

Professor Jaap de Hoop Scheffer
Chairman of the Advisory Council
on International Affairs
P.O. Box 20061
2500 EB The Hague

Date: 23 January 2020
Re: Request for advice pursuant to motion 35189, no. 7

Dear Professor De Hoop Scheffer,

Following the parliamentary committee meeting of 23 September 2019 with the minister to discuss the proposal for European armed forces by and for Europeans (submitted by MP Salima Belhaj), the House of Representatives adopted the motion by MPs Sjoerd Sjoerdsma, Salima Belhaj and John Kerstens (35189, no. 7). The motion requests that the government 'have an independent advisory body investigate the optimal design of the European security architecture and the optimal division of tasks between NATO and the EU'. Following up on a previous meeting with the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV), the government hereby requests an AIV advisory report to implement the motion. To this end, the government would like to inform you of the following.

Within the EU and NATO there are ongoing debates regarding the performance and tasks of the two organisations. At the NATO Leaders Meeting, the allies agreed to a 'forward-looking reflection process' focused on strengthening NATO's political dimension. Earlier this month, the European Council adopted conclusions concerning the Conference on the Future of Europe. New European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has high geopolitical ambitions for the EU and would like to take steps towards a European Defence Union. Within the framework of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), much attention will be given in the coming period to making the three priorities¹ of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) operational, and to the corresponding level of ambition.

Developments like those in northeast Syria raise questions about the role of the EU, NATO and coalitions of the willing within the European security architecture. It is not merely a matter of the role that each of them plays but, above all, of their roles in relation to each other.

The government would like the AIV to provide as specific an answer as possible to the main questions related to these discussions, which are essentially:

1. Against the backdrop of geopolitical and security developments and in the light of their comparative strengths and weaknesses, what role should the EU and NATO respectively play in safeguarding European security? To what extent should or must their roles overlap? How should article 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union be understood in this regard?
2. What implications would that have for the further development of the EU's CSDP in terms of both its structure – including its military planning and conduct capability

¹ Responding to external conflicts and crisis; building the capability and capacity of external partners; and protecting the EU and its citizens.

(MPCC) – and level of ambition, and of making the three EUGS priorities operational?

3. What is the role of coalitions of the willing in safeguarding Europe's security? Could these coalitions, which now often operate outside EU and NATO frameworks, also play a role within the EU and NATO? If so, what might that look like? In this regard, what is the optimal way to guarantee the UK's involvement in the European security architecture post-Brexit? What role could a European Security Council play in this?

In light of the ongoing discussions, the government would like to receive the AIV's report soon, and preferably before the end of April 2020. That would allow for optimal use of the report in shaping the Netherlands' positions in the ongoing discussions on the European security architecture.

The government looks forward to receiving the AIV's report, and would of course be glad to provide further information pertaining to this request if the AIV wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Ank Bijleveld-Schouten
Minister of Defence

Stef Blok
Minister of Foreign Affairs