



Advisory Council
on International Affairs

European Security: Time for New Steps

Advisory Council on International Affairs

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Summary

In recent decades, the Netherlands' policy on European defence has focused on achieving effective security cooperation and achieving tangible results with regard to military capabilities. Our country has always been reluctant to embrace a more political interpretation of European security and defence policy. Members of the Dutch government rarely, if ever, speak in terms of 'strategic autonomy' or a 'European Defence Union'. Nevertheless, the Netherlands will have to review its role and position in the European security architecture as a result of Europe's increased vulnerability, the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union and the change in the United States' stance. If the Netherlands wishes to preserve its ability to influence the configuration of European security, it is time for new steps.

Europe's security is under pressure from new threats, fundamental geopolitical shifts and changes in the transatlantic relationship. Europe has become vulnerable. The era of US hegemony, in which the United States served as the guardian of the post-war global order, is over. Where Washington would once have taken the lead in the event of an international crisis, this is now no longer the case. The current US president shows little interest in European security issues. Europe faces an increased risk of Russian military aggression or political pressure backed up by military force. On its southern and southeastern flanks, it is confronted with instability. It is also feeling the effects of China's efforts to expand its global presence. Moreover, Europe is increasingly being confronted with hybrid (non-military) threats and attacks.

In response to a motion submitted by MPs Sjoerd Sjoerdsma, Salima Belhaj and John Kerstens, the government asked the AIV to prepare an advisory report on 'the optimal design of the European security architecture and the optimal division of tasks between NATO and the EU'.¹ In the AIV's opinion, Europe's capacity to act depends heavily on the extent to which Berlin and Paris, with as much input from London as possible, are able to take the lead. The political decisions made in these three capitals are of paramount importance for the design of the European security architecture and, thus, for Europe's ability to take decisive action.

Of these three major neighbouring countries, France is the most outspoken supporter of far-reaching European defence and military cooperation. At the same time it also endorses NATO's role in collective European defence. France's nuclear weapons form the backbone of its national strategic autonomy. In 2017, President Emmanuel Macron launched the European Intervention Initiative (EII2) to promote a European strategic culture. At present, 13 countries, including the Netherlands, have joined EII2. France would like to see the adoption of a declaration on the implications of the EU's mutual defence clause (article 42(7) TEU) during its EU Council Presidency in 2022.² Germany also favours a more comprehensive interpretation of the EU's own security and defence role. For some years now, it has argued for the creation of a European Defence Union, which is in line with France's ambitions. The German government has initiated a discussion on the EU's 'strategic compass' which is aimed at the adoption of a more detailed definition of Europe's security and defence ambitions during Germany's EU Council Presidency in the second half of 2020. In addition, Germany, together with France, has proposed the creation of a European Security Council as a forum for discussing European security issues after the United Kingdom's departure from the EU. Although the UK has always been hesitant about European defence cooperation and has blocked new steps in this area, the country remains vital to European security owing to the quality and power of its armed forces. Moreover, in addition to being a nuclear power and an active NATO ally, it has a comparatively large defence budget and a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

For the Netherlands, NATO and the EU form the basis of the European security architecture. Pursuant to article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, the organisation's core task is the collective defence of the Alliance's territory, as guaranteed by the US nuclear umbrella. Since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO has largely refocused its efforts on the defence of its European territory, especially along the Alliance's eastern border. The EU also has a mutual defence clause, which is laid down in article 42(7) TEU. For over two decades, the EU has pursued greater autonomy and credible military capabilities in the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). In contrast to NATO, it does not have an integrated command structure and focuses chiefly on defusing conflicts in its immediate vicinity. Ad hoc coalitions often play a key role in military interventions. They can be deployed swiftly, and the presence of a lead nation (usually the United States or France) increases their ability to take decisive action.

In the event of a major conflict with Russia, Europe would be dependent on combined operations with the United States for its defence. The EU is still a long way from achieving the level of ambition set out in its Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy of June 2016. Only France and the United Kingdom are able – to a certain extent – to autonomously carry out every type of operation at the high end of the spectrum of force. European countries need to substantially increase their defence spending. In addition, in order to strengthen Europe's military capabilities, they need to continue on the path towards more joint defence planning and procurement, for example by making the reciprocal agreements that exist in this area more binding. In addition, it is high time European states started focusing on task specialisation, which has the potential to increase efficiency, expand crucial military capabilities and strengthen solidarity and interdependence. Against this background, the AIV has arrived at the following 10 recommendations.

Recommendations



▶ Recommendation 1

The Netherlands would be well advised to align itself as closely as possible with the Franco-German initiatives for European security.

▶ Recommendation 2

The continued involvement of the United Kingdom is indispensable for the proper protection of Europe's security interests.

▶ Recommendation 3

The Netherlands should prepare a multiannual plan setting out a series of predetermined steps towards achieving NATO's 2% goal.

▶ Recommendation 4

The Netherlands should support the proposal to establish a European Security Council in order to enhance Europe's capacity for decisive action.

▶ Recommendation 5

During the EU discussions on the operationalisation of article 42(7) TEU, the Netherlands should strongly urge that this provision also be applied to hybrid threats and that the EU clarify what assets are available in the event of aggression.

▶ Recommendation 6

The Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) should be transformed into a headquarters for strategic and contingency planning in support of military missions, and should spearhead the implementation of any military tasks that the EU may – independently if necessary – have to carry out.

▶ Recommendation 7

The establishment of a European interparliamentary network to discuss defence plans and parliamentary decision-making procedures for the deployment of military units will enhance Europe's capacity to act.

▶ Recommendation 8

The establishment of a binding collective European defence planning process, the strengthening of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in matters relating to the development, production and procurement of materiel and the allocation of sufficient resources to the European Defence Fund (EDF) are needed for coherent defence planning and materiel development at European level.



► Recommendation 9

In order to make European defence cooperation more efficient, it is essential to standardise and improve the interoperability of military units. The Netherlands should cooperate closely with France and Germany in the areas of materiel and arms export controls, subject to the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports.

► Recommendation 10

The European countries should start focusing on task specialisation as soon as possible in order to enhance the effectiveness of their defence spending, expand crucial military capabilities and strengthen solidarity and interdependence.

Europe's vulnerability

▶ 1.1 A European responsibility

Europe has become vulnerable.³ Its security is at risk from new threats, fundamental geopolitical shifts and changes in the transatlantic relationship. The threats it faces are increasing in number and scope and are becoming more complex as a result of technological developments. Internal divisions and differences of opinion between European countries concerning the nature of these security threats are limiting Europe's capacity for decisive action.

Over the past 10 years, Europe's vulnerability to potential Russian military aggression or political pressure backed up by military force has increased considerably. On its southern and southeastern flanks, it is confronted with instability in North Africa and the Middle East. Terrorism, transnational crime, arms and drug smuggling and human trafficking also give rise to significant security threats. China is emerging as a major economic, political and military power on the world stage – and thus also in Europe. The COVID-19 crisis may have considerable long-term implications for security policy – the rapid deterioration in US-China relations is a notable example. Other political risks include instability in the wider region surrounding Europe and renewed irregular migratory pressure.⁴ Furthermore, Europe is increasingly confronted with hybrid (non-military) threats and attacks. Online disinformation is disseminated more or less in real time, while democracy and the rule of law are being undermined by alternative facts, fake news and the misuse of social media. This fans the flames of internal discord not only within the EU and NATO but also within European societies.

The era of US hegemony, during which the United States served as the guardian of the post-war global order, has come to an end as a result of gradual strategic and electoral shifts. Over the past three years, this trend has been exacerbated by a foreign policy aimed at enhancing US power and prosperity ('America First') and a heavy focus on great-power rivalries, particularly with China but also with Russia. While US foreign policy has traditionally oscillated between geopolitical realism and moral idealism, under President Trump the balance has tipped entirely towards the former. This has had a significant impact on international relations. Where Washington would once have taken the lead in the event of an international crisis, this is no longer the case, as demonstrated by the current crisis surrounding COVID-19. Furthermore, the United States is intervening less and less in developments in Syria, Libya and Afghanistan and is turning away from multilateral institutions and multilateral arms control. Previous US presidents have consistently urged the European Allies to assume a larger share of the European defence burden. Although President Trump has done so too, at the same time he shows little interest in European security issues. For example, the United States recently announced a substantial reduction in the number of US forces stationed in Germany (from 34,500 to 25,000) without much prior consultation. Vital confidence-building steps between Russia and the United States in support of the mutual reduction of nuclear weapons are likewise not forthcoming. The AIV believes that the current attitude in Washington in favour of withdrawing from Europe and even pursuing international isolation is harmful to the position of the West as a whole.

More than ever, the countries of Europe need to take account of circumstances that oblige them to take responsibility for security issues in Europe and its immediate vicinity, including the deployment of military assets if necessary. Europe is largely dependent on itself, or as Chancellor Merkel put it in 2017: 'We Europeans really have to take our fate into our own hands.'⁵

▶ 1.2 European security tasks

How can the security tasks of the European countries be summarised in geographical and functional terms? Crisis management is needed on the periphery of Europe, namely in North Africa, the Sahel and the Middle East. The safe passage of international shipping needs to be guaranteed. The deterioration of relations with Russia has created a need for a credible deterrent but also makes it imperative to enter into a dialogue with the Russian Federation with a view to achieving security, détente and arms control. Hybrid forms of warfare also threaten Europe's security, particularly its political and social cohesion. Climate change is expected to lead to competition for scarce resources and threaten people's quality of life, resulting in increased migration from areas surrounding Europe. Arctic warming is causing sea ice to melt, making the region more accessible. This has major geopolitical and economic implications, not least because Russia and China are seeking to establish a presence in this area.

From a military perspective, the defence of NATO territory against military pressure and aggression remains the most important challenge. Protecting and monitoring Europe's external maritime borders is also becoming increasingly important, while the protection of vital infrastructure and digital networks requires ever-increasing attention. Crisis management and stabilisation missions on the periphery of Europe will be very demanding. In order to defend itself against the threat of terrorist attacks, cyber and hybrid warfare, new nuclear weapons and hypersonic weapons, Europe will need to pursue different security policies than it has in the past. Mutual arms control and reduction agreements and confidence-building measures are in desperate need of renewal, especially where nuclear weapons are concerned.

Most European countries broadly agree on this list of tasks. However, problems begin to arise when it comes to prioritisation: national governments may adopt widely diverging threat analyses based on geographical particularities, historical experiences or political circumstances. For example, it is hardly surprising that countries in southern Europe are particularly concerned about instability in North Africa and the Middle East, while many (but not all) countries in central and eastern Europe regard Russia as the primary security threat. That is why an ongoing political discussion of strategic challenges between European states is so important. Without shared strategic awareness, even the best-designed security architecture will remain 'uninhabited'.

▶ 1.3 Issues relating to the European security architecture

On 23 September 2019, the House of Representatives adopted a motion submitted by MPs Sjoerd Sjoerdsma, Salima Belhaj and John Kerstens in which the government was requested to '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'.⁶ In this connection, the government asked the AIV to address the following questions:

- What role should the EU and NATO respectively play in safeguarding European security?
- What implications would this have for the further development of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in terms of its structure, its level of ambition and the operationalisation of the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS)?
- What is the role of coalitions of the willing, within the EU and NATO or otherwise, in safeguarding Europe's security? What is the optimal way to guarantee the United Kingdom's involvement in the European security architecture? What role could a European Security Council play in this regard?

In the AIV's opinion, the enhancement of Europe's capacity to act depends heavily on the extent to which Berlin and Paris (with as much input from London as possible) are able to take the lead. The political decisions made in these three European capitals are of paramount importance for the design of the European security architecture and, thus, for Europe's ability to take decisive action. For some years now, Germany has argued for the creation of a European Defence Union, which is in line with France's ambitions. The two countries are expected to put forward significant proposals in this area during their respective presidencies of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2020 and the first half of 2022. The fact that the United Kingdom, which has always opposed the deepening of European security and defence policy, is leaving the EU creates new opportunities. However, as a major regional military power and a member of NATO, the United Kingdom remains vital to the security and defence of Europe. The final shape of the United Kingdom's relations with the EU will depend on the outcome of the Brexit negotiations.

As a result of Europe's increased vulnerability, the United Kingdom's departure from the EU and the change in the United States' stance, the Netherlands will also have to review its own role and position and make certain choices in the coming period. In recent decades, the Netherlands has not been at the forefront of the institutional design of European security and defence policy. Together with the United Kingdom, it has stepped on the brakes from time to time. Following Brexit, and as result of the changes in the geopolitical environment, the Dutch government will have to alter its course, especially if it wishes to preserve its ability to influence the configuration of European security, which is inseparable from the security of the Netherlands. The AIV therefore believes that it is time for new steps.

In this advisory report, the AIV first examines the views of the key players (2), the relevant institutional structures (3) and the necessary military capabilities (4) in the context of the European security landscape. It then goes on to analyse the shifting relationship between NATO and the EU (5) before presenting its conclusions and recommendations (6).

European actors': the 'big three'

As in previous decades, the design of the European security architecture will largely depend on the political choices of Germany, France and the United Kingdom. However, these countries have substantially different views on the future shape of European security and defence policy. These views are informed by each country's particular strategic culture, military capabilities, geographical location and history. At the same time, all three are aware that the situation is dynamic, and they are each reassessing their own role and position. This makes it all the more important that the Netherlands closely follow developments in this area, and it also provides opportunities to influence the outcomes. In general, the Netherlands, which is geographically located between these three key players, has every interest in maintaining optimal relations with all three countries and promoting mutual cooperation.

► 2.1 France

Of all the EU member states, France is the most outspoken supporter of far-reaching European defence cooperation and European military independence: '*une Europe qui protège*'.⁷ At the same time, it endorses NATO's role in collective European defence. France has a special status in the nuclear domain.⁸ It regards its own possession of nuclear weapons as an indispensable component of a defence strategy that enables it, under all circumstances, to make its own decisions. France's nuclear capability thus forms the backbone of its national strategic autonomy. In a speech delivered on 7 February 2020, President Macron offered to enter into a strategic dialogue with those of France's European partners 'who are willing' concerning the role of its nuclear weapons in European security.⁹ In the AIV's opinion, the European states countries thus addressed, including the Netherlands, should not decline this invitation. This debate, which will not be an easy process, should be conducted from the perspective of the common European strategic culture advocated by France.

Paris is keen to increase the collective military strength of the European states. It is therefore interested in working with member states that are willing to take far-reaching steps in this area within an EU framework.¹⁰ In 2017, President Macron launched the European Intervention Initiative (EI2) to develop a European strategic culture and build up military capabilities with a view to conducting military missions not only within an EU, NATO or UN framework but also via ad hoc frameworks. Germany initially showed little enthusiasm for this initiative because it was established outside the EU framework; it feared that military operations would focus on Europe's southern flank.¹¹

During its EU Presidency in 2022, France intends to push for the adoption of a political declaration on the implications of the EU's mutual defence clause (article 42(7) TEU), including its operationalisation by the member states.¹² The French feel a strong connection to this particular Treaty provision because it was first invoked following the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris.

Germany is France's main partner in the area of military cooperation. In 1989, the two countries established a Franco-German brigade comprising almost 6,000 military personnel from both countries serving under binational command.¹³ Another Franco-German initiative, Eurocorps, has existed since 1992 and also counts Spain, Belgium and Luxembourg among its members. In 2019, France and Germany signed the Treaty on Franco-German Cooperation and Integration (Aachen Treaty), which replaced the 1963 Treaty of Friendship. The Aachen Treaty aims to deepen political cooperation between the two countries, in part to enhance Europe's capacity to act autonomously. It also contains a mutual defence clause.

France also maintains a very close defence relationship with the United Kingdom in matters relating to operational, materiel and nuclear cooperation. Since 2010, these relations have been governed by the Lancaster House Treaties. On account of their permanent membership of the UN Security Council, their nuclear capability, their contributions to military operations and their comparatively well-equipped armed forces, the United Kingdom and France are the most important countries in Europe from a politico-military perspective.

▶ 2.2 Germany

Since the Second World War, Germany has taken a cautious approach to the deployment of military assets. Participation in military operations is governed by a rigorous parliamentary consent procedure. The country's stance on European security is heavily influenced by the fact that it was divided during the Cold War and that West Germany was entirely dependent on US support. It therefore continues to attach great importance to the role of NATO and the United States in Europe. Owing to the size of its population, its economic strength and its central location, Germany bears a significant share of the responsibility for Europe's defence policy. It seeks to define its own role in the EU in the area of security and defence in greater depth. In February 2020, for example, German foreign minister Heiko Maas stated that Germany was contemplating 'the establishment of a European Security and Defence Union as a strong, European pillar of NATO. This is the European policy design task of the 2020s. And today it is no longer a question of "if" but rather of "how"'.¹⁴

Germany's armed forces can be deployed equally on behalf of NATO or the EU, but in practice Germany focuses on the former – both in military and political terms. German defence planning is chiefly tailored to providing the core component of NATO's follow-on forces in the framework of article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. These forces are built around three German divisions to which other member states can attach brigade-sized units. There is nevertheless a disparity between Germany's policy on Europe and its focus on NATO. It pursues an inclusive approach in its cooperation with third countries and also ensured that the EU's new framework for cooperation in the area of defence capabilities, which is known as Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), abandoned its original format as an exclusive European vanguard. One thing is clear: the number of voices in Germany calling for the country to take on a larger role in the area of security is growing.¹⁵ With the support of France, Germany has initiated a debate on the EU's 'strategic compass', which is aimed at the adoption of a more detailed definition of Europe's security and defence ambitions during Germany's EU Presidency in the second half of 2020.

▶ 2.3 United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has long had a close relationship with the United States and is an active NATO Ally. Its orientations are Atlanticist and maritime, and its policy towards Russia is more assertive and more critical than that of France or Germany. In many cases, however, the United Kingdom's security analysis is much closer in substance to those of the European partners than those carried out in Washington, for example regarding Iran. This remains true even after Brexit.

The United Kingdom has always been hesitant about European defence cooperation and has consistently stepped on the brakes. It has repeatedly blocked EU initiatives, for example by systematically opposing the establishment of a European military headquarters and by blocking any increase in the budget of the European Defence Agency (EDA) over the past six years.¹⁶ Over the past decade, it has hardly contributed to EU military operations, although it has contributed to civilian missions.

Nevertheless, the United Kingdom's departure from the EU has severely weakened the latter's defences. In addition to being a nuclear power, the United Kingdom was a member state with a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and a comparatively large defence budget. As a result of Brexit, the EU has lost approximately 20% (on paper) of the military capabilities available to it, and one of the six headquarters that could be used for EU operations and the deployment of EU Battlegroups. For the EU, Brexit has turned the United Kingdom into an outsider:¹⁷ it no longer participates in EU decision-making or PESCO, and has acquired the status of a third country.

In its mandate for the negotiation of a new partnership agreement with the United Kingdom, the EU set out the following objective: '... the partnership should enable appropriate dialogue, consultation, exchange of information and cooperation mechanisms that are flexible, scalable and proportionate to the level of engagement of the United Kingdom alongside the Union'.¹⁸ The United Kingdom is pursuing a flexible, case-by-case approach.¹⁹ It wishes to cooperate with the EU on security and defence issues and may potentially participate in PESCO, the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the EDA.

However, the future shape of the relationship between the United Kingdom and the EU largely depends on the outcome of the Brexit negotiations. If they result in a hard Brexit, ambitious security and defence agreements are unlikely to materialise. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom will remain vital to European security after Brexit, owing to the quality of its armed forces.

Security structures

When an acute threat arises in Europe or its immediate vicinity, government leaders look for a framework in which to consult with each other and decide what needs to be done. The most obvious frameworks in this regard are NATO and the EU, whose largely overlapping memberships²⁰ comprise 30 and 27 countries, respectively. Each framework has its own strengths and weaknesses.²¹

In the event of a direct threat to the integrity of one or more of these member countries, NATO is the appropriate forum for them to join forces in order to take defensive action, based on the principle of collective defence laid down in article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. In the case of crises or instability in the wider region outside the Alliance's territory, the EU has been making its own contribution to crisis management in recent decades by carrying out military and civilian missions alongside – and sometimes in cooperation with – NATO. There are also situations in which European countries decide, with or without the United States, to establish informal coalitions of the willing outside the NATO or EU frameworks, as they did in 2014 against Islamic State (IS). In some cases, such coalitions were later formally embedded in or taken over by NATO or the EU.

For the Netherlands, NATO and the EU form the basis of the European security architecture. Both organisations are strongly institutionalised: they are permanent forums in which member states discuss security matters, they have standard procedures for dealing with crises and they are able to deploy various capabilities for this purpose. However, there are also significant differences between the two organisations. Under US leadership, NATO focuses on collective defence and a limited number of crisis management missions, including at the high end of the spectrum of force.²² The EU favours an integrated civil-military approach whereby it seeks to contribute to conflict prevention and management in Europe's immediate vicinity by providing political support and mediation, promoting trade and development projects, and carrying out civilian and military missions of limited scope.²³

▶ 3.1 NATO

Pursuant to article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, NATO's core task is the collective defence of the Alliance's territory, as guaranteed by the US nuclear umbrella. This collective defence is often regarded as the Alliance's main strength. However, article 5 is subject to important qualifications. First of all, the term 'armed attack' is open to political interpretation. While the emphasis was originally on attacks by the Soviet Union, article 5 has been invoked on just one occasion, namely in support of the United States following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. Since 2014, article 5 has also been applicable to cyberattacks, but only if the North Atlantic Council so decides in the case in question.²⁴ Another issue concerns the manner in which the NATO Allies choose to implement article 5 once it has been invoked. The doubt that President Trump has sown in this regard therefore undermines NATO's credibility and its capacity for deterrence. NATO can also rely on article 4, which requires the member countries to consult together whenever the security of any of the Allies is threatened. This provision carries less weight than article 5 but can still draw NATO into dangerous situations, such as that on the Turkish-Syrian border.

NATO's main decision-making body is the North Atlantic Council, which meets at ambassadorial level, at the level of foreign and defence ministers and at the level of heads of state and government. In contrast to the regular meetings of the European Council, heads of state and government meet less frequently within the NATO context. The Alliance has an extensive military structure, which includes the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE).²⁵ The United States provides the highest-

ranking commander, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), who also heads the United States European Command (EUCOM) in Stuttgart. As a result of this double hatting, the command structures of NATO and the United States are directly linked.²⁶

Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has expanded its range of tasks.²⁷ For example, it has taken on a more political role and has entered into partnerships with candidate countries.²⁸ Since the end of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan and Russia's annexation of Crimea, both in 2014, NATO has largely refocused its efforts on defence, for example by strengthening its position in the Baltic states via the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) and the NATO Response Force/Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (NRF/VJTF).

In response to Turkey's incursion into Syria, which was approved by President Trump, and President Macron's comments on this event, which referred to the 'brain death' of NATO, the heads of state and government assembled at the NATO summit in London on 3-4 December 2019 decided to launch a reflection process on strengthening NATO's political dimension and how the Alliance should deal with current and future threats. An advisory group appointed by Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg will report to the NATO foreign ministers in December 2020, after which the heads of state and government will adopt decisions at the NATO summit in 2021.

► 3.2 European Union

Like NATO, the EU also has a mutual defence clause that applies to cases in which a member state is the victim of armed aggression on its territory. This clause, which is laid down in article 42(7) TEU, clearly states that this obligation is subordinate to article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty for EU member states that are also members of NATO. The Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) of June 2016 explicitly states that NATO remains the primary framework for most EU member states when it comes to collective defence.²⁹ In certain situations of aggression, however, it is conceivable that the United States will feel no need or desire to respond. In such cases, the focus will shift to Europe. For example, article 42(7) TEU was first invoked following the terrorist attacks perpetrated by IS against targets in Paris in November 2015. The language of article 42(7), which calls on member states to provide aid and assistance 'by all the means in their power', is more imperative than that of article 5.³⁰ However, the military capabilities of the member states are thoroughly inadequate for dealing with critical situations (see section 4.1 Shortfalls). In contrast to NATO, moreover, the EU does not have an integrated military command structure. In addition to the mutual defence clause for armed attacks, the EU treaties also contain a solidarity clause covering terrorist attacks and natural or man-made disasters, which is enshrined in article 222 TFEU.

The limited operationalisation of article 42(7) TEU does not negate the fact that for over 20 years the EU has been striving for strategic autonomy based on credible military capabilities in the framework of the CSDP. The EU focuses primarily on containing conflicts in its immediate vicinity, from Ukraine and the Western Balkans to the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel. The central concern is defending European interests: confronting and reducing irregular migration, piracy and terrorism, fostering stability on Europe's borders and boosting the strength and resilience of neighbouring states. In contrast to NATO, the EU offers a largely integrated approach.³¹ Its external policy combines all kinds of instruments, from trade and development cooperation to cultivating political relations and assisting with elections, conflict prevention and mediation, as well as carrying out civilian and military operations in the framework of the CSDP. The EU is also working to improve border management by the European Border and Coastguard Agency (Frontex) and other bodies. This integrated approach enables the EU to help manage conflicts in a variety of ways.

The EU has various structures for decision-making on the CSDP. At the highest level, the European Council, which is composed of heads of state and government, identifies ‘the strategic interests and objectives of the Union.’³² It also hosts emergency consultations during major foreign policy crises. For example, it convened specially to formulate the EU’s response to the annexation of Crimea (2014) and to prepare for the military intervention in Libya (2011). Nevertheless, the member states adopt most implementing decisions at ministerial level, in the Foreign Affairs Council, and at ambassadorial level, in the Political and Security Committee. In another example of double hatting, the EU Military Committee is largely composed of the same generals that make up the NATO Military Committee. The member states are supported by the European External Action Service (EEAS), which is headed by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP).

The EU does not have a military headquarters of its own. EU military missions are conducted from the national military headquarters of a member state, which may be temporarily expanded to include representatives of other member states or, in the case of Bosnia, NATO (under the so-called ‘Berlin Plus’ arrangements).³³ Since 2017, the EU has had a very limited Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), which leads training missions.³⁴ At the end of 2018, the member states agreed that in the future the MPCC could also be used for the planning and conduct of small executive missions consisting of no more than one battalion (such as the EU Battlegroups), but this has not yet happened. The EU’s ability to plan for unexpected scenarios is also limited. When it comes to conducting missions, it is dependent on the military command structures of larger member states, such as France, Germany and Italy.³⁵

Military operations conducted in the framework of the CSDP are limited in size and scope, mainly due to a lack of ambition on the part of many member states. The EU is currently active in the maritime field through Operation EUNAVFOR MED Irini, which is tasked with enforcing the arms embargo against Libya, and the counterpiracy operation EU NAVFOR Atalanta off the coast of Somalia. In the past, the EU has sent military missions to various countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Chad and the Central African Republic. It also maintains a small mission in Bosnia.³⁶ In addition to this, it operates a number of smaller training missions in countries such as Mali and Somalia, where it often partners with organisations such as the UN or the African Union.³⁷ Besides military missions, the EU also conducts a large number of civilian missions, for which it does possess the relevant planning and implementation structures.³⁸

Following in the footsteps of the Juncker Commission (2014-2019), the current European Commission is proving to be ambitious in the field of European security and defence policy. On assuming her new post, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced that she wanted to build a ‘truly geopolitical Commission’ and also stated that ‘[w]e need further bold steps in the next five years towards a genuine European Defence Union.’³⁹ During a hearing in the European Parliament, HR/VP Josep Borrell expressed himself in similar terms, stating that ‘[t]he EU has to learn to use the language of power.’⁴⁰ With the establishment of the new Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space, which is headed by French Commissioner Thierry Breton, the EU is seeking to unite European initiatives relating to the defence industry, thereby granting the Commission a larger role in this area. The EUGS also refers to the ambition of ‘strategic autonomy’, but for now the EU member states disagree on the meaning and scope of this concept.

▶ 3.3 Coalitions of the willing



Ad hoc coalitions often play a key role in military interventions. Examples include the coalition against IS in Syria (since 2014) and the recent European coalition to protect shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, whose contributing countries include France, Germany, the Netherlands and Greece. In some cases, a coalition can be the first step on the path towards a NATO or EU mission, such as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan and the European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali). Ad hoc coalitions enable missions to be launched rapidly without a lengthy diplomatic process to obtain the consent of all NATO or EU member states. Decision-making is expedited, and the presence of a lead nation increases the capacity for decisive action.⁴¹ However, ad hoc coalitions also have drawbacks. For a start, they are even more dependent on having a lead nation than NATO or EU missions. In the past, many coalitions have therefore made use of the United States' military command structure. In the case of Libya in 2011, when it became clear that the United States wished to limit its involvement, NATO had to step in within two weeks to take over the mission from the ad hoc coalition.⁴² Another disadvantage of ad hoc coalitions is that they often operate without an institutional mandate or a proper financial framework, which is why states tend to favour tried and tested institutions such as NATO and the EU. This does not change the fact that the capacity of countries like the United States and France to make decisions and act unilaterally is high, and that there is a need for such military effectiveness.

While countries can form coalitions of the willing outside the frameworks of NATO and the EU, both organisations offer coalitions of member states the opportunity to use their institutional structures for missions in which not all member states participate. Although NATO has traditionally pursued an 'all in or all out' approach (e.g. in the case of ISAF), only a handful of Allies actually participated in the airstrikes in Libya in 2011.⁴³ Within the EU the contrast is even greater. Most of the troops participating in the EU missions in the DRC, Chad and the Central African Republic have been from France, while other countries provided only a limited military contribution.⁴⁴ Even so, flexibility within NATO and the EU is limited. Although the common costs relating to EU military missions are low, member states still engage in forceful debate concerning the Athena mechanism, which manages the financing of those costs.⁴⁵ In recent times, moreover, EU member states of all sizes have repeatedly threatened to use their veto in matters relating to the CSDP. In 2020, for example, it proved very difficult to restart Operation Irini off the coast of Libya.

Informal lead groups have been around for some time. The so-called Quad, an informal group comprising France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States, has existed within NATO since the Balkan wars of the 1990s. Similarly, the E3 (France, Germany and the United Kingdom) played a key role in the negotiations with Iran, assisted by the HR/VP.⁴⁶ As a result of the United Kingdom's departure from the EU, the E3 now lacks the institutional framework it once enjoyed. Another example of an ad hoc group is the 'Normandy Format' comprising France and Germany, as well as Russia and Ukraine, which emerged in 2014 in the context of the war in Ukraine. Other member states appear to accept such groups as long as the leading member states achieve results and keep them adequately informed. In the case of the Normandy Format talks, for example, it is customary for the French president and the German chancellor to brief their fellow leaders in the European Council.

▶ 3.4 European Intervention Initiative

The European Intervention Initiative (EI2) is an initiative of French president Emmanuel Macron that comprises 13 EU and/or NATO member states, including the Netherlands and the United Kingdom and excluding most central and eastern European countries.⁴⁷ France believes that European

countries contribute too little to CSDP missions in Africa, especially in the Sahel.⁴⁸ Under German pressure, moreover, PESCO – which was meant to foster cooperation among ‘willing and able’ member states – has become an inclusive mechanism in which almost all member states participate.⁴⁹ PESCO’s level of ambition has accordingly declined, whereas President Macron wanted above all to work towards an ambitious European strategic culture.⁵⁰ The countries participating in E12 still differ substantially in terms of their threat perceptions and their willingness to participate in missions at the high end of the spectrum of force.⁵¹

E12 is a flexible framework in which various groups of countries can take the lead to enhance cooperation. Such efforts focus primarily on specific regions. For instance, E12 has working groups for the Sahel, the Baltics and the Caribbean. The Netherlands leads the working group for the Caribbean. Direct contacts between regional experts have proved to be very useful in situations where practical cooperation needs to be established. A good example is the swift provision of military assistance in the Bahamas by the Netherlands, France and Germany following the devastation caused by Hurricane Dorian in September 2019. E12 can also be used to cooperate on the faster and more effective launch of combined operations in other regions, such as in response to crises in North Africa.

The flexible nature of E12 gives it considerable scope. Its ultimate purpose is to facilitate the member states’ participation in EU, NATO, UN or ad hoc missions.⁵² It achieves this by hosting consultations, by enhancing military capabilities – including through PESCO and NATO structures – in order to encourage participation in missions, and by developing a shared strategic culture. E12 is a framework for military cooperation that facilitates the formation of smaller lead groups. Although it remains a predominantly French-supported initiative, with a small secretariat within France’s defence ministry, the Netherlands played a significant role in its development by organising the second ministerial meeting of E12 in September 2019.

► 3.5 A European Security Council

Whereas E12 is a concrete initiative involving actual contact between European countries, the creation of a European Security Council as yet remains a Franco-German idea that is supported at the highest political level.⁵³ It is underpinned by two objectives: ensuring that the United Kingdom remains involved in strategic decisions that affect European (and thus UK) security and expediting EU decision-making on security matters. The view in Berlin is that a European Security Council composed of permanent and rotating members (following the UN example) would make it easier to overcome the obstacles associated with achieving unanimity among 27 EU member states. However, there is a tension between the aforementioned two objectives, which has recently increased. Given the atmosphere in which the final stage of Brexit is taking shape, the chances that the United Kingdom would want to be part of what would essentially be an EU body are extremely low. This presents the initiators of the idea with a dilemma: should the European Security Council be used to keep the United Kingdom involved or to improve EU decision-making? The AIV believes that priority should be granted to the first objective, not least because there are other ways to achieve the second one.

Europe lacks a forum for strategic reflection and a place where key players can swiftly convene in the event of a crisis. The AIV therefore believes that the European Security Council should take the form of an informal consultative body that can serve as a political playmaker in the event of specific crises. In practice, this might entail a moderate formalisation of the E3 – with France, Germany and the United Kingdom serving as permanent members – but without the creation of a new decision-making body. The presidency of the European Security Council could rotate between these three countries on a yearly basis. In addition to the leaders of these countries, the President of the European Council

and the NATO Secretary-General should also become permanent members of the Security Council in order to establish a connection with the EU and NATO institutions. In the event of an acute crisis in or around Europe or the emergence of a pressing security issue, the European Security Council would provide these leaders with a forum to promptly consult with each other and prepare for any necessary action. This could also serve as an incentive for decision-making in the regular EU institutions and/or NATO.

The above-mentioned configuration of a future European Security Council will raise questions concerning the potential membership of other states, institutions and officials. A key concern is that greater inclusiveness (and thus formalisation) would come at the expense of speed and effectiveness. All European countries, including the Netherlands, would benefit greatly from the ability to take joint action, although it stands to reason that countries directly affected by a pressing security issue and (large) neighbouring countries would participate in emergency consultations on an ad hoc basis. Examples of this include Italy in the case of unrest in Libya, and Poland in the case of the war in Ukraine. Compared to the status quo, under which the 'big three' consult with each other behind the scenes, the above-mentioned set-up would provide a certain amount of transparency towards countries that are not part of the European Security Council, thanks to the presence of the President of the European Council and the NATO Secretary-General. In addition to representing their respective organisations, these two officials could act as representatives of the non-participating countries, as the presidents of the European Council and the Commission have long done at meetings of the G7 and the G20. Where necessary and possible, moreover, they could steer proposals and initiatives through their respective organisations, where the formal decision-making would subsequently take place. The AIV believes this configuration of a European Security Council as a political playmaker would deliver the most added value from a strategic perspective.

Military capabilities

To a large extent, the allied military capabilities in Europe consist of national units whose characteristics, size and quality are determined on the basis of national defence planning that is often not fully public. These units are deployed in accordance with national decision-making procedures and systems of parliamentary involvement that vary between countries. They also reflect the interests of each country's national defence industry.

Countries try in various ways to enhance the effectiveness of military units through international cooperation and, in a few cases, by jointly acquiring joint operational and support capabilities. However, neither NATO nor the EU has a truly integrated military force at its disposal.⁵⁴

► 4.1 Shortfalls

It is quite clear that the military capabilities of several European countries are severely limited. In the event of a major conflict with Russia, Europe would be dependent on combined operations with the United States for its defence. Given the magnitude of Russia's nuclear arsenal, NATO is and remains essential in this regard. Although the nuclear arsenals of the United Kingdom and France also have a deterrent effect, they are incomparable in size to the United States' nuclear capability, which is indispensable to NATO. It is important to further analyse the role and significance of these nuclear powers in the context of European security. In a recent advisory report on the role of nuclear weapons in a new geopolitical reality, the AIV argued that in view of the uncertain future, especially vis-à-vis relations with the United States, it would be wise to explore the scope for achieving greater European nuclear independence.⁵⁵ President Macron's February 2020 appeal to the European partners to enter into a strategic dialogue on the position of France's nuclear deterrent in a European context would be a good starting point for such an exploration.

In 2019, the European Court of Auditors concluded that the EU was still a long way from achieving the level of ambition set out in the EUGS.⁵⁶ For example, the European NATO members are not even close to approaching the United States' vast air transport capability, which is vital to the ability to rapidly transfer or supply units. The military tasks and types of missions for which European states are supposed to prepare themselves as members of NATO and the EU, including the use of hard military power, are laid down in article 43(1) TEU.⁵⁷ The EUGS explicitly states that the Union should be able to carry out military operations at the high end of the spectrum of force. Only France and the United Kingdom are able – to a certain extent – to autonomously carry out every type of operation at this level.⁵⁸ However, even a more modest level of ambition would require much more defence spending.

A study carried out in 2018 established that in terms of its autonomous capabilities Europe was only able to carry out rescue and evacuation operations and support humanitarian assistance operations up to its own periphery.⁵⁹ This is the most limited version of the type of missions that the EU should be able to carry out under the EUGS. And even that is subject to the participation of the United Kingdom, which accounts for approximately 20% of Europe's military capabilities. Larger operations have to contend with critical capability shortfalls, for example in the areas of transport, intelligence and reconnaissance.⁶⁰

▶ 4.2 Essential capabilities

If full military autonomy is not feasible, what should be expected of Europe and how can it reduce its vulnerability and its dependence on the United States? First, it should provide a credible contribution to collective defence within the NATO framework. Former NATO Deputy Secretary-General Alexander Vershbow argues that Europe should focus on greater self-sufficiency. For example, the EU could commit to achieving a 50/50 split with the United States in the provision of essential NATO capabilities, including the British contribution.⁶¹

Second, Europe should be able to carry out certain tasks independently, without relying on the United States. Examples of such tasks include controlling and protecting the EU's external borders and conducting operations in Europe's immediate vicinity, ranging from military interventions (initial entry) and stabilisation to peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance. In the years ahead, moreover, there will be a much greater need for assistance to civilian authorities, for example in the case of pandemics, as demonstrated by the COVID-19 crisis.

Given the disparities between the military capabilities of the European countries, it makes sense to measure growth in this area in terms of the financial share of defence spending as a percentage of GDP as in the case of NATO's 2% goal. On top of this goal, there is also a 20% target for investment expenditure. At the end of the day, however, it is not a matter of building defence through budgets but rather of achieving the actual operational combat strength that those budgets are supposed to fund. In recent years, the European countries have increased their defence spending. At present, the European NATO Allies collectively spend approximately €250 billion on defence, which amounts to roughly 1.6% of GDP.⁶² The European Court of Auditors has calculated that about another €90 billion is needed to reach the 2% goal.

Moreover, a large part of the above-mentioned increase in defence spending is needed to restore capabilities that have been eroded over recent decades. This is not just about replenishing stocks of spare parts and munitions; in some cases it involves reintroducing military materiel that has been taken out of service, restoring operational strength and expanding support, transport and logistics capacity, including the recruitment of personnel. This additional investment is also needed to be able to participate in missions and operations for longer periods (sustainability).

In addition to the need for a structural rise in defence spending, an increase in joint defence planning and materiel procurement will help strengthen European military capabilities. The EU has created a number of integrated instruments for this purpose in recent years. The EDA's Capability Development Plan (CDP) sets priorities for the member states' military capabilities. The Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) provides an overview of progress achieved and identifies follow-up steps for joint projects. PESCO imposes binding obligations on all participants and provides a framework for implementing projects in flexible member state groupings. The European Commission's EDF helps fund joint military technology and materiel projects, while simultaneously strengthening industrial cooperation between defence companies in various member states.

The weakness of the EU's defence planning system has always been its voluntary nature. CARD represents the first step towards an adaptation that is based on monitoring, reporting and assessment, as in the case of the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP). Strictly speaking, however, CARD continues to operate on a voluntary basis. The next step should therefore be to make participation in CARD obligatory, which is how the NDPP operates. In addition, the forthcoming review of PESCO can be used to convert the somewhat vague commitments adopted at the time of its launch into stricter benchmarks, and to agree on a timetable for this purpose. Finally, a substantial sum should be allocated to the EDF in the framework of the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027.

It is high time the European countries started focusing seriously on task specialisation. The idea that each country can be adequately equipped for all military tasks is an expensive illusion. Moreover, for a majority of EU member states, including the Netherlands, it is highly unlikely that they will ever have to employ military force on a strictly national basis in response to an act of aggression against their territory. Any such action will always take place within the NATO framework. Task specialisation leads to better and more efficient use of available assets, reinforces interdependence and allows countries to purchase missing military capabilities for which at present they often still have to turn to the United States. However, it would be wrong to assume that task specialisation creates more scope for cutbacks in national defence spending, since the tasks allocated to each country will actually require additional investment, while creating savings elsewhere. In this manner, the countries concerned will also become more closely connected in the area of defence policy.

One thorny aspect of joint weapons development is arms export policy. The Netherlands has one of the strictest arms export regimes. In October 2019, France and Germany concluded a legally binding agreement under which one country cannot always block the other country's arms exports. Other EU member states may also sign up to this agreement. If the Netherlands did so too, it would mean that future European tanks or combat aircraft containing parts produced in the Netherlands could one day be exported to countries that currently fall foul of Dutch arms export policy. The rise in cross-border materiel cooperation in Europe, which is dominated by France and Germany and encouraged by the EDF, increases the pressure to coordinate national arms export policies at European level. This could force the government in The Hague to amend certain rules to enable the Dutch defence industry to participate in European materiel projects whose financial and strategic success depends in part on exports outside the EU.

Changing perspectives on NATO and the EU

The Netherlands has long adhered to a traditional division of tasks between NATO and the EU, which is known as the 'two-track policy'.⁶³ NATO is responsible for deterrence and the territorial defence of Europe, while the EU focuses on containing crises in the wider region around Europe as effectively as possible through reconstruction and civil-military missions. In Dutch defence policy, NATO and transatlantic relations continue to take absolute priority, and NATO is the first choice when it comes to deterrence and the collective defence of Europe's territory.

The Netherlands believes that the EU is better suited to reconstruction and civil-military missions that focus on strengthening the security capabilities of its partner countries. In the eyes of The Hague, the EU has a complementary role⁶⁴ and all efforts to expand Europe's military capabilities are aimed primarily at strengthening the European pillar within NATO. Duplication should be avoided at all times, and the preferred framework for EU missions is provided by the 'Berlin Plus' arrangements, which allow the EU to make use of NATO's command structure.⁶⁵ Moreover, the Netherlands has always been in favour of the greatest possible involvement of third countries and maintaining the EU's open character. In recent decades, it could count on the United Kingdom as an ideological ally on EU matters. Following Brexit, it will have to redefine its position.

The Dutch approach to European security and defence policy has always focused on realising effective security cooperation and achieving concrete results in the area of military capabilities based on specific output criteria.⁶⁶ Whereas France and Germany focus on operational efforts in the framework of PESCO, the Netherlands puts the emphasis on strengthening capacity.⁶⁷ The Netherlands has always been reluctant to embrace a more political interpretation of European security and defence policy. Members of the Dutch government rarely, if ever, speak in terms of 'strategic autonomy' or a 'European Defence Union' or seek to define such concepts.

However, the division of labour that the Dutch government adheres to in respect of NATO and the EU is outdated. The EU needs its own capacity to act in order to independently deal with security issues that do not give rise to a NATO response or involve direct US interests. It is no longer possible to rely exclusively on US leadership. Whereas the Dutch government prefers a 'neat' division of tasks and is wary of duplication, the AIV actually favours an overlap between NATO and the EU in order to ensure that at least one of them will swing into action and deploy its capabilities if the need arises.⁶⁸ Moreover, if the European countries are better able to take responsibility for their own security matters, further erosion of NATO can be prevented.

These changing perspectives on NATO and the EU also serve as the backdrop for renewed debate on the organisations' mutual defence clauses. The EU is currently discussing the scope and operationalisation article 42(7) TEU. France would like to see the adoption of a political declaration on this issue during its EU Presidency.

These and other debates are currently gaining momentum. The rise in internal and external security threats, developments in the transatlantic relationship, including the widening gap between Europe and the United States, and the United Kingdom's departure from the EU have all increased the vulnerability of continental Europe. The need for the European countries to take responsibility and act autonomously has increased likewise.

Following the publication of the EUGS, much has been done at EU level to facilitate the further development of the CSDP, including the introduction of PESCO and CARD and the establishment of the EDF. Although these initiatives have certainly helped enhance the EU's capacity to act, with both Germany's EU Presidency (from 1 July 2020) and France's EU Presidency in 2022 ahead the time has come – in terms of both opportunity and necessity – to translate Europe's ambitions in the field of security and defence into actual policies.

The initiatives aimed at discussing the EU's 'strategic compass', the Franco-German proposal for a European Security Council, the pursuit of a more homogeneous strategic culture within E12 and the plan to operationalise the EU's mutual defence clause all point in this direction. Spain and Italy also support these proposals, as illustrated by a joint letter of 29 May 2020 from the defence ministers of France, Germany, Italy and Spain to the other EU defence ministers and the HR/VP.⁶⁹ It seems possible that a decisive breakthrough will be achieved in the coming year. The Netherlands would be well advised to align itself with and actively contribute to this political agenda, which will enhance its security. It is time for new steps.

Conclusion and recommendations

▶ 6.1 Conclusion

The configuration of European security can be viewed on three levels: the political-strategic level, the institutional level and the level of military capabilities. The political-strategic level is characterised by certain shortcomings. Although the EU and NATO each have forums for high-level consultations, these forums are not always sufficiently flexible or strategic in outlook and there is no connection between the two. The AIV advises the government to support the Franco-German proposal to establish a European Security Council, which would address these failings. Such an informal consultative body, whose members would include France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the President of the European Council and the NATO Secretary-General, would serve as a political playmaker, facilitating swift and effective action in the event of acute security issues or crises.

As regards institutional matters, the AIV is of the opinion that it is important not to fixate on a single security organisation or structure but to approach each security issue that arises on the basis of the specific circumstances. In each case, the selection of the appropriate structure for concrete action – NATO, the EU or a coalition of the willing – should be based on the treaty obligations and interests of the member states, on the one hand, and their willingness to contribute, on the other. In other words, Europe should favour a pragmatic, multitrack approach over a single, fixed security architecture. In general, it is in the Netherlands' interest to play an active role in such frameworks and to consistently demonstrate its reliability as an ally.

Given the key role of the British armed forces in deterrence and the conduct of military operations, the United Kingdom's continued involvement is an important factor in the configuration of European security. Now that it is leaving the EU, all efforts should focus on keeping the UK involved in European security through the European Intervention Initiative (EI2), which in due course may serve as a framework for the formation of military lead groups, and the establishment of a European Security Council. In order to maintain the UK's involvement in European security, the AIV also recommends reviving the Eurogroup of defence ministers within NATO. Between 1968 and 1994, this group, which was established at the initiative of the United Kingdom, served as a forum for informal consultations between European countries, usually in the margins of NATO ministerial meetings. A new Eurogroup would enable the United Kingdom, France and Germany, along with the other European member countries, to informally discuss how their efforts can best serve transatlantic NATO cooperation.⁷⁰ Despite Europe's close security ties with the United Kingdom, there is no scope for a British right of scrutiny or veto on EU matters, especially not where the further development of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) is concerned. Politically speaking, the United Kingdom's departure from the EU will reduce the Netherlands' ability to rein in Franco-German initiatives (should it wish to do so).

The role of parliaments is a key consideration in the further development of European security and defence policy. Active parliamentary involvement in decision-making on the deployment of military units is crucial for obtaining the necessary legitimacy and public support. In order to secure such support, the government must also use its powers of political persuasion and pursue an active and coherent public information policy. On 23 September 2019, the House of Representatives adopted a motion submitted by MP Sjoerd Sjoerdsma and others. On the basis of this motion, the House of Representatives will seek to establish an interparliamentary network of standing committees on defence and security that will focus on various issues, including international defence cooperation.⁷¹ Such a network will be conducive to closer European defence cooperation in the future. The

European Parliament, and its Subcommittee on Security and Defence in particular, can also play a role in this regard.

The EU's Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) could be used to ensure the effective conduct of EU military operations. It could also be expanded to enable it to work on strategic and contingency planning and the planning of military missions. The Netherlands has always opposed the establishment of a European military headquarters but has agreed to a modest expansion of the MPCC to 60 full-time staff. In the government's view, further expansion can be contemplated only once it is clear what type of missions the MPCC will conduct and why, as duplication should be avoided at all costs.⁷² The AIV believes that this restriction should now be lifted, however. The relevant proposal from four defence ministers of 29 May 2020,⁷³ is deserving of the Netherlands' support.

At the level of military capabilities, the Netherlands should abandon its hesitant approach to the interpretation of the EU's political and strategic-military autonomy and support the German and French initiatives. The Netherlands can actively contribute to:

- the operationalisation of article 42(7) TEU;
- the further build-up of military capabilities through the joint development, production and procurement of military materiel;
- the further prioritisation and political framing of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) as the main vehicle for shaping EU policy on materiel. This can be achieved via the strategic evaluation of PESCO;
- the allocation of sufficient resources to the European Defence Fund (EDF) in support of cross-border defence research and capacity building.

► 6.2 Recommendations

In order to guarantee the security of the Netherlands and the European states with which it is closely bonded and shares many interests, NATO and the EU both need to be strengthened. It would be neither sensible nor feasible for the Netherlands to focus all its efforts on only one of these two organisations. Both frameworks are essential, and strengthening one will result in the strengthening of the other. Binary thinking to the effect that either NATO or the EU should be solely responsible for European security ignores reality and could lead to serious missed opportunities. Within both organisations it is sometimes necessary to form smaller groups of like-minded countries that are willing to take on certain urgent tasks in coalitions of the willing. Where possible, such coalitions should be institutionally anchored within NATO or the EU. For the moment, the security policies of the member states of NATO and the EU are still largely determined at national level, but there are various opportunities for mutual reinforcement, cooperation, task specialisation, the formation of multinational units and the launch of initiatives that do not require unanimity. States that are unwilling to support certain activities that other members consider important should not veto those initiatives but should do what they can to ensure that they are successful. Against this background, the AIV has adopted the following 10 recommendations.

General compass for the Netherlands

1. In view of the current security threats, the AIV believes that the Netherlands should support the Franco-German initiatives in the field of security and defence wherever possible. Instead of adopting a wait-and-see approach, the Netherlands should be proactive, particularly since the nature of each specific security issue, rather than the security structures themselves, will determine which forum takes action. The Dutch government should focus on promoting joint action by the Benelux countries, France and Germany, in cooperation with the United Kingdom, both within NATO and within or together with the EU.

2. The continued involvement of the United Kingdom and its armed forces is indispensable for the proper protection of Europe's security interests. The creation of a European Security Council and the revival of the Eurogroup within NATO can help ensure this. In the AIV's view, however, the United Kingdom's continued involvement should not be allowed to interfere with any further deepening of European security and defence cooperation.
3. Given the increasing precariousness of the security situation in Europe and along its periphery, it is essential that the Netherlands continue to push for compliance with NATO's 2% goal – to which it has repeatedly committed itself – even though this has not been made any easier by the COVID-19 crisis. In the AIV's view, only those countries that invest in their armed forces should have a say in the future configuration of European security. To this end, the Netherlands should prepare a multiannual plan setting out a series of predetermined steps towards achieving NATO's 2% goal.

A strategic forum

4. The AIV advises the government to support the principle of the proposal to establish a European Security Council in order to enhance Europe's ability to take decisive action. As to its concrete elaboration, the Netherlands can seek to ensure that the European Security Council takes the form of an informal consultative body whose membership is limited to a few key players (Paris, Berlin, London, the European Council President and the NATO Secretary-General), thus enabling it to act as a political playmaker in the event of acute crises or pressing security issues. From a strategic perspective, this would be a major source of added value. Countries directly affected by a specific threat that are not members of the European Security Council would be invited to participate in the Council's deliberations on an ad hoc basis.

Institutions

5. In the event of a serious act of aggression, both article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty and article 42(7) TEU may apply. It is conceivable that a conflict on one of Europe's borders would not immediately trigger article 5 but nevertheless requires a European response. The AIV recommends that during forthcoming discussions on the operationalisation of article 42(7) TEU the government proposes that this provision be declared applicable to both traditional and hybrid threats. In addition, it advises the government to call on the EU to clarify what assets are available in the event of aggression.
6. The EU needs an effective military command structure to plan military missions and conduct military operations. The current practice of alternating between national headquarters for missions is inefficient and undermines the EU's ability to take decisive action. The EU has conducted permanent military operations since 2003 and requires a permanent command structure for this purpose. The AIV believes that the EU's modest Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) should be transformed into a headquarters for strategic and contingency planning and the preparation of military missions. In addition, it should spearhead the implementation of any military tasks that the EU may, independently if necessary, have to carry out.
7. In order to strengthen defence cooperation between European states, it would be advisable to establish a European interparliamentary network to discuss defence plans and parliamentary decision-making procedures for the deployment of military units. Wherever possible the government should facilitate the establishment of such a network. It is inevitable that national parliamentary procedures in this area, for example regarding participation in international military operations, will ultimately need to be more closely aligned.

Military capabilities

8. In line with the Coordinated Annual Review of Defence and the priorities for the member states' military capabilities laid down in the Capability Development Plan prepared by the European Defence Agency (EDA), the AIV calls for the establishment of a binding collective European defence planning process. Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) merits reinforcement by means of more concrete obligations that are linked to an implementation schedule. The European Defence Fund (EDF) will continue to financially support military and defence industrial cooperation, assuming that it is allocated substantial resources in the framework of the adoption of the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027. Together these four instruments provide a comprehensive framework for coherent defence planning and materiel development at European level, coordinated centrally by the EDA. This would however require additional funding and staff.

9. In order to make European defence cooperation more efficient, it is necessary to standardise and improve the interoperability of military units and materiel. The joint development, procurement and use of materiel creates optimal conditions for far-reaching forms of operational cooperation, such as those illustrated by the cooperation between the Dutch and German armies, or between the Dutch and Belgian navies. Further expansion of such bilateral and multilateral forms of defence cooperation should be encouraged, as long as military effectiveness remains the top priority. Materiel cooperation at European level should also be encouraged, and the Netherlands should seek to link up with countries that cooperate closely in this area, such as France and Germany, at an early stage. This is also in the interests of the Dutch defence industry. In this context, moreover, the Netherlands should align with the Franco-German arms export control agreement, which provides that countries participating in joint materiel projects cannot block another participating country's arms exports, subject to the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports.

10. In practice, most European countries will rarely, if ever, become embroiled in a military conflict by themselves. The AIV therefore believes it is high time they started focusing on task specialisation, which has the potential to increase efficiency, expand crucial military capabilities and strengthen solidarity and interdependence. However, it would be wrong to assume that task specialisation creates scope for financial cutbacks, since the tasks allocated to each country will actually require additional investment.

- ¹ [Request for advice pursuant to motion 35 189, no. 7, 23 January 2020.](#)
- ² Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU).
- ³ For the purpose of this advisory report, the term Europe refers to the European members of NATO and the EU and other European democracies that cooperate with them. The report focuses on western, central and southern Europe and does not examine the position of, nor Europe's relationship with, Turkey (a NATO member, but one that is located in two continents), Russia, Ukraine or Belarus.
- ⁴ AIV advisory letter no. 34, [The Netherlands and the Global Approach to COVID-19 \(2020\)](#).
- ⁵ [‘Kanzlerin trotz Trump: “Wir müssen unser Schicksal wirklich in die eigene Hand nehmen”’, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 28 May 2017.](#)
- ⁶ [Request for advice pursuant to motion 35 189, no. 7, 23 January 2020.](#)
- ⁷ President Emmanuel Macron, [Speech before the College du Renseignement en Europe, 25 April 2019.](#)
- ⁸ Some of this information is from [European Defence: The Challenge of Strategic Autonomy](#), Information Report no. 626 (2018-2019), prepared by Ronan Le Gleut and H el ene Conway-Mouret on behalf of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee of the French Senate, 3 July 2019.
- ⁹ [President Emmanuel Macron, Speech on defence and deterrence strategy before the cadets of the 27th promotion of the  cole de Guerre, 7 February 2020.](#)
- ¹⁰ In the [Strategic Review of Defence and National Security 2017](#) France announced its intention to ‘proposer des partenariats de d efense ambitieux   ses partenaires, selon une logique diff erenci ee et en priorit e aux pays europ eens volontaires et capables.’
- ¹¹ ‘Germany Cautious as France Leads European Defense Initiative’, [Deutsche Welle](#), 8 January 2018.
- ¹² Jana Puglierin, [Charm Defensive: Macron and the Germans at the Munich Security Conference](#), [European Council on Foreign Relations](#), 20 February 2020.
- ¹³ <http://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/organisation/10-panzerdivision/deutsch-franzoesische-brigade>.
- ¹⁴ [Speech by Foreign Minister Heiko Maas at the 56th Munich Security Conference, 14 February 2020.](#)
- ¹⁵ See, inter alia, [Joschka Fischer](#), ‘Deutschland 75 Jahre nach Kriegsende: Die Deutschen m ussen ihren instinktiven Pazifismus hinterfragen’, [Der Tagesspiegel](#), 1 May 2020: ‘Mit der Abschw achung oder gar v olligen Wegfall des amerikanischen Schutzes werden sich f ur Deutschland wieder Fragen stellen, die sich seit dem Fr uhjahr 1945 andere f ur uns beantwortet haben. Hier tut sich f ur unser Land ein ernster Zielkonflikt zwischen seinem historisch begr undeter Pazifismus und der Sicherheit Europas und Deutschland auf: Kann Deutschland an der Sicherheitsfrage Europa scheitern lassen? Ich meine: Nein.’
- ¹⁶ [Brexit Brief: UK-EU Defence and Security Cooperation](#), Institute for Government, 2020.
- ¹⁷ Martin Banks, [‘Britain’s defense ties to the EU are still up in the air post-Brexit’](#), [Defense News](#), 29 November 2019.
- ¹⁸ [Annex to Council Decision authorising the opening of negotiations with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for a new partnership agreement](#), 25 February 2020.
- ¹⁹ Claire Mills, [Brexit Next Steps: Defence and Foreign Policy Co-operation](#), House of Commons Library, 5 March 2020.
- ²⁰ The following countries are members of both organisations: the three Benelux countries, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.
- ²¹ Other international organisations also contribute to European security. The OSCE is conducting a large-scale monitoring mission in eastern Ukraine, and the UN contributes directly through its peacekeeping missions in Cyprus and Mali, among other initiatives.

- ²² London Declaration, issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in London, 3-4 December 2010, para. 1.
- ²³ European External Action Service, *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, June 2016, pp. 28-32.
- ²⁴ Wales Summit Declaration, issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales, 5 September 2014, para. 72.
- ²⁵ *The NATO Command Structure*, factsheet, February 2018.
- ²⁶ Guillaume Parmentier, 'Redressing NATO's Imbalances', *Survival* 42(2) (2010): 97-100.
- ²⁷ Active Engagement, Modern Defence: Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, adopted by the Heads of State and Government in Lisbon on 19 November 2010.
- ²⁸ NATO-Russia Council and the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC), 30 January 2017.
- ²⁹ European External Action Service, *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy*, June 2016, p. 20.
- ³⁰ Article 42(7) of the Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union.
- ³¹ On the differences between the integrated approach and the comprehensive approach and the differences between the EU, NATO, the UN and the OSCE, see EU-CIVCAP, *Report on EU Comprehensive Approach to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding*, 23 March 2018.
- ³² Article 22(1) of the Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union.
- ³³ Luis Simón, *Command and Control? Planning for EU Military Operations*, EU-ISS Occasional Paper no. 81, January 2010.
- ³⁴ Thierry Tardy, *MPCC: Towards an EU Military Command?*, EU-ISS Brief, 17 June 2017, and Yf Reykers, 'A Permanent Headquarters under Construction? The Military Planning and Conduct Capability as a Proximate Principal', *Journal of European Integration* 41(6) (2019): 783-799.
- ³⁵ European Union Concept for Command and Control, EEAS (2019) 468, 23 April 2020, p. 10.
- ³⁶ EEAS, EUFOR Operation ALTHEA European Union Military Operation Bosnia and Herzegovina, 24 February 2020.
- ³⁷ For example, the EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) collaborates with the UN's MINUSMA peacekeeping mission and the EU Training Mission in Somalia (EUTM Somalia) works with the African Union's AMISON mission. See Petar Petrov et al., 'All Hands on Deck: Levels of Dependence between the EU and Other International Organizations in Peacebuilding', *Journal of European Integration* 41(8) (2019): 1027-1043.
- ³⁸ Hylke Dijkstra, Petar Petrov and Ewa Mahr, 'Learning to Deploy Civilian Capabilities: How the United Nations, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and European Union Have Changed Their Crisis Management Institutions', *Cooperation and Conflict* 54(4) (2019): 524-543.
- ³⁹ Ursula von der Leyen, *A Union That Strives for More. My Agenda for Europe: Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2019-2024*, 9 October 2019.
- ⁴⁰ Vassilis Ntousas, 'How Can the EU Learn the Language of Power', Chatham House, 3 December 2019.
- ⁴¹ Sarah Kreps, *Coalitions of Convenience: United States Military Interventions after the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- ⁴² Ellen Hallams and Benjamin Schreer, 'Towards a "Post-American" Alliance? NATO Burden-Sharing After Libya', *International Affairs* 88(2) (2012): 320-324.
- ⁴³ Ivo H. Daalder and James G. Stavridis, 'NATO's Victory in Libya: The Right Way to Run an Intervention', *Foreign Affairs* 91(2) (2012): 4. Tim Haesebrouck, 'NATO Burden Sharing in Libya: A Fuzzy Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61(10) (2017): 2235-2261. The contributions of the NATO Allies in Afghanistan also differed, but all member states were represented. See David P. Auerswald and Stephen M. Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).
- ⁴⁴ Niklas I.M. Nováky, *European Union Military Operations: A Collective Action Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2018).

- ⁴⁵ Niklas I.M. Nováky, 'Who Wants To Pay More? The European Union's Military Operations and the Dispute over Financial Burden Sharing', *European Security* 25(2) (2016): 216-236; Fabien Terpan, 'Financing Common Security and Defence Policy Operations: Explaining Change and Inertia in a Fragmented and Flexible Structure', *European Security* 24(2) (2015): 221-263.
- ⁴⁶ Sebastian Harnisch, 'Minilateral Cooperation and Transatlantic Coalition-Building: The E3/EU-3 Iran Initiative', *European Security* 16(1) (2007): 1-27.
- ⁴⁷ Besides France and Germany, the following countries have participated in EI2 since its inception: Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom. Finland, Norway and Sweden joined later.
- ⁴⁸ Niklas Nováky, 'France's European Intervention Initiative: Towards a Culture of Burden Sharing', Wilfried Martens Centre Policy Brief, October 2018.
- ⁴⁹ Dick Zandee and Kimberley Kruijver, *The European Intervention Initiative: Developing a Shared Strategic Culture for European Defence*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', September 2019, Nicole Koenig, *The European Intervention Initiative: A Look Behind the Scenes*, Policy Brief, Jacques Delors Centre, 27 June 2018.
- ⁵⁰ Initiative for Europe, Speech by President Emmanuel Macron, Paris, 26 September 2017.
- ⁵¹ Dick Zandee and Kimberley Kruijver, *The European Intervention Initiative: Developing a Shared Strategic Culture for European Defence*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', September 2019.
- ⁵² Letter of Intent concerning the Development of the European Intervention Initiative (EI2), 10 July 2018, para. 5.
- ⁵³ *Le programme d'Emmanuel Macron pour l'Europe: Une Europe qui protège les Européens*, En Marche!, 24 January 2017. Speech by Chancellor Merkel before the European Parliament, Strasbourg, 13 November 2018.
- ⁵⁴ The European Court of Auditors has formulated the following non-exhaustive list of characteristics of a real and credible European army: a permanent standing force funded by a common budget; common defence planning to develop and acquire common capabilities; autonomous military capabilities, including fully-fledged command and control; an effective decision-making process with a unique chain of command and clear leadership with the authority and legitimacy to engage armed forces; and civilian and democratic control over the military and the use of armed forces. See European Court of Auditors, *Evaluation no. 9: European Defence*, September 2019, p. 29.
- ⁵⁵ AIV advisory report no. 109, Nuclear Weapons in a New Geopolitical Reality (2019), p. 60.
- ⁵⁶ *Evaluation no.9: European Defence*, September 2019, p.42-42.
- ⁵⁷ 'The tasks referred to in Article 42(1), in the course of which the Union may use civilian and military means, shall include joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making and post-conflict stabilisation. All these tasks may contribute to the fight against terrorism, including by supporting third countries in combating terrorism in their territories.'
- ⁵⁸ A recent study analysed the scenario of a limited regional armed conflict in Lithuania and Poland. In order to be able to respond to such a conflict, the European NATO countries would have to invest an additional €265 to €330 billion. It would take over 20 years to build up the required military capability. See Douglas Barrie et al., *Defending Europe: Scenario-Based Capability Requirements for NATO's European Members*, IISS, May 2019, p. 3.
- ⁵⁹ Douglas Barrie et al. *Protecting Europe: Meeting the EU's Military Level of Ambition in the Context of Brexit*, IISS/DGAP, November 2018.
- ⁶⁰ See Daniel Fiott, ed., *The CSDP In 2020: The EU's Legacy and Ambition in Security and Defence* (Paris: EUISS, 2020), in particular ch. 3 by Dick Zandee, 'No More Shortfalls? European Military Capabilities 20 Years On', pp. 50-58.
- ⁶¹ Alexander Vershbow, 'European Defense: Time for a Higher Level of Ambition', *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* 34 (2018): pp. 5-8. See also Dick Zandee and Kimberley Kluiver,

- COVID-19: De geopolitieke gevolgen voor de EU* (COVID-19: The Geopolitical Implications for the EU), Netherlands Institute of International Relations ‘Clingendael’, 9 June 2020.
- ⁶² The United States’ defence budget amounts to \$730 billion. A detailed overview of the defence expenditure of the NATO countries (2013-2019) can be found in the Annex to the Secretary General’s Annual Report 2019, 19 March 2020, pp. 114-126.
- ⁶³ ‘Bijleveld pleit voor een sterkere NAVO én EU voor een veilig Europa’ (Dutch defence minister Ank Bijleveld advocates strengthening NATO and the EU for a secure Europe), news report, Ministry of Defence, 5 March 2020.
- ⁶⁴ ‘The EU can play a complementary role in various areas, including protecting infrastructure, border control, cyber threats and cybersecurity, preventing terrorist attacks and combating people smuggling.’ Letter from the Minister of Defence responding to the policy proposal for European armed forces by and for Europeans, Parliamentary Paper 35 189, no. 5, 24 May 2019, p. 2.
- ⁶⁵ ‘The duplication of NATO structures should be avoided. In a general sense the Netherlands will continue its efforts within the EU and NATO to ensure that the “Berlin Plus” arrangements, under which the EU can make use of NATO command-and-control structures when necessary, can be used again in the future.’ *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- ⁶⁶ Central Government Budget 2020, chapter V: Foreign Affairs, 14.
- ⁶⁷ Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence of 5 June 2020 concerning the annotated agenda for the EU Foreign Affairs Council’s informal video conference of ministers responsible for defence on 16 June 2020, p. 2.
- ⁶⁸ ‘... that the government’s efforts are focused on further strengthening European defence cooperation, which will also contribute to a stronger European role within NATO, without any duplication of NATO’s tasks and structures.’ Letter from the Minister of Defence responding to the policy proposal for European armed forces by and for Europeans, Parliamentary Paper 35 189, no. 5, 24 May 2019, p. 4.
- ⁶⁹ Letter from the defence ministers of France, Germany, Italy and Spain to the EU defence ministers and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 29 May 2020.
- ⁷⁰ See AIV advisory report no 106: The Future of NATO and European Security, 6 October 2017, p. 39. It goes without saying that this group should not be confused with the current Eurogroup, which comprises the finance ministers of the countries that make up the euro area.
- ⁷¹ Parliamentary Paper 35 189, no. 6, motion submitted by MP Sjoerd Sjoerdsma and others, 23 September 2019.
- ⁷² Letter from the Minister of Defence responding to the policy proposal for European armed forces by and for Europeans Parliamentary Paper 35 189, no. 5, 24 May 2019, pp. 5-6.
- ⁷³ Letter from the defence ministers of France, Germany, Italy and Spain to their European counterparts and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 29 May 2020, p. 4.

Request for advice

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

List of persons consulted

In preparing this report, the committee spoke to the French, German and UK ambassadors to the Netherlands and to Professor François Heisbourg. The AIV is very grateful to them for their insights and their contribution to the thinking underlying this advisory report.

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|------------------------------|---|
| H.E. Mr Luis Vassy | Ambassador of France |
| H.E. Mr Dirk Brengelmann | Ambassador of Germany |
| H.E. Mr Peter Wilson | Ambassador of the United Kingdom |
| Professor François Heisbourg | Senior Advisor at the International Institute for Strategic Studies and Special Advisor at the Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique |

List of abbreviations

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| CARD | Coordinated Annual Review on Defence |
| CDP | Capability Development Plan |
| CSDP | Common Security and Defence Policy |
| EDA | European Defence Agency |
| EDF | European Defence Fund |
| EFP | Enhanced Forward Presence |
| Elz | European Intervention Initiative |
| EU | European Union |
| EUCOM | United States European Command |
| EUTM | European Union Training Mission |
| HR/VP | High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission |
| IS | Islamic State |
| ISAF | International Security Assistance Force |
| MPCC | Military Planning and Conduct Capability |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NDPP | NATO Defence Planning Process |
| NRF | NATO Response Force |
| OSCE | Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe |
| PESCO | Permanent Structured Cooperation |
| SACEUR | Supreme Allied Commander Europe |
| SHAPE | Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe |
| TEU | Treaty on European Union |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |
| US | United States |
| VJTF | Very High Readiness Joint Task Force |