

ADVISORY LETTER

**RUSSIA AND THE DEFENCE EFFORTS  
OF THE NETHERLANDS**

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## Foreword

On 9 November 2016, the AIV received a request for advice on NATO's adaptation requirements in response to the deterioration of the security situation as a result of threats emanating from Russia, the Middle East and Northern Africa.<sup>1</sup> In addition, it was asked to examine the implications of this new situation for Dutch security policy and defence efforts. The AIV decided to initially publish an advisory letter on the impact of the new security situation on the Netherlands' defence efforts, particularly in light of Russian policy. Later this year, it will publish a more comprehensive advisory report, which will also cover the other issues raised in the request for advice,<sup>2</sup> such as NATO-EU cooperation and conventional arms control. Given that the AIV has examined developments in the Middle East and Northern Africa at length in previous reports,<sup>3</sup> the present advisory letter focuses on developments in the Russian Federation. This is particularly relevant in view of article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. The advisory letter was prepared by the AIV's Peace and Security Committee (CVV). Its members are Professor J.J.C. Voorhoeve (chair), Lieutenant General (ret.) M.L.M. Urlings (vice-chair), Professor E. Bakker, D.J. Barth, A.J. Boekestijn, L.F.F. Casteleijn, Professor J. Colijn, Dr N. van Dam, Dr N. de Deugd, Dr M. Drent, Professor I. Duyvesteyn, P.C. Feith, Dr A.R. Korteweg and Lieutenant General (ret.) Dr D. Starink. The executive secretary was Ms M.E. Kwast-van Duursen, assisted by H.C. Raaphorst (trainee). The civil service liaison officers were J.W.K. Glashouwer of the Ministry of Defence and C.H.J. Veerman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The AIV adopted this advisory letter on 3 March 2017.

1 Northern Africa comprises the Sahel, West Africa, the Horn of Africa and North Africa.

2 See: <<http://aiv-advice.nl/96b/publications/request-for-advice-on-nato-s-long-term-adapta>>.

3 See AIV advisory report no. 101, 'Security and Stability in Northern Africa', The Hague, May 2016 and AIV advisory report no. 91, 'The Netherlands and the Arab Region: A Principled and Pragmatic Approach', The Hague, November 2014.

# I Introduction

The number of uncertainties, security risks and conflicts in and around Europe has risen sharply in recent years. In several of these conflicts, Russia's actions are a source of major concern. Tensions and conflicts in the Middle East and Africa also have far-reaching implications for European security, while non-state groups are becoming increasingly prominent. In many cases, the threat is not limited to regular military action but also includes hybrid operations and disruptive cyberattacks. Moreover, thanks to the use of new media and other technologies, the battle for public opinion has become increasingly entrenched. Until recently, the digital manipulation of public opinion, including direct attempts by a foreign power to influence a national election, was almost unthinkable. In this area, too, Russia's actions give cause for concern. The consequences of international uncertainty, tension and conflict have penetrated every corner of our society, especially in the form of terrorist attacks like those carried out in Brussels, Nice, Berlin and Paris. In addition, the influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants into Europe has heightened internal social and political tensions in several countries. Relations between Western countries are also less stable than before. There are serious shortcomings in the EU's ability to take decisive action. Several member states are pursuing their own policies, while anti-European political movements are gaining ground in others. The United Kingdom is leaving the EU. Finally, until the new US administration's foreign and security policy takes shape, the European allies lack an important and trusted point of reference.

It is hard to predict where this increase in international uncertainty and tension will lead. The world is more complex than ever, and differences between independently operating states may end up becoming more pronounced. We may be on the brink of a prolonged period of instability that is devoid of new alliances along familiar lines. Another potential scenario, finally, involves renewed international cooperation and constructive dialogue, but for now this is less likely. All this necessitates a review of the security and defence policies of the Netherlands and its closest allies, on which our national security depends heavily. Security policy touches many areas, such as preventive diplomacy, development cooperation, stability funds and regional partnerships. The forthcoming advisory report will examine these aspects of security policy in greater depth. The present advisory letter focuses chiefly on the implications of the new security situation for the Netherlands' defence efforts.

The next chapter examines the policies pursued by the Russian Federation (hereinafter Russia). This is followed by a brief analysis of the measures taken by NATO. The following chapter discusses the implications for the Netherlands, with a specific focus on Dutch defence efforts. The final chapter presents a number of conclusions and recommendations.

## II Security developments relating to Russia

### II.1 Political objectives

President Vladimir Putin sees it as his mission to obtain recognition of Russia's status as a major power. In his view, only military power can prevent other countries from limiting Russia's options and ensure that it regains its rightful place in history. Russia believes that the West is pursuing a policy of containment, in part through NATO and EU expansion. It is therefore vital to defend Russia's territory beyond the country's current borders, including the 'zone of privileged interests' around its periphery.<sup>4</sup> As a major power, Russia lays claim to its own spheres of influence, buffer zones against perceived enemies and the right to intervene in the near abroad if it deems it necessary.<sup>5</sup> This is reflected in the doctrine of *Russkiy Mir* (the Russian world), which holds that Russia is entitled to come to the aid of Russians living outside the country's borders, using force if necessary, if they feel threatened.<sup>6</sup> On this basis, Russia may currently be described as a revisionist power.<sup>7</sup> Although it initially sought to strengthen its position within Europe, Moscow is currently demanding spheres of influence based on 'power' and 'respect'. The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is meant to provide an alternative to a system centred on the EU.<sup>8</sup>

Another of Putin's key motives is his desire to prevent a 'colour revolution' in Russia. Following the large-scale protests surrounding the 2011 elections, a series of restrictive measures were announced. The centralisation of power and decision-making has resulted in the emergence of an authoritarian political system in which the state exercises near-total control over media outlets, the internet, education, youth movements, culture and academic life. Political opponents are intimidated, prosecuted on dubious grounds or murdered. Human rights are restricted by repressive measures,<sup>9</sup> in violation of the obligations arising from Russia's membership of the Council of Europe and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Putin sits at the centre of a powerful network

4 Term used by former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev in 2008. See John Foreman, 'The Determinants of Recent Russian Behaviour: What Do These Mean for NATO Decision Makers?', NDC Research Report 08/2016, October 2016, p. 4.

5 Timothy Ash, 'Russia's long-term aims and how the west will respond', Financial Times, 1 August 2016.

6 Hubert Smeets, 'Nu zuchten wij onder die "totale triomf"', *NRC Handelsblad*, 19 August 2016.

7 Gudrun Persson (ed.), *Russian Military Capability in a Ten-Year Perspective – 2016*, Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), 2016, p. 195.

8 In addition to Russia, the members of the EAEU are Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan.

9 Jakob Hedenskog, Gudrun Persson and Carolina Vendil Pallin, 'Russian Security Policy', in Gudrun Persson (ed.), *Russian Military Capability in a Ten-Year Perspective – 2016*, Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), 2016, pp. 100-101. The AIV plans to publish an advisory report on illiberal democracies this spring.

consisting of 30-40 influential stakeholders.<sup>10</sup> The state apparatus ensures the survival of this network, which comprises intelligence and security officials, entrepreneurs, large companies, state-owned companies and organised crime. All efforts are currently focused on Putin's re-election in 2018.<sup>11</sup>

Although unlikely in the short term, it cannot be ruled out that the Russian president will eventually be willing to launch constructive talks on confidence-building measures or even take steps in the field of conventional and nuclear arms control and disarmament, provided this is reconcilable with his wish to remain in power. For the time being, however, Russia's 'robust' foreign policy appears to be serving its purpose of projecting national greatness, thus increasing acceptance of Putin's presidency and his popularity. Military action abroad and allegations of a massive Western threat distract attention from Russia's grave and structural socioeconomic problems and are helping to keep Putin in power for the moment.

From an economic perspective, Russia is unable to achieve its desire to be seen as a major power; it is a 'giant with feet of clay'. The country has substantial economic problems, which can be attributed to the persistently low oil price, the financial crisis, the fall in the rouble and – to a lesser extent – Western sanctions. With a GDP similar to that of Spain, it cannot claim to be a global power.<sup>12</sup> Russia has limited access to international financial markets. Foreign investment, which is essential for high-tech innovation and sustainable economic growth, is lacking. Structural economic reforms would require a substantial reduction in the role of the state – which in part relies on criminal networks – in favour of a social market economy, but this would jeopardise the power of Putin and his associates.<sup>13</sup>

The illegal annexation of Crimea and the subsequent war in Ukraine have resulted in an almost complete break in political, economic and cultural relations with the West. Putin initially denied that Russia was carrying out a direct military intervention in Ukraine, but later admitted that this was indeed the case. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has repeatedly confirmed the presence of Russian troops and military materiel in Ukraine.<sup>14</sup> As a result of Russia's military intervention, in particular, a stalemate has developed in eastern Ukraine. The Minsk II agreements are

10 James Sherr, 'The New East-West Discord: Russian Objectives, Western Interests', Clingendael Report, December 2015, p. 19.

11 Timothy Ash, 'Russia's long-term aims and how the west will respond', *Financial Times*, 1 August 2016.

12 In 2015, Russia was ranked 13th globally in terms of GDP, between Australia and Spain. See: <<http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/GDP-ranking-table>>.

13 'Russia needs a revolution to reform its economy', *Financial Times*, 16 January 2017, available at <<https://www.ft.com/content/3bf85efa-dbea-11e6-9d7c-be108f1c1dce>>.

14 For weekly reports on this issue, see: <<http://www.osce.org/om/reports>>.

not being observed, and the front has barely shifted.<sup>15</sup> The hostilities in eastern Ukraine have so far caused 9,000-10,000 fatalities, and 1.5 million people in Ukraine have fled their homes. By intervening in the conflict in Syria, moreover, Russia has assumed a role on the international stage, to the extent that a solution without its backing is now inconceivable. Most recently, it has emerged as a player in Afghanistan, and the associated six-party talks in Moscow are providing Russia with a second platform to consolidate its international role.

## **II.2 Military capabilities**

Over the past decade, Russia's armed forces have been thoroughly revamped. Defence budgets have risen sharply, and the armed forces are modernising on various fronts. In the past few years, there has been a sharp increase in the use of unconventional military methods, such as large-scale cyberattacks and information warfare. 'Hybrid' or 'non-linear' warfare is on the rise, which does not distinguish clearly between situations of war and peace, regular and irregular units or military and non-military units.<sup>16</sup> Russian military doctrine describes non-linear warfare as the 'integrated use of military force and political, economic, informational, or other non-military measures with the wide use of the protest potential of the population and of special operation forces.'<sup>17</sup> Elements of this integrated approach were applied in Estonia (2007) and Georgia (2008). In both cases, Russia made use of organised protests and cyberattacks. The same approach was later employed during the illegal annexation of Crimea and in eastern Ukraine, which saw the use of disinformation, large-scale cyberattacks and the deployment of paramilitary units and 'little green men'.

The use of disinformation and cyberattacks has attracted a lot of attention recently, for example in the context of the US presidential election. The FBI, the NSA and the CIA claim to possess enough intelligence to determine that Russia – and President Putin in particular – was responsible for hacking the Democratic National Committee (DNC).<sup>18</sup> According to Keir Giles, information warfare is not a new phenomenon where Russia is concerned, nor is its use limited to wartime. 'Instead, it is an ongoing activity regardless

15 Minsk II includes agreements on the following issues: a ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weapons, the release of hostages and prisoners and the withdrawal of all foreign troops and mercenaries. See further Gert Jan Rohmensen, 'Akkoord "op hoofdlijnen" bereikt over Oekraïne, na 17 uur praten' ("Main points" of agreement reached on Ukraine after 17 hours of talks), *Trouw*, 12 February 2015, available at <<http://www.trouw.nl/home/akkoord-op-hoofdlijnen-bereikt-over-oekraïne-na-17-uur-praten~abcd8c91>>. Russia's decision of 19 February 2017 to temporarily recognise passports and other identity documents of separatists in eastern Ukraine (Donetsk and Luhansk) constitutes a violation of the Minsk agreements.

16 Rob de Wijk, 'Hybrid Conflict and the Changing Nature of Actors,' in Julian Lindley-French and Yves Boyer (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 358.

17 Margarete Klein, 'Russia's Military: On the Rise?', 2015-2016 Paper Series, no. 2, Transatlantic Academy, Washington, 2016, p. 9.

18 Intelligence Community Assessment, 'Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections', 6 January 2017.

of the state of relations with the opponent.<sup>19</sup> Information warfare covers a wide range of activities, such as the theft, posting, interception, manipulation, misrepresentation or destruction of information by state-funded programmes that seek to influence public opinion through real or fake news, online trolling campaigns, text messages and YouTube videos. Various Russian TV channels and websites, such as *RT* (formerly *Russia Today*) and *Sputnik*, play a key role in disseminating fake news reports.

In the past few years, the Netherlands has also been exposed to Russian disinformation and cyberattacks. In the days immediately following the downing of flight MH17, and at the time of the presentation of the reports of the Dutch Safety Board (OVV) and the Joint Investigation Team, Russia disseminated various contradictory stories concerning those responsible for the downing of the aircraft. Before and after the presentation of the OVV's report on 13 October 2015, intelligence agencies directed by Russia tried to break into the OVV's systems by means of a cyberattack.<sup>20</sup> According to the General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD), Russia, along with China and Iran, presents the greatest cyberthreat to Dutch security.<sup>21</sup>

#### Modernisation of Russia's armed forces

After 1989, Russia drastically reduced its armed forces (from five million to one million troops). Significant shortcomings were detected during the war in Georgia in 2008. Putin subsequently launched a large-scale modernisation programme that resulted in a radical overhaul of Russia's armed forces. In this context, Giles notes: 'Two specific tools for exercising Russian power demand close study: the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation; and the state's capacity for information warfare. In both of these fields, Russia's capabilities have developed rapidly in recent years to match its persistent intentions. The most visible demonstration of this has been the unprecedented near-total transformation of Russia's armed forces since 2008.'<sup>22</sup>

It is said that, by 2020, 70% of Russia's armed forces will have been upgraded. Incidentally, this is not part of an attempt to achieve conventional parity with the United States. The 2011-2020 modernisation programme has set aside \$700 billion for the purchase of modern materiel.<sup>23</sup> Russia has made the modernisation of its nuclear arsenal a top priority and is investing in missile systems that can carry conventional

19 Keir Giles, 'Handbook of Russian Information Warfare', Fellowship Monograph no. 9, Research Division, NATO Defense College, November 2016, p. 4. This integrated operational concept is also referred to as the 'Gerasimov doctrine', based on a description provided by the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, General Valery Gerasimov, in February 2014. See also A.J.C. Selhorst, 'Russia's Perception Warfare: The Development of Gerasimov's Doctrine in Estonia and Georgia and its Application in Ukraine', *Militaire Spectator*, vol. 185, no. 4, 2016.

20 'Rusland zat achter cyberaanval op onderzoek ramp MH17' (Russia was behind cyberattack on MH17 investigation), *de Volkskrant*, 9 June 2016, available at <<http://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/-rusland-zat-achter-cyberaanval-op-onderzoek-ramp-mh17~a4317040>>.

21 Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 'AIVD Annual Report 2015', April 2016, p. 21.

22 Keir Giles, 'Russia's "New" Tools for Confronting the West: Continuity and Innovation in Moscow's Exercise of Power', Chatham House, March 2016, p. 2.

23 Margarete Klein, 'Russia's Military: On The Rise?', 2015-2016 Paper Series, no. 2, Transatlantic Academy, Washington, 2016, p. 11.

or nuclear warheads.<sup>24</sup> The army is investing in tanks and armoured vehicles, mobility, missile and artillery systems with precision-guided ammunition, and electronic warfare. In the air force, the focus is on new combat aircraft and ground-based air defence systems. The Russian navy is also undergoing an ambitious modernisation programme, which focuses on the acquisition of new Borey-class submarines. In practice, however, it cannot compete with NATO's naval capabilities and lacks the capacity to operate worldwide.<sup>25</sup> The modernisation process has significantly increased the combat strength and deployability of the armed forces, but it is not without its problems. Russia's arms industry has been adversely affected by Western sanctions and by the fact that Ukraine is no longer supplying components. It also remains to be seen whether Russia will be able to sustain such high levels of defence spending over time.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, it is worth noting that Russia can acquire more defence capabilities on the same budget than most Western countries.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to sophisticated cyber capabilities and effective information warfare, Russia's military actions in Ukraine have shown that its armed forces currently have access to highly advanced weaponry in several key areas. During the Battle of Zelenopillya in July 2014, for example, Russian artillery completely destroyed two Ukrainian mechanised battalions in only a few minutes, using a new generation of submunitions filled with thermobaric explosives, which are significantly more lethal than conventional explosives. Because most NATO countries are no longer allowed to use cluster munitions and submunitions,<sup>28</sup> Russian artillery is much more effective. Russia's extensive use of tactical drones for target acquisition (which is superior to NATO's) further increases this effectiveness. During the conflict in Ukraine, it also became apparent that Russia has access to the world's most effective electronic warfare technologies (for instance for jamming GPS, radio and radar).<sup>29</sup>

Since 2009, Russia has significantly increased the number, duration and complexity of its military exercises. Since 2013, moreover, it has once again been conducting snap

24 Gustav Gressel, 'Russia's Quiet Military Revolution and What It Means for Europe', Policy Brief, European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), October 2015, p. 2.

25 Ibid., p. 7.

26 'Russia needs a revolution to reform its economy', *Financial Times*, 16 January 2017, available at <<https://www.ft.com/content/3bf85efa-dbea-11e6-9d7c-be108f1c1dce>>.

27 Maarten Schinkel, 'Poetins oorlog: nu 2,5 maal voordeliger' (Putin's War: now 2.5 times better value), *NRC Handelsblad*, 19 January 2017.

28 A cluster bomb is an explosive bomb, grenade or missile that releases or ejects a large number of explosive bomblets (submunitions). Their use is highly controversial because it results in relatively high numbers of civilian casualties.

29 See, inter alia, Robert H. Scales, 'Russia's superior new weapons', *Washington Post*, 5 August 2016; Deborah Haynes, 'Russia has edge over us in battle, army admits', *The Times*, 10 August 2016; Franz-Stefan Gady, 'Russia's T-14 Armata: "The Most Revolutionary Tank in a Generation?"', *The Diplomat*, 8 November 2016; Daniel Gouré, 'Near-Term U.S. Army Modernization: Buying What Is Available and Buying Time', Lexington Institute, January 2017, Executive Summary; David A. Shlapak and Michael W. Johnson, 'Outnumbered, Outranged, and Outgunned: How Russia Defeats NATO,' *War on the Rocks*, 21 April 2016; Mark Pomerleau, 'Threat from Russian UAV jamming real, officials say', *C4ISRNET*, 20 December 2016.

exercises<sup>30</sup> to enhance combat readiness. Over 120,000 personnel took part in the latest large-scale exercise, 'Kavkaz-16', which took place in September 2016. Since the beginning of 2014, a force of 20,000-30,000 troops has been stationed along the border with Ukraine. These units are rotated between the various districts every two to three months, which means that they are undergoing constant training.<sup>31</sup> According to some experts, Russia has the ability to mobilise up to 47,000 troops within 48 hours, deploy up to 60,000 troops within two to three weeks and sustain such a deployment for up to twelve months.<sup>32</sup> Since 2000, the simulated use of nuclear weapons has been a constant feature of the scenarios used in Russian military exercises.<sup>33</sup> Incidentally, these exercises focus not only on military capabilities but also on the entire chain of military and civilian capabilities in a 'whole of government' approach.

The conclusion to be drawn from the above is that, under its current leadership, Russia is intent on changing the status quo in Europe and increasing its coercive power. Its foreign policy is aimed at undermining Western influence and power. The Kremlin's chosen strategy is to sow discord by various means, as described above, while simultaneously engaging in an alarming build-up of the country's armed forces. Russia cannot win a prolonged, large-scale conflict with NATO. It has therefore opted for a rapidly deployable military capability aimed at neighbouring countries that are not members of NATO, as well as peripheral NATO members that cannot swiftly be defended by the rest of the Alliance. Russia has thus far avoided a direct military confrontation with NATO, but the possibility of a conventional or unconventional attack – however unlikely at present – can never be ruled out entirely. For the time being, Russia can achieve its objectives without engaging NATO in open conflict. By sowing discord and employing deception and surprise, it is able to make gains in its immediate environment by recreating its own sphere of power. In this context, the Kremlin has identified Ukraine, the Baltic states, Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria, the Balkans, the Black Sea region, Georgia and – potentially – Greece as Western weak spots where it can expand its influence.

30 Snap exercises are exercises conducted without prior notification.

31 International Institute for Security Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2016*, p. 166.

32 House of Commons Defence Committee, 'Russia: Implications for UK Defence and Security', First Report of Session 2016-2017, p. 12.

33 Johan Norberg and Fredrik Westerlund, 'Russia's Armed Forces in 2016', in Gudrun Persson (ed.), *Russian Military Capability in a Ten-Year Perspective – 2016*, Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), 2016, p. 53.

### III NATO's response

Russia's actions must now be met with resolve, without excluding the possibility of fruitful cooperation. NATO should focus on developing its three core tasks – collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security – into a coherent policy. At the summit meeting in Wales in September 2014, NATO adopted the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) for the dual purpose of assurance (of NATO's eastern Allies) and deterrence. The NATO Response Force (NRF) was expanded from 13,000 to 40,000 troops and the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) was established, a brigade consisting of approximately 5,000 troops, part of which must be deployable within 48-72 hours.<sup>34</sup> The aim of the VJTF is to enhance NATO's readiness and shorten its response time. It was also agreed at the Wales summit that Allies currently spending less than 2% of GDP on defence will move towards this guideline within the next decade.<sup>35</sup> In February 2017, US Secretary of Defence Jim Mattis issued a warning to the European Allies and Canada, and called on all countries, where relevant, to specify before the end of 2017 how they plan to reach the 2% target: 'Showing immediate and steady progress to honour commitments made at Warsaw and Wales must become a reality if we are to sustain a credible Alliance and adequately defend ourselves'.<sup>36</sup>

At the summit meeting in Warsaw in July 2016, NATO decided to establish an advanced forward presence in the Baltic states and Poland,<sup>37</sup> consisting of four multinational battalion-sized battlegroups led by the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Germany, in addition to expanding NATO's presence in Bulgaria and Romania. Cyberspace was also identified as its fourth operational domain.

It is debatable whether the above-mentioned measures possess sufficient deterrent force to prevent Russia from using military action to expand its sphere of influence at any given time, for example in the Baltic states. This region is particularly vulnerable as a result of the Suwalki Gap, a nearly 100-kilometre-wide land corridor between

34 The Netherlands' contribution to NATO in 2017 is as follows: one raiding squadron of marines for the VJTF, two Dutch minehunters (each for a period of three to four months), a frigate (for two periods of three months), a submarine (second half of 2017, on call), four F-16s for Baltic Air Policing and, together with Germany, the headquarters of 1 (German/Netherlands) Corps to serve as Joint Task Force Headquarters. See Letter to parliament presenting a report on international defence cooperation, The Hague, 29 November 2016, p. 10.

35 See Wales Summit Declaration, available at <[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_112964.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm)>.

36 'Intervention by U.S. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis at Session One of the North Atlantic Council', available at <<https://nato.usmission.gov/february-15-2017-intervention-secretary-defense-mattis-session-one-north-atlantic-council/>>.

37 See Warsaw Summit Communiqué, available at <[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_133169.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm)>.

Kaliningrad and Belarus, along the Polish-Lithuanian border.<sup>38</sup> Russia could block this area from within Kaliningrad and Belarus, making it impossible for NATO to send reinforcements. The expansion and stationing of Russian missile systems and missile defence systems form another key obstacle preventing NATO from coming to the rescue of the Baltic states (Anti-Access/Area Denial or A2/AD). Potential scenarios include anything from a rapid large-scale military operation to inciting unrest among Russian minorities, for example in Estonia, which could subsequently legitimise Russian intervention. Russia is unlikely to launch a direct large-scale attack on the Baltic states, as this would result in the invocation of article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty and trigger a direct military confrontation between NATO and Russia. Incidentally, the EU also has a mutual defence clause.<sup>39</sup> The second scenario is more plausible, and more attractive for Russia. It would set off a time-consuming discussion within NATO as to whether it was dealing with an article 5 situation. In the meantime, Russia would be able to present NATO with a *fait accompli*, as argued in a report published by the Rand Corporation, entitled 'Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics'.<sup>40</sup> It is clear that the new security environment has implications for NATO and the contributions of its member states. The need to be able to conduct large-scale operations at the high end of the spectrum of force places different demands on the size, availability and composition of the required capabilities. Given that the importance of crisis management and cooperative security has not been downgraded as a result of the increased emphasis on collective defence, there is a greater need for robust, rapidly deployable units.

NATO is also clearly searching for the role that it could and should be playing in response to the challenges on its southern flank and the global threat of terrorism. Although there is still no straightforward answer to this question, the key is to improve cooperation with the EU, the African Union, the United Nations, the OSCE and other organisations operating in these areas – each according to its own specialisation. Harnessing this expertise through cooperative frameworks would enable NATO to adopt a more comprehensive approach. A good example is the cooperation between NATO and the EU/Frontex in the Aegean Sea. In addition, NATO will have to keep open all available channels in order to prevent violent conflict and promote stability through dialogue, negotiation and preventive diplomacy.

Mutual solidarity and unity within NATO are more crucial than ever. The ability to act as a cohesive alliance lies mainly in the hands of the member states. However, this unity is fragile, because individual member states have different national interests, due in part to the changing security environment. As a result, decision-making is frequently complex and time-consuming. The transatlantic bond is what sets NATO apart and it

38 Agnia Grigas, 'NATO's Vulnerable Link in Europe: Poland's Suwalki Gap', Atlantic Council, 9 February 2016, available at <<http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/nato-s-vulnerable-link-in-europe-poland-s-suwalki-gap>>.

39 Article 42, paragraph 7 of the Treaty on European Union obliges all member states to provide aid and assistance 'by all the means in their power' if a member state is the victim of armed aggression on its territory.

40 David A. Shlapak and Michael Johnson, 'Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics', Rand Corporation, 2016. According to the report, NATO would need seven brigades to prevent such a scenario.

is a vital component of its unity – the United States’ leading role within the Alliance is indispensable. Nevertheless, this role is coming under pressure from isolationists in the United States and nationalist movements in various European countries. In order to somewhat mitigate the potential implications of this isolationist current, countries like the Netherlands must prove that they are worth defending by taking their responsibilities in this area seriously. NATO has taken initial steps to adapt the Alliance to the changing security situation in and around Europe. In its forthcoming advisory report on NATO’s adaptation requirements, the AIV will examine in greater detail what additional measures need to be taken and what role the Netherlands can play in this regard.

## IV Implications for the Netherlands

### IV.1 Security policy

In September 2016, the government pointed out that the Netherlands is faced with a disturbing reality. 'Disturbing because the international security situation has worsened considerably in recent years and our society, too, is exposed to the effects of this deterioration. This situation will not swiftly blow over nor pass us by, on the contrary.'<sup>41</sup> A range of measures is required to contain the mounting security threats. The AIV believes that it is vital to adopt an open and active approach to current developments in international relations. The situation requires that the Netherlands be able to respond to new events in a flexible manner. Moreover, the country's interests are not served by the free play of centrifugal forces, the fragmentation of international relations and the erosion of international agreements and frameworks. Without being blind to new developments, government policy should focus on preserving and, if necessary, repairing the relevant institutions. This is particularly true with regard to NATO, the EU, the OSCE and the United Nations. The Netherlands will be able to use its upcoming membership of the UN Security Council to pursue these goals.

Russia's actions must be met with resolve, and the European NATO members must assume responsibility for their own defence efforts. At the same time, it is essential to conduct an intensive dialogue with Russia on developments in Eastern Europe, Syria, Northern Africa and other regions. This dialogue should focus on preventing and controlling the use of armed force and resolving urgent political problems. In addition, attempts should be made to resume and renew existing arms control agreements that are no longer being observed, especially those concerning the timely announcement of military exercises and the movement of troops or weapon systems.<sup>42</sup> In its political dialogue with Russia, the West will have to take account of Moscow's alternative perspective on the end of the Cold War. For example, it is important to realise that Russia intends to bring Ukraine back into its sphere of influence. Moscow does not accept the country's independence and also believes that the Baltic states and Georgia should return to its sphere of influence.

The EU needs to start acting more decisively. Strengthening its foreign policy is part of this process. Since Germany and France have a special responsibility in this context, the Netherlands would do well to ensure – both in Brussels and by intensifying bilateral security and defence relations – that those countries are able to perform their leading role at European rather than national level. With regard to the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), efforts should focus on enhancing cooperation in lead

41 Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Defence and the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation to the President of the House of Representatives of the States General on coherence in the Netherlands' participation in international missions, The Hague, 9 August 2016, Parliamentary Paper 33 694, 29 521 no. 9, p. 4.

42 The meeting between the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joe Dunford, and his Russian counterpart, General Valery Gerasimov, on 16 February 2017 constituted the first high-level military meeting between the two countries since January 2014. See: <<https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1085746/dunford-meets-russian-counterpart-to-strengthen-mil-to-mil-contacts>>.

groups and expanding the range of civil-military instruments for crisis management operations. Other top priorities for the EU include counterterrorism and migration and asylum policy. What's more, European defence cooperation should no longer be treated as a political refuge, regardless of its importance. Money has to be spent before the benefits can be reaped, and a lot more investment is needed before its long-term financial advantages become apparent.

The policy outlined above will only be credible if it is supported by powerful instruments in the field of security and defence policy. Strengthening those instruments will be one of the most important responsibilities of the new Dutch government. It is no exaggeration to say that 2017 is the moment of truth in this regard. The Netherlands needs to strengthen its foreign diplomatic representations, significantly expand its defence efforts and allow international military action to go hand in hand with institutional capacity building and economic development, in line with the 3D (defence, diplomacy and development cooperation) approach. The intelligence services also play a key supporting role in this area.

The domestic security situation and the international security situation are inextricably linked. It is vital to prevent the Netherlands from being thrown off balance by national and international attempts to influence public opinion, by means of cyberattacks and the threat of terrorism. Protecting vital objects and processes plays a crucial role in the level of stamina and resilience in Dutch society. Our country's security and defence policy must therefore be developed in close cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Security and Justice and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. For instance, efforts to combat hybrid threats (cyberattacks and disinformation) facing Dutch society are a government-wide responsibility that requires interministerial funding.

As stated in the introduction to this advisory letter, the main purpose of this precursor to the advisory report on NATO's adaptation requirements, which the AIV hopes to publish in the summer, is to examine the implications of the deteriorating security situation for Dutch defence efforts. The forthcoming, more wide-ranging report will discuss various other issues, in order to paint a comprehensive picture. The Netherlands' defence efforts are designed to contribute to its foreign and security policy. Although the present advisory letter focuses primarily on the threat emanating from Russia, it goes without saying that other developments in the national and international security environment also have an impact on the Netherlands' defence efforts, as described in previous AIV advisory reports.<sup>43</sup> The next section starts with a description of the current status of the Dutch armed forces. This is followed by a breakdown of the impact of developments in the national and international security environment on the core tasks of the Dutch armed forces, as well as a consideration of their financial implications. The section concludes with a discussion of the operational measures the AIV considers necessary.

43 See, inter alia, AIV advisory report no. 94, 'Instability around Europe: Confrontation with a New Reality', The Hague, April 2015 and AIV advisory report no. 101, 'Security and Stability in Northern Africa', The Hague, May 2016.

## IV.2 Dutch defence efforts

### Current status of the armed forces

Since 1990, the level of ambition of the Dutch armed forces has been systematically reduced,<sup>44</sup> as the government repeatedly cashed in the 'peace dividend'. In 2009, a comparison of Dutch defence efforts with those of a representative group of benchmark countries, which was carried out in the framework of a defence policy review, revealed that from 1990 onwards the Netherlands had reduced its armed forces more than most of the other countries. After Poland, the Netherlands had the smallest armed forces (relative to population size) of the European benchmark countries. Since then, the size, combat power and deployability of the armed forces have been significantly reduced by further cuts. More than four years ago, in an advisory letter entitled 'Open letter to a new Dutch government: the armed forces at risk', the AIV observed that the deployability of the armed forces was a source of concern and that additional cuts would have a disastrous impact on the defence organisation, as well as being in conflict with the constitutionally mandated tasks of the armed forces and the Netherlands' obligations under international agreements.<sup>45</sup> In the coalition agreement of October 2012, however, the armed forces were not spared further cuts.<sup>46</sup> In recent years, the Netherlands Court of Audit has repeatedly informed Parliament of problems relating to deployability. It describes the situation as alarming.<sup>47</sup> Last year, the Ministry of Defence was forced to admit that it is unable to fully meet deployability targets for the defence of Dutch and Allied territory.<sup>48</sup>

In its *Defence Planning Capability Review 2015/16*, NATO strongly criticises the Dutch defence contribution: 'Configuring the Netherlands Armed Forces to meet the significant challenges of the new security environment [...] without sustained predictable increases in defence expenditures in real terms, will be an almost impossible task.' The criticism focuses mainly on the land forces: 'The highest priority for the Netherlands is to increase the readiness and combat effectiveness of its land forces [...]. [...] Budget cuts have resulted in significant downsizing of the Netherlands' land forces accompanied by reductions in combat capabilities, indirect fire support, ground-based air defence, engineering, maintenance, logistics, and operational stocks of ammunition. Furthermore, the armoured capability of two, previously mechanised brigades, has been removed altogether, rendering a remaining mechanised brigade and a new motorised (light) brigade (both having only two manoeuvre battalions) unable to fight effectively a high-

44 The level of ambition reflects what the armed forces should be able to do in the light of the Constitution and the three core tasks of the defence organisation, for example the number of operations that can be carried out at one time and the scope and duration of the Dutch contribution to them. The level of ambition is specified in terms of deployability targets.

45 AIV advisory letter no. 22, 'Open letter to a new Dutch government: the armed forces at risk', The Hague, September 2012.

46 'Building bridges', VVD/PvdA coalition agreement, 29 October 2012.

47 Netherlands Court of Audit, 'Results of the 2015 Accountability Report concerning the Ministry of Defence (X)', report accompanying the Annual Report, p. 4 (in Dutch).

48 Annual Report and Final Budget Act concerning the Ministry of Defence, The Hague, 18 May 2016, Parliamentary Paper 34 475 X, no. 1, p. 135 (in Dutch).

intensity battle with an opponent using mechanised forces.’<sup>49</sup>

It is striking that in various letters to the House of Representatives concerning the defence budget, the government nevertheless strikes a surprisingly positive note, highlighting that it has reversed the trend of cuts and approved several budget supplements. In response to parliamentary questions concerning the 2017 defence budget, moreover, it states: ‘With this budget, the government has once again shown that it regards security as a priority.’<sup>50</sup> Such positive framing may serve a political purpose, but it paints an inaccurate picture and fails to acknowledge the seriousness of the current situation. It is also striking that, in the same response, the government states that armed forces are only expected to return to a basic level of readiness in 2021.<sup>51</sup> In an interview with *De Telegraaf* at the end of 2016, the Chief of Defence noted that, ‘At such time, we will have enough manpower and resources to ensure that the armed forces are operational.’<sup>52</sup> The present situation is very serious and irresponsible given the alarming level of deployability of the armed forces at the beginning of the present government’s term of office and the rapid deterioration of the security situation that has taken place since. Moreover, the defence budget makes no allowance for strengthening the armed forces (investing in maintenance and innovation) or improving the balance between combat units and the overextended operational (combat) support and logistics, to say nothing of expanding and modernising the military’s striking power.<sup>53</sup>

#### Core tasks of the armed forces

As a result of Russia’s destabilising actions, the first core task of the Dutch armed forces (protecting Dutch and allied territory, including the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom) has clearly become more important. In fact, there has been a paradigm shift from ‘wars of choice’ to ‘wars of necessity’. In the current geopolitical environment, NATO’s solidarity clause (article 5) has regained its significance. In response to these developments, the Netherlands is required to make a proportionate contribution to international defence and deterrence, including participation in rapid-response forces such as the VJTF and the NRF. The stationing of Dutch troops in the Baltic states, in the framework of NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP), also falls into this category. The new security situation sets strict requirements in terms of the availability, mobility and deployability of the units that have been pledged, which need to be available at the same time as units deployed in the framework of the second and third core tasks of the armed forces. In qualitative terms, possible action in an article 5 scenario places high

49 NATO Defence Planning Capability Review 2015/16: The Netherlands – Draft Overview, p. 5.

50 Report containing a list of questions and answers from the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Defence concerning the budget statements of the Ministry of Defence (X) for 2017, The Hague, 7 November 2016, Parliamentary Paper 34 550 X, no. 14, p. 8 (in Dutch).

51 Ibid., p. 38, question 119.

52 Interview with the Chief of Defence in *De Telegraaf*, 31 December 2016.

53 Report containing a list of questions and answers from the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Defence concerning the budget statements of the Ministry of Defence (X) for 2017, The Hague, 7 November 2016, Parliamentary Paper 34 550 X, no. 14, p. 8 (in Dutch).

demands on the armed forces' capacity for escalation dominance.<sup>54</sup> In such a scenario, they must expect an opponent with robust Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities, which may partly prevent them from deploying on land, at sea or in the air. In addition, they must be prepared to deal with all forms of hybrid warfare. In such cases, it is difficult to differentiate between article 5 and non-article 5 situations. The current Dutch military presence in the Caribbean region also remains as important as ever, not least in light of the alarming developments in Venezuela.

As a result of developments in the Middle East and Northern Africa, the second core task of the armed forces (maintaining the international legal order and stability) has also become more important.<sup>55</sup> Military intervention in these conflict areas may become unavoidable, since phenomena such as international terrorism, mass migration and cross-border crime (e.g. people smuggling) have a profound impact on Western societies. Such interventions would have to take place in the framework of an integrated effort that includes diplomatic initiatives and development cooperation. A comprehensive, 'whole of government' approach is needed to address the threats that have emerged. Operations of this kind will generally have to be lengthy in order to be successful, with a desired end state rather than a scheduled end date. This raises the issue of the sustainability of the Dutch armed forces, which has been reduced to irresponsible levels by previous cuts and past choices. In addition to this quantitative aspect, such operations also set strict qualitative requirements. High-quality resources with sufficient capacity for escalation dominance are needed to create credible units that are capable of engaging potential adversaries. One example of this is the efforts to combat Islamic State (IS), which has access to various types of military hardware, including heavily armoured vehicles and modern weapon systems, which it has captured or procured.

The third core task (assisting the civil authorities in maintaining law and order and providing disaster relief and humanitarian aid both nationally and internationally) will also become more important. The connection between internal and external security is clearer than ever. Besides the threats emanating from the Middle East and Northern Africa, the threat of cyber espionage and sabotage is also on the rise.<sup>56</sup> There is a real risk of a terrorist attack in the Netherlands. If this were to happen, a substantial part of the armed forces would inevitably be deployed, as happened recently in France and Belgium, as well as in the Netherlands (at Schiphol airport). Disasters such as extreme weather conditions and epidemics may also result in heavy demands being placed on the armed forces. In the framework of civil-military cooperation, about a third of the armed forces are already deployed on a daily basis in support of the civil authorities. The National Security Profile (NVP) provides a comprehensive overview of the risks of various disasters, crises and threats that could potentially disrupt Dutch society.<sup>57</sup> The armed forces have become a permanent partner in the area of national security. Moreover, in the event of an armed conflict on the edges of the NATO treaty area,

54 Escalation dominance is the inherent ability scale the use of force up or down (throughout the spectrum of force), with minimal preparation, according to the needs of a particular time and place.

55 AIV advisory report no. 101: 'Security and Stability in Northern Africa', The Hague, May 2016.

56 AIV/CAVW advisory report no. 77/22, 'Cyber Warfare', The Hague, December 2011.

57 National Security Profile 2016.

measures will have to be taken to guarantee the continuity of certain social processes in the Netherlands.

#### The financial framework

At the NATO summit meeting in Wales, it was agreed that member states currently spending less than 2% of their GDP on defence would move towards this guideline within the next decade. According to the Ministry of Defence, the Dutch defence budget amounted to €7.8 billion in 2015, representing 1.09% of GDP (compared with 1.5% at the time of the defence policy review in 2009).<sup>58</sup> However, this figure paints far too rosy a picture, since it includes approximately €1.3 billion earmarked for pensions, benefits and redundancy pay. In addition, almost €400 million goes to the Royal Military and Border Police, whose responsibilities are mostly of a non-military nature,<sup>59</sup> approximately €600 million goes to the Ministry of Finance in the form of annual VAT payments and approximately €180 million is deducted in the form of a final tax levy on benefits for ex-service personnel (*Uitkering Gewezen Militairen*, UGM). The Ministry of Defence also contributes approximately €100 million a year to balance the price-related public sector deficit and approximately €60 million a year to the International Security Budget (BIV).<sup>60</sup> After excluding these amounts, which do not contribute to sustaining the armed forces, only about 0.7% of GDP is actually available for this purpose rather than the official figure of 1.09%.

Every year, moreover, the Ministry of Defence loses income to unpaid wage and price compensation. According to UK research and the findings of the European Defence Agency (EDA), the cost of investment in military materiel is estimated to be increasing at a rate of 2-7% per year beyond the rate of inflation.<sup>61</sup> The financial sustainability of the Defence organisation is also under pressure from external factors, such as exchange rate fluctuations, the gap between the end of military benefits and redundancy payments and the beginning of state pensions, and various judicial decisions which may have far-reaching financial implications. The Ministry of Defence focuses on implementation and effectively lacks the budgetary flexibility and financial tools to mitigate the effects of such external factors. In other words, expenses triggered by these external factors will sooner or later undermine the Defence organisation's operational capabilities.

Despite these developments and the agreement at the NATO summit meeting in Wales to raise defence spending to 2% of GDP within the next decade, the current government has only partially reversed previously announced cuts and there is still no sign of growth. In various letters to parliament, the mantra 'more money for defence, where necessary

58 Report containing a list of questions and answers from the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Defence concerning the budget statements of the Ministry of Defence (X) for 2017, The Hague, 7 November 2016, Parliamentary Paper 34 550 X, no. 14, p. 6 (in Dutch).

59 AIV advisory letter no. 22, 'Open letter to a new Dutch government: the armed forces at risk', The Hague, September 2012.

60 Report containing a list of questions and answers from the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Defence concerning the budget statements of the Ministry of Defence (X) for 2017, The Hague, 7 November 2016, Parliamentary Paper 34 550 X, no. 14, pp. 10, 13 and 14 (in Dutch).

61 'Future Policy Survey: a new foundation for the Netherlands Armed Forces', p. 308 (in Dutch; summary and conclusions available in English).

and possible' keeps cropping up. Although its own analysis clearly shows the urgency of the issue, the government has made 'more money for defence' contingent on budgetary capacity. This approach fails to acknowledge the urgency involved and ignores the fact that defence, which is one of the government's core tasks, should be a structural priority. This is especially problematic, because unlike other areas of government activity (e.g. healthcare, culture and education) defence spending cannot be supplemented by funding from public or private sources. There will never be a financial surplus; it will always be a matter of setting priorities for government spending.

In its responses to factual questions from the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Defence concerning the budget statements of the Ministry of Defence for 2017, the government has indicated that in the absence of policy changes the defence budget will actually decline from 1.17% of GDP in 2016 to 1.12% in 2021. The Dutch defence budget is well below the European NATO average (1.43% of GDP in 2015). In 2021, this discrepancy will amount to €2.3 billion, while the discrepancy based on NATO's 2% target will amount to €6.6 billion.<sup>62</sup> These figures have risen further over the past year, in part because other countries are spending more on their armed forces and because the Netherlands' GDP is growing. To be clear, all this is based on the 'rosy' view of the Dutch defence budget.

As one of the richest countries in Europe, the Netherlands is neglecting its responsibilities. Under the current government, whose term has been characterised by alarming developments in the security environment, the deployability of the armed forces has continued to deteriorate. Defence expenditure as a percentage of GDP is at an all-time low. Although successive governments have invariably described NATO as the cornerstone of Dutch security and defence policy, this attitude has not been translated into financial terms. Firm decisions will have to be made during the forthcoming coalition-building process. In the run-up to the election, political parties should not need to justify 'more money for defence' solely on the basis of public support: this is about the constitutionally mandated tasks of the armed forces and the Netherlands' obligations under international agreements. Politicians bear a specific and heavy responsibility in this area.

The deterioration of the security situation, the alarming level of deployability of the armed forces, the agreements reached at the summit meeting in Warsaw<sup>63</sup> and US foreign policy under the new administration all require that the decision in Wales to raise defence spending to 2% of GDP finally be taken seriously. According to the AIV, the adoption of what might be referred to as a 'Delta Plan for the armed forces' is more essential than ever. It would create a multi-year financial framework for the stable development of the armed forces that extends beyond the term of office of the present government. In line with the agreements made in Wales and reaffirmed in Warsaw, a 10-year timetable would be an obvious choice. The speed at which the defence budget can grow will be determined in part by the defence organisation's ability to absorb

62 Report containing a list of questions and answers from the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Defence concerning the budget statements of the Ministry of Defence (X) for 2017, The Hague, 7 November 2016, Parliamentary Paper 34 550 X, no. 14, p. 7 (in Dutch).

63 Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence to the President of the House of Representatives of the States General reporting on the NATO summit meeting in Warsaw on 8-9 July 2016, The Hague, 25 July 2016, Parliamentary Paper 28 676, no. 252.

more funding and personnel. Given the discrepancy between current levels of defence spending and NATO's 2% target, a phased increase in the Dutch defence budget is necessary. Over the next four years, under a new government, it should rise to meet the European NATO average. During the subsequent four years, it should reach the 2% target.

#### Essential measures

With the exception of operations on Dutch territory, all future deployments of the armed forces will take place in an international framework and will need to take account of diffuse threats and different forms of hybrid warfare. The likelihood of the armed forces being deployed for all three of their core tasks simultaneously has increased. The connection between internal and external security has intensified as a result of various factors, such as the rise of foreign terrorist fighters. The importance of the Defence organisation's operational intelligence and cyber capabilities, as well as other non-lethal forms of warfare, is increasing. Perceptions play a crucial role in modern conflicts. The importance of striking a good balance between the Defence organisation's 'teeth' (lethal capabilities), its capabilities in the information domain (non-lethal) and its support capabilities cannot be overemphasised. To stay relevant, the armed forces must press on with operational reform and innovation.

With a gradual increase in the defence budget over the next few years, the first essential step will be to eliminate existing deficiencies. This means not only replenishing stocks of spare parts and munitions that are currently in short supply, restoring the balance between combat and support capabilities and preventing weapon systems from becoming obsolete, but also 'repairing' operational capabilities that have been scrapped in recent years purely because of cuts. The AIV has on several occasions drawn attention to these shortcomings in the armed forces.<sup>64</sup> The growing importance of all three core tasks, especially the first, makes it all the more vital to eliminate these deficiencies, which are clearly identified in the *NATO Defence Planning Capability Review 2015/16*.<sup>65</sup> In addition to 'repairs', the Netherlands needs to further strengthen its armed forces. Additional funding is definitely and urgently needed to maintain and upgrade the existing armed forces, improve operational (combat) support and expand and modernise the military's striking power, especially at the higher end of the spectrum of force. At a time when the security paradigm is changing, it is vital that the armed forces be able to exercise decisive military force.

64 AIV advisory report no. 78, 'European Defence Cooperation: Sovereignty and the Capacity to Act', The Hague, January 2012; AIV advisory letter no. 22, 'Open letter to a new Dutch government: the armed forces at risk', The Hague, September 2012; Roundtable discussion of the Permanent Parliamentary Committee on Defence on the Dutch armed forces, 5 November 2012; Roundtable discussion on the policy document on the future of the armed forces, 'In the interest of the Netherlands', 2 October 2013; and AIV advisory report no. 94, 'Instability around Europe: Confrontation with a New Reality', The Hague, April 2015.

65 NATO Defence Planning Capability Review 2015/16: The Netherlands – Draft Overview.

## V Conclusions and recommendations

The international security situation in Europe and beyond has changed fundamentally over the past three years. The nature, scale and speed of these changes are cause for concern. International institutions such as the EU and NATO are under pressure, which in the case of the Alliance also appears to be affecting the transatlantic relationship. It is hard to predict where this rise in international uncertainty and tension will lead. Managing these tensions requires a comprehensive security policy, especially with regard to diplomatic, economic and defence-related issues. Russia is seeking to sow discord in Europe by means of cyberattacks, disinformation and support for populist movements. Since 2008, it has invested heavily in modernising its armed forces, including the development of a rapidly deployable military capability that is superior to NATO's in certain areas. Following the annexation of Crimea, NATO took a series of measures to reassure the eastern Allies and strengthen its deterrence. Despite these measures the Baltic states, in particular, remain vulnerable to a potential Russian intervention, which could be triggered by real or perceived problems involving Russian-speaking minorities. There is a risk that Russia could be able to create a *fait accompli* before NATO has decided how to respond.

Russia's actions must be met with a united and resolute response. It is clear that the new security environment places different demands on NATO and the contributions of its member states. The renewed need to be able to conduct large-scale operations at the high end of the spectrum of force sets different requirements for the size, availability and composition of the required capabilities. For example, there is a greater need for robust, rapidly deployable units for the purpose of maintaining a credible deterrence. The United States' leading role within NATO is under pressure. For this and other reasons, countries such as the Netherlands must show that they take the Alliance seriously, demonstrate solidarity with other Allies and increase their defence efforts.

At the same time, it is essential to conduct a dialogue with Russia on developments in Eastern Europe, Syria, Northern Africa and other regions. Depending on Russia's stance, this dialogue should focus on preventing and controlling the use of armed force and resolving urgent political problems. Attempts should be made in multilateral consultations to encourage Russia to adopt a constructive approach. In this context, the Netherlands needs to strengthen its diplomatic missions in the countries most affected by the growing threat emanating from Russia. In addition, attempts should be made to resume and renew existing arms control agreements that are no longer being observed, especially those concerning the timely announcement of military exercises and the movement of troops or weapon systems.

According to the Ministry of Defence, in 2015 the Dutch defence budget stood at 1.09% of GDP, which is well below the European NATO average (1.43% of GDP in 2015). After excluding those parts of the budget that do not contribute to sustaining the armed forces (e.g. pensions, redundancy pay and VAT payments), less than 0.7% of GDP is actually available for this purpose rather than the official figure of 1.09%. Under the present government, the deployability of the armed forces has continued to deteriorate. The AIV considers it very serious and irresponsible that as a result of current policies the armed forces will not return to a basic level of readiness until 2021. Both the Netherlands Court of Audit and NATO have severely criticised their deployability. NATO's criticism focuses mainly on the army. The Dutch armed forces thus have a long way

to go before they recover the ability to carry out their constitutionally mandated tasks and comply with the Netherlands' obligations under international agreements in a responsible manner.

In its forthcoming advisory report on NATO's adaptation requirements, the AIV will examine more closely what measures need to be taken and what role the Netherlands can play in this regard. Regarding the Netherlands' defence efforts, the AIV would make the following recommendations:

1. In view of the deterioration of the security situation as a result of the threat emanating from Russia, it is crucial that NATO's mutual defence clause and the transatlantic relationship retain their effectiveness. With this in mind, the agreements reached at the NATO summit meeting in Wales, specifically the commitment to raise defence spending to 2% of GDP by 2024, should be honoured.
2. As a result of developments in the national and international security situation, the three core tasks of the armed forces – especially the first (protecting Dutch and allied territory) – have become more important. The armed forces will have to ensure the *simultaneous* availability of capabilities for all three core tasks.
3. The government should adopt a 'Delta plan for the armed forces' to create a multi-year financial framework for the stable development of the armed forces. Given the discrepancy between current levels of defence spending and NATO's 2% target, and taking into account the armed forces' limited ability to absorb more funding and personnel, a phased increase in the Dutch defence budget is necessary. Over the next four years, under a new government, it should rise to the European NATO average. Over the subsequent four years, it should reach the 2% target.
4. The AIV believes that, as it gradually increases the defence budget, the government should focus first and foremost on 'repairing' operational deficiencies in the armed forces' basic capabilities, which should always be available at national level. The *NATO Defence Planning Capability Review 2015/16* has identified these deficiencies. If the armed forces are to remain relevant, operational reform and innovation, for example in the domain of information and cyber warfare, should feature prominently in every step that is taken over the coming years, from 'repairing' operational deficiencies and restoring the balance between combat and support capabilities to expanding the military's striking power.
5. Priority should be given to restoring the military's striking power, in particular by endowing land-based operations with sufficient escalation dominance and improving the balance between the armed forces' combat and support capabilities. Only then would it be appropriate, in the view of the AIV, to raise the armed forces' level of ambition and increase their sustainability, bearing in mind the shortcomings that exist within NATO.

**Request for advice**

Professor Jaap de Hoop Scheffer  
Chairman of the Advisory Council on International Affairs  
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2500 EB The Hague

Date October 2016  
Re Request for advice on NATO's long-term adaptation

Dear Professor De Hoop Scheffer,

At the NATO summit meetings in Wales and Warsaw, the NATO countries' heads of state and government took several key steps to adapt the Alliance to the changing security environment. The Readiness Action Plan (RAP) addresses the concerns of those Allies that feel most threatened by Russia and demonstrates the Alliance's determination to defend the treaty area. In today's turbulent security environment, it is vital that NATO continue to reflect on the scope and effectiveness of the RAP's adaptation measures and the Alliance's enhanced forward presence in the Baltic states and Poland, which was approved in Warsaw.

Following a period in which the main emphasis was on crisis management operations outside NATO's territory, the Alliance's original purpose – collective defence and deterrence – has clearly gained in importance, especially as a result of the change in Russia's stance. In addition to reinforcing its deterrence and defence posture, NATO is focusing specifically on dialogue with Russia, cooperation with partners, and arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. Finally, in addition to collective defence, NATO's two other core tasks – crisis management and cooperative security – remain as important as ever.

Russia's actions require a firm response, as the AIV rightly noted in its April 2015 advisory report 'Instability around Europe' (no. 94). The issue is not just Russia's annexation of Crimea and its destabilising actions in eastern Ukraine and Syria. Other concerns include the increase in military activities along the eastern and northern flanks of the Alliance, the far-reaching modernisation of the Russian armed forces, the expansion of Russia's Anti-Access/Area Denial capabilities, which pose a direct threat to the Baltic states and the region around the Black Sea, Russia's doctrine on the deployment of nuclear weapons, and the use of hybrid or 'new generation' warfare, in which the information domain plays a prominent role.

In addition, the Alliance is under threat from terrorism emanating from the Middle East and North Africa, due in part to the presence of ISIS, and European NATO countries are facing an acute migration crisis and cross-border problems resulting from the collapse of state authority elsewhere. In general, the Alliance's interests and values are increasingly under pressure as a result of global power shifts and geopolitical changes.

The Alliance is expected to act as a collective defence organisation in an environment that in many respects differs substantially from the one that prevailed during the Cold War. The organisation no longer faces a single (and to some extent predictable) potential adversary and has undergone far-reaching changes, due in part to the accession of a large number of new members. Further examination is required to determine how NATO can best defend itself against conventional military threats as well as mixed, hybrid tactics and advanced

cyber warfare. Due to the complexity and multiplicity of these threats, both individually and collectively, modern crisis management requires closer cooperation with security partners, such as the EU, in order to guarantee joint access to a wider range of capabilities and instruments. The recent NATO-EU joint declaration, issued at the summit meeting in Warsaw, reflects this view.

As a result of the worsening security situation, NATO's collective defence tasks are placing increasing demands on military units. In light of the new security context, NATO has set higher standards for the readiness, rapid deployability and availability of military capabilities. The Netherlands is a member of NATO with good reason, and it is expected to make a meaningful contribution to the Alliance. The roles and tasks that the armed forces must be able to perform in response to assorted threats, as well as in a wide range of locations and during various stages of a conflict, have important implications for their composition, equipment and readiness.

Within these parameters, the government requires a detailed analysis of the adaptation measures the Alliance will have to take in the long term and their implications for the Netherlands. For this purpose, the AIV can build on the analysis presented in its aforementioned advisory report, though it should also take more recent developments into account, such as the outcome of the NATO summit meeting in Warsaw – which highlighted the importance of arms control and non-proliferation – UN peace operations, the adoption and further elaboration of the EU Global Strategy, the ongoing military conflicts in eastern Ukraine and Syria, the United Kingdom's decision to leave the EU, the attempted military coup in Turkey and the response to it, and the Dutch public debate concerning all these developments. Finally, the analysis could also cover potential changes in the direction of US foreign and security policy as a result of the entry into office of a new president and administration.

Against this general background, the government would ask the AIV to address the following specific questions:

#### Principal question

Given the diffuse and variable nature of the threat situation, how can NATO continue to perform its three core tasks in a sustainable manner in the long term, what is the best way to build on the results of the summit meetings in Wales and Warsaw, and what are the implications of NATO's adaptation requirements for Dutch security policy and defence efforts?

#### Subsidiary questions

1. What is the AIV's assessment of the measures taken by NATO thus far in response to the threats on Europe's eastern and southern flanks, both in terms of strengthening its deterrence and defence posture and regarding its use of diplomacy and other instruments of security policy?
2. What follow-up steps does the AIV consider necessary? In its response to this question, the AIV should at any rate devote attention to the following issues:
  - The change in Russia's stance and new methods of warfare. What demands do these developments place on NATO? How should it respond to provocations and conflict situations that remain below the threshold of article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty?

How can NATO conduct a meaningful and constructive political dialogue with Russia without returning to 'business as usual'? What topics might such a dialogue cover and what objectives might it reasonably pursue?

- Projecting stability. What role should NATO play with regard to responding to the challenges on its southern flank and the threat of terrorism? How does its contribution to stabilisation efforts and crisis management in this region relate to similar efforts in other, more distant deployment areas, such as Afghanistan?
- Cooperative security. What are the AIV's recommendations regarding cooperation with other international organisations, in particular the UN and the EU? The translation of the NATO-EU joint declaration into actual opportunities for cooperation is an important starting point. In this context, the government would also ask the AIV to examine NATO's cooperative relations with partner countries, countries that wish to join NATO and countries in unstable regions. What existing and additional options does the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) initiative offer? How can NATO realistically revive the debate on and implementation of conventional arms control in Europe? How likely and relevant is the establishment of a new regime along the lines of the CFE Treaty? From a Dutch perspective, should the first priority be to modernise the Vienna Document? German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier's recent attempt to relaunch conventional arms control and the United States' cautious response to this initiative are also relevant here. In this respect it is crucial to determine what form and degree of military transparency is needed to address the concerns of NATO's eastern Allies, particularly with regard to Russia.

3. How can NATO ensure that it remains able to perform all three of its core tasks in an effective manner? How can NATO's member countries – and the Netherlands in particular – contribute to this goal?

This request for advice has been included in the AIV's 2016 work programme. We look forward to receiving your advisory report, preferably in the first quarter of 2017 so that its recommendations can be included in the preparations for the next NATO summit meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Bert Koenders  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert  
Minister of Defence

**List of abbreviations**

<b>AIV</b>	Advisory Council on International Affairs
<b>AIVD</b>	General Intelligence and Security Service
<b>BIV</b>	International Security Budget
<b>CIA</b>	Central Intelligence Agency
<b>CVV</b>	Peace and Security Committee
<b>ECHR</b>	European Convention on Human Rights
<b>EDA</b>	European Defence Agency
<b>EFP</b>	Enhanced Forward Presence (NATO)
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FBI</b>	Federal Bureau of Investigation
<b>GDP</b>	gross domestic product
<b>GPS</b>	Global Positioning System
<b>IS</b>	Islamic State
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NRF</b>	NATO Response Force
<b>NSA</b>	National Security Agency
<b>NVP</b>	National Security Profile
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>OVV</b>	Dutch Safety Board
<b>RAP</b>	Readiness Action Plan
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>VJTF</b>	Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (NATO)

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