporter in the region. The country's economy is also known for its stability, high-skilled workforce, and developed infrastructure. As a result, the country is the sixth biggest destination of foreign direct investment in the world. Household consumption is the main component of GDP and accounts for 45% of its total use, followed by government expenditure (26%) and gross fixed capital formation (18%). Exports of goods and services account for 83% of GDP while imports account for 72%<sup>39</sup>.

Regarding the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), the investor-to-state dispute settlement mechanism, which would allow companies to take legal action against governments whose decisions risk undermining firms' investments, has recently become a bone of contention. The coalition partners in The Hague are divided, with the Labour Party hostile to TTIP and the conservative-liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy in favour of TTIP<sup>40</sup>.

### *Economic Diplomacy & Foreign Trade*

The Netherlands is one of Russia's main trading partners; in 2013, trade exchanges totalled €27 billion. This is in part explained by the favourable tax conditions for foreign companies in the Netherlands. Oil and gas and other **energy** products constitute the most important element in the two countries' trade relations. But when the Ukraine crisis broke out, the Netherlands condemned Russia's annexation of Crimea and Moscow's support for the destabilisation of the Donbas region. The downing of civilian airliner Malaysia Airlines MH17 was a game changer for Dutch relations with Russia. The community (including Dutch businesses) became convinced that tougher sanctions could no longer be avoided. European sanctions weakened the economic ties between the two countries, which are suffering from a drastic reduction both in exports and imports<sup>41</sup>. Dutch policy-makers are considering plans to transform the Netherlands into an energy hub filled with Russian oil and gas. The country recently turned to the idea of a common European energy policy with decreased dependency on Russian imports. Dutch businesses accepted the EU economic sanctions imposed on Russia, even though national exporters suffer and sometimes look for creative ways to circumvent the Russian ban on imports of EU dairy products, fruits, and vegetables<sup>42</sup>.

Given its size, The Netherlands strongly relies upon international trade and has a very open economy. On financial and trade issues, the country is a considerable international force and understands new realities; it will follow other EU member states in joining the Chinese alternative to the World Bank: the **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank**. The Dutch government has also agreed to share its seat on the board of the International Monetary Fund

<sup>39</sup> "Netherlands GDP Growth Rate", *Trading Economics*, September 23, 2015. Web. Accessed October 14, 2015. <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/netherlands/gdp-growth>.

<sup>40</sup> Van Schaik L., Drent M., "Letter from The Hague", *Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe*, Carnegie Europe, July 17, 2015. Web. Accessed October 5, 2015. <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=60756>

<sup>41</sup> Van Der Togt T., "How Should we Respond to Russia? The Dutch view", *European Council on Foreign Relations*, February 25, 2015. Web. Accessed October 10, 2015. [http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_how\\_should\\_europe\\_respond\\_to\\_russia\\_the\\_dutch\\_view311233](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_how_should_europe_respond_to_russia_the_dutch_view311233).

<sup>42</sup> Van Schaik L., Drent M., "Letter from The Hague", *Judy Dempsey's Strategic Europe*, Carnegie Europe, July 17, 2015. Web. Accessed October 5, 2015. <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=60756>

with Belgium, in order to accommodate the concerns of emerging economies about the significant European presence in the Bretton Woods institutions<sup>43</sup>.

**e. Other Diplomatic Priorities**

*Priorities at the Global Level*

The Netherlands has long been at the forefront of **women's role** regarding peace and security issues. The government will launch its third National Action Plan (NAP) by the end of 2015. However, strong support for principles and objectives of the UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000) has not always translated effectively into Dutch foreign policy, with programming failing to consider both the causes and effects of women's disempowerment<sup>44</sup>. An example of the failure is the current NAP (2012-2015), which aims to "facilitate the creation of an enabling environment for women's leadership and political participation in fragile states and transition countries"<sup>45</sup>, but makes no reference to the underlying economic causes – such as low wages or uncertain employment – that prevent women from being political actors and leaders in their communities. According to Alex Paul from *The Hague Institute for Global Justice*, in order to deliver the important political and social reforms needed to embed more equal gender relations, the new NAP will have to connect the two, as well as encourage programming that targets the economic factors that underline women's disempowerment<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Paul A., "Women, Peace and Security in Dutch Foreign Policy: A Recommendation for the new National Action Plan", *The Hague Institute for Global Justice*, August 19, 2015. Web. Accessed October 7, 2015. [http://thehagueinstituteforglobaljustice.org/index.php?page=Commentary-Commentary\\_Articles-Recent\\_Commentary-Women\\_Peace\\_and\\_Security\\_in\\_Dutch\\_Foreign\\_Policy&pid=176&id=432](http://thehagueinstituteforglobaljustice.org/index.php?page=Commentary-Commentary_Articles-Recent_Commentary-Women_Peace_and_Security_in_Dutch_Foreign_Policy&pid=176&id=432).

<sup>45</sup> "Women: Powerful Agents for Peace and Security", *Dutch National Action Plan (2012-2015)*, November 2011: 21. Web. Accessed October 8, 2015. <http://www.nap1325.nl/assets/NAP-1325-2012-2015.pdf>.

<sup>46</sup> Paul A., "Women, Peace and Security in Dutch Foreign Policy: A Recommendation for the new National Action Plan", *The Hague Institute for Global Justice*, August 19, 2015. Web. Accessed October 7, 2015. [http://thehagueinstituteforglobaljustice.org/index.php?page=Commentary-Commentary\\_Articles-Recent\\_Commentary-Women\\_Peace\\_and\\_Security\\_in\\_Dutch\\_Foreign\\_Policy&pid=176&id=432](http://thehagueinstituteforglobaljustice.org/index.php?page=Commentary-Commentary_Articles-Recent_Commentary-Women_Peace_and_Security_in_Dutch_Foreign_Policy&pid=176&id=432).

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