Chapter 1

Shifts in the Security Environment

Ernst Hirsch Ballin, Huub Dijstelbloem, and Peter de Goede

1.1 The Netherlands in the Shifting Geopolitical Force Field

The Netherlands' security and defence policy is entering a crucial phase. Since the end of the Cold War and the ensuing apparent supremacy of American hegemony, the geopolitical force field has changed radically. The last decade has seen the emergence of a multipolar world which is creating increasing tensions that directly affect the Netherlands. This new order calls for a strategic analysis of the security environment on the basis of which defence policy, and more specifically the role of the armed forces, can be formulated.

The Dutch armed forces have responded to the shifts occurring on the world stage and in the process have been highly active in a wide variety of operations. Since 1990 the armed forces have been transformed into an expeditionary organisation. Conscription has been suspended and professional Dutch soldiers have taken part in numerous international missions – approximately 50 since 1990. The structure of the slimmed-down Dutch armed forces was geared to these types of operations – with a fairly wide range of military capabilities, but without the resources to carry them out for longer than a few years. Now, however, the capacity of the armed forces is under severe pressure. It is time to re-assess the strategic position of the defence forces in the medium term.

The capacity of the branches of the armed forces has been eroded by the so-called 'peace dividend', which has been repeatedly cashed in since the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the many rounds of cutbacks that have been made. In 2016, the Netherlands Court of Audit [*De Algemene Rekenkamer*] found that "for years the material readiness of the armed forces has been below the level regarded by the Ministry of Defence as necessary to meet the objectives for deployability formu-

E. Hirsch Ballin (✉) · H. Dijstelbloem · P. de Goede
WRR, Scientific Council for Government Policy, The Hague, Zuid-Holland, The Netherlands
e-mail: ballin@tilburguniversity.edu; h.o.dijstelbloem@uva.nl; peter.goede@minbzk.nl

lated by the Minister of Defence in the budget. We have already observed in some years that the Ministry of Defence is putting a lot of pressure on itself due to the imbalance between ambitions, resources and organisation.”

In the meantime, the tasks the armed forces have to carry out have not diminished. The assignments that the armed forces must be able to perform to protect the territory and the inhabitants, to safeguard the international legal order and to support civil authorities are not going to subside in the near future. The nature of the threats has also changed. Increasingly, cyber attacks, threats to vital infrastructure and the use of disinformation (as created by Russia with respect to the investigation into the Flight MH17 disaster) are setting the tone.

The Netherlands does not operate alone on this environment, but with allies. But the NATO and EU alliances are in need of maintenance and extra efforts are required to guarantee their cohesion and sustainability. The signals sent from Washington by the current and former American presidents leave no doubt that most of NATO's European partners, including the Netherlands, must do more to honour the agreements made on the financing of their own armed forces. The United Kingdom's pending exit from the EU will complicate the military cooperation in Europe, when the EU's common defence policy was already lagging behind. All too often the EU's approach is based on crisis management.¹ The same ad-hoc approach is currently being used to protect the borders in the context of migration, albeit not in the classical territorial sense; that remains the core task of NATO. This crisis management distracts attention from what is really needed, which is consistent policy aimed at eliminating the underlying causes of the threats. The new types of threats to cyber security and infrastructure can also not be addressed in an ad-hoc manner.

The world order is shifting, the cooperation within NATO and the EU is under pressure and the Dutch armed forces are gasping for breath. What is the task of Dutch security and defence policy? There have been growing calls in the last few years to end the devastating cuts in the defence budget and to invest more. The acute threats and the conflicts in which the Netherlands is involved have served as a wake-up call. The shooting down of Flight MH17 over Ukraine, the streams of refugees from Syria and other countries, the conflict with Da'esh² in Syria and Iraq and terrorist threats make it clear that events in many of the world's flashpoints have a direct or indirect impact on the Netherlands. Conflicts in other countries have a spill-over effect in this country, as illustrated by tensions between population groups and the clashes over the Gülen schools after the failed putsch in Turkey on 15 July 2016 and over the constitutional referendum in that country. But how to ensure that any additional funds are not divided among the branches of the armed forces without any sense of strategic direction? What should a future-proof security policy that plots the course of defence policy look like? What strategic analyses should lie behind the political choices that are made?

1.2 A Different Security Policy in Turbulent Times

In this book the WRR takes the line that security policy must be based on strategic analysis. Defence policy and the role of the armed forces can then be determined on the grounds of that analysis. The discussion in this book expands on changes that have recently been initiated and on earlier policy recommendations. The policy letter *Turbulente tijden in een instabiele omgeving* [Turbulent Times in Unstable Surroundings] (2014) already underlined the need to anticipate a lengthy period of tension, both close to home and far away. That view was endorsed in the Ministry of Defence's multi-year perspective on the future of the armed forces entitled *Houvast in een onzekere wereld* [Certainty in an Uncertain World]³: "Crises are succeeding one another in rapid succession and the diversity and complexity of threats and risks has also increased enormously. Internal and external security are more interrelated than ever. Europe is surrounded by conflicts and instability."

Other recent reports support that diagnosis. In a report entitled *Een kompas voor een wereld in beweging* [A compass for a changing world],⁴ The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS) identified four trends in the domain of international security of importance for the Netherlands: multipolarity, sovereignism, assertiveness and the 'Rise of the Rest'. In the Strategic Monitor 2017,⁵ the Clingendael Institute referred to a world without historical precedent and described the current period as a 'multi-order' era. Significantly, the report of the authoritative Munich Security Conference 2017 was entitled *Post-Truth, Post-West, Post-Order?*, although it did end with a question mark. Like the other reports mentioned above, it found that the security environment is highly volatile but, above all, it observed that illiberal movements are gaining ground. The rise of so-called 'illiberal democracies' (as Fareed Zakaria called them in an article in *Foreign Affairs* in 1997), democratically-elected governments that stretch, and even go beyond, the limits of constitutional law by violating the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens, form a threat to the international legal order that the Netherlands actively seeks to protect. More than ever, internal and external security, developments in the Netherlands and abroad, are interconnected.

These changes in the security environment and the threats to the international legal order not only call for a new strategic positioning, but also for consideration of increased investment in the armed forces. Accordingly, the government declared, in 2014, that it would adjust the level of ambition of the armed forces and, where necessary and possible, increase the financial resources allocated to the defence budget.⁶ During the NATO summit in Wales in September 2014, the Netherlands alongside the other alliance members promised to raise defence spending closer to the NATO standard of 2% of gross domestic product (GDP) within 10 years. These undertakings were confirmed at the NATO summit in Warsaw on 8 and 9 July 2016, when the Dutch government indicated that it envisaged taking further steps on the basis of a long-term perspective, having regard to the international security environment and the budgetary scope.⁷

Although the need for additional budgetary room is repeatedly stressed, a problem is that up to now the commitments have been mainly statements of intent. To highlight the limits to the deployability of the armed forces, the Minister of Defence sent the *NATO Defence Planning Review* to the President of the House of Representatives of the States-General.⁸ Without investments to increase their deployability, the Netherlands would be left with nothing more than a 'recuperating armed forces'. Although earlier austerity measures are being made up for, they will still not attain the necessary capacity.⁹ In short, the proposals for additional investment are still a long way from meeting the requirements imposed by the security environment and the necessary strategic reorientation.

1.3 Security Policy Must Reflect Values and Meet Conditions

Since the 1899 Hague Peace Conference, efforts to secure peace through multilateral treaties and judicial settlement of disputes between states have been under way. The First World War crushed the expectations of those years, but after this horrendous war and again after the global disaster of the Second World War, responsible political leaders built and rebuilt the multilateral international legal order. The Netherlands has always been an active partner in these endeavours.

In our times, the notion of peace through international law is seriously challenged in at least two respects: on the one hand the re-emergence of nationalistic antagonism in authoritarian political systems, and on the other hand the growing importance of security issues that are insufficiently covered by international legal arrangements and dispute settlement: environmental issues, resource conflicts, human security and migration. The Dutch constitution requires the government to promote actively the international legal order. Given the requirements that result from a changing security environment, security policy and defence policy have to contribute to this mission in the national and international interest of peace and justice.

The tasks of the armed forces and defence policy are set out in general terms in the Constitution. However, in light of the changed security environment the ability to protect the integrity of national and allied territory, including the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom (the first main task) will have to be reviewed, in addition to the task of protecting and promoting the international legal order (the second main task). Assisting civil authorities in upholding the law, providing disaster relief and humanitarian relief, both nationally and internationally (the third main task) presents new challenges with the available capacity.

The capacity to provide security also has to be in balance with the values of a free and democratic society. Studies devoted to the issue of security warn of 'securitisation'.¹⁰ Just as excessive 'medicalisation' transforms miscellaneous everyday complaints into medical conditions and 'juridification' leads to issues consistently being seen in legal terms and 'criminalisation' to issues being seen in the context of criminal law, 'securitisation' is a process by which various issues are clustered under the

title of security, even when to do so is not always necessary or desirable. To put it another way, in a democratic society security policy must be embedded in a broader framework and care must be taken to avoid immediately treating every problem as a ‘security problem’ of a similar order.

The concept of security has already expanded in the Netherlands in the last decade. The Dutch Safety Board [*Onderzoeksraad voor Veiligheid*] was established in 2005, and the name of the Ministry of Justice was expanded to include ‘Security’ (currently ‘the Ministry of Justice and Security’), even though security in the ministry’s policy domain is primarily the result of effective law enforcement and therefore does not need to be named separately. This is a reflection of the attention to security in other ministries which are responsible for subjects such as food safety, the safety of the infrastructure, product safety and safety in public health. Caution is required, however, when security threatens to be seen as all-embracing.

The concept of security has itself gradually assumed a different meaning. The dynamics of technology, globalisation, geopolitics and the emancipation of society and individuals in relation to the state have changed the interpretation of the term ‘security’. The scope of the term has been ‘extended’ from the traditional military defence of the state and its inhabitants against external threats, to the economic and ecological security of supranational regions and even the entire world. The term is also increasingly used in connection with the safety and future risks and threats to and within societies, social groups and individuals. Anyone wishing to explain and appreciate international views and policies on security has to be aware of the historical, cultural and political givens and future orientations that are inherent to this concept of security.¹¹

1.4 Protection Cannot Be Achieved Through Isolation

This book is guided by the insight that the security of the Netherlands is connected to and entwined with that of the countries around us. It is pointless to think of this country’s security in terms of entrenchment: purposeful policy can only be pursued by collaborating in measures to strengthen security in Europe and reducing the causes of dissatisfaction in Africa and the Near East. This insight is all the more relevant now that Brexit will create a gap in the development of the European security and defence policy and the likelihood that American involvement in NATO will diminish under President Trump – something that President Obama had in fact already clearly hinted at, particularly with a call for greater investment in the armed forces by the EU member states. Due to the *unpredictability* of the role of the US, the already escalating tensions with the Russian Federation assume even greater significance.

This book discusses at length the growing interconnectedness of national and international policy (including security policy) and the socialisation of security and defence and their consequences for international security and defence pol-

icy. These issues are discussed on the basis of an analysis of *international security*. For the Netherlands and Europe in particular, it is important to continue investing in strengthening the international legal order and in creating the conditions and circumstances under which countries on the eastern and southern flank of the EU can continue to develop in economic and political terms. At the same time, the WRR observes that the further development of the international legal order must be built on robust, realistic foundations in which the security of Dutch and European citizens is paramount. This means that the Netherlands must have a coherent international security policy, which includes future-proof armed forces.

The growing economic and political influence of countries like Russia, China, Indonesia, India, Brazil and Mexico is expected to translate into greater political tensions over trade, rivalry over access to raw materials and transport routes and expansion of potential military strength. The strain on the security of transport routes, the strategic game surrounding logistics and connections, as well as the status of networks and flow security, will increase. The international architecture under UN auspices will also come under further pressure. This means that the contours are emerging of a lengthy period of conflict for the control of, access to, availability of and safeguarding of vital interests, i.e., territorial, physical, economic and ecological security, political and social stability and the international legal order.¹² Consequently, complex conflicts and persistent global and regional problems such as climate change, migration, poverty and guaranteeing fair access to shared natural resources are difficult to tackle. The US has not lost any of its military dominance, but, due in part to its ageing population, internal political developments and pressure on financial and other resources, it is no longer willing and able to present itself as the sole hegemonic guardian of the international order. It is uncertain whether other stable alternative (regional) forums between groups of countries will emerge in time.

These power shifts and the fragmentation of power among state and non-state actors will probably also be reflected in the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the coming years. Most nuclear powers are already modernising their arsenals. There are currently 25 countries in possession of nuclear material that can be used to produce nuclear weapons. The risks of further proliferation to states in the Middle East, of misunderstandings and accidents and of weapons falling into the hands of terrorists or criminals are therefore far greater than at the time of the Cold War, when five countries possessed nuclear weapons.

It is also becoming increasingly clear that the instability and potential for conflict on the southern and eastern flanks of the EU will persist in the coming years. Since the popular uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in 2011 descended into large-scale destabilisation and refugee crises, Europe and the Netherlands have been experiencing the negative spill-over effects. There has been a sharp rise in the number of refugees and irregular migrants, which has caused a severe escalation in social and political tensions within and between the EU member

states. The instability on the EU's southern periphery appears set to continue for the time being.

The states in the east of the EU and their immediate neighbours also appear susceptible to future instability and conflict because of their weak institutions, imbalanced economic development, corrupt political elites, ethnically diverse populations and difficult regime changes. They will possibly also be more exposed to Russia's disrupting influence. The armed conflict in Ukraine is a warning sign. Europe will have to be prepared for a scenario in which Russia tries to disrupt the Baltic States in the same way as it disrupted Ukraine and seeks closer ties with Serbia in order to increase its influence in the Balkans.

The multiplicity of (purported) risks and security threats, the interconnection of internal and external security issues and the greater involvement of social actors in security affairs all call for a clear policy. The government will have to explain the policy to the public. What are its priorities on the basis of the evaluation of the analysis of the internal and external environment in light of the national interests and values that are inseparable from the European context? What are the appropriate instruments and resources for the coming years?

Explaining them in outline is an essential ingredient of the public and political debate that is needed to create support for the necessary long-term investments in foreign and security policy. After all, the absence of sufficient support for policies increases the risk of vacillating policy and leaves less room for contradiction and the possibility for learning and innovation. Moreover, public and political debate about the goals, resources and instruments of security policy can provide a healthy counterweight to undesirable securitisation and permanent 'overkill' in the demands made on the government in the field of national and international security policy.

Most political parties in the Netherlands still regard the Netherlands' international orientation and its support for the international legal order and the rule of law as imperative: without them the country cannot undertake any action against threats such as international crime, weapons of mass destruction, uncontrolled migration streams or cyber crime. At the same time, however, there is also a reluctance to translate that realisation into a larger narrative, with clear review frameworks, envisaged goals and a coherent and consistent approach to problems derived from it.

However, it is the WRR's view that these narratives are essential for creating public support for the envisaged policy, particularly in times of international and European turbulence and public controversy. No one is immune to the images of streams of refugees and the heated local debates about providing shelter for refugees and asylum seekers. Many people in the Netherlands and Europe are more uncertain than they used to be about their prospects of a meaningful future. Immigration, globalisation and economic instability are strengthening the calls for individuality, small-scale interaction and the human dimension. Responding to these calls with guarded 'policy language' or financial discourse will not get one very far. Those responsible for defence policy and international security policy will have to be able to explain the strategic considerations in terms the layman can

clearly understand, particularly when it concerns the importance of Europe, NATO and the UN and crisis-management operations abroad. Geopolitics and micropolitics go hand in hand. The mixed experiences of the last decade call for a realistic narrative, which has to encompass both awareness of the Netherlands' direct interests and the dilemmas it faces and the values that Dutch people wish to defend in the twenty-first century. Those experiences also suggest that human rights, human security and the social contract between state and society represent a challenge not only for distant developing countries. They must also be the subject of permanent maintenance and debate here in the Netherlands.

1.5 Approach and Demarcation

The aim of this book is to stimulate political and public debate about the priorities and capacities required for an intelligent, future-proof Dutch security and defence policy. The book is the result of a detailed study of the literature, interviews with numerous experts in the Netherlands and abroad, seminars, written input and peer review, in addition to the regular and intensive deliberations of the WRR members and the academic staff of the WRR. The book builds on previous reports by the WRR that are relevant to the subject.¹³ The book does not contain a comprehensive analysis of trends or an elucidation of all the – theoretical – options for a new international security policy for the Netherlands, but it does consider the changes that the WRR feels provide compelling reasons for policy changes in the Netherlands. Radical policy changes, such as a return to the policy of neutrality preferred by Netherlands in the pre-1940 period or withdrawal from the EU, are not considered here. In the WRR's view, such breaks with the past are incompatible with the Netherlands' existing interconnectedness with the rest of the world and the country's international interests, values and orientations.

The WRR's point of departure is the necessity (including a constitutional obligation) and desirability of the Netherlands making an active contribution to the further development of the international system of security, liberty and legal order. The reference point for the action perspectives presented in this book is the armed forces. Many other parties are relevant to a broad security policy, but the question addressed in this book requires that it should focus directly on the role of the armed forces and defence policy. And because it concerns *Dutch* security policy, the book concentrates on the policy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which according to the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands embraces the international relations and the defence of the entire Kingdom, including the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom. For the purpose of this study, *defence policy* is defined as the policy by which the government manages the organisation, instruments and finances of the armed forces. Defence policy is an essential component of the broader Dutch security policy.¹⁴

1.6 Structure of the Book

The structure of the book is as follows. The first part (Chaps. 2, 3, and 4) analyses the changing nature of security, the concept of security and the type of strategy formulation that is required. The second part (Chaps. 5, 6, and 7) contains a discussion of the consequences of that for defence policy and the position of the armed forces, and ends with the conclusions and recommendations.

In Chap. 2, the WRR analyses the extension of the concept of security that has occurred in the last few decades. The classical view of security as relating to national states and the protection of their territory still forms the core of thinking about national and international security. But security nowadays encompasses more than the protection of a state's territory against military aggression by another state. International security, for example, is increasingly linked to the security of society and the security of individuals (human security).

Globalisation, growing interdependence and geopolitical rivalry are prompting closer attention to economic security and flow security – safe, unimpeded flows of goods, services and data and the infrastructure required for them.

Chapter 3 shows that a steady expansion and socialisation of the security agenda is also occurring in the Netherlands. Attention in international security policy shifted from the Cold War dynamic to crisis management in fragile states, human rights and development. The Ministry of Defence and the armed forces translate this orientation into a sharp focus on 'expeditionarity', with missions carried out a long way from the country's own territory being linked to the agenda for development cooperation. The experiences with these missions have not been entirely positive, however. Economic security and flow security have only entered the vocabulary of the Dutch security agenda fairly recently and are not yet embedded as fully-fledged perspectives in the broader policy. On the other hand, the Netherlands does have a dedicated strategy for cyber security.

Chapter 4 outlines the rise of strategy formulation and national security strategies. Internationally, strategy formulation is a tried and trusted instrument for finding one's way in a complex, dynamic and unpredictable security context. By extension, it also leads to new policy processes and instruments, with appropriate changes in coordinating structures and forms of partnership. The Netherlands also studies the internal and external security environment, but has not yet fully embraced the available policy instruments and the underlying ideas.

Chapter 5 investigates the main tasks of defence policy in a changing security environment, starting with a brief sketch of the basic principles and recent priorities of Dutch foreign and security policy. There is then a discussion of the changing international security environment in the Netherlands and Europe, as well as the special requirements of the defence of the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom. The chapter describes how defence policy explicitly has to be seen in the context of the strong mutual dependencies between the national, regional and global levels. The main tasks are still the same, but have to be performed differently, for example to meet

the growing threat of terrorism as a result of Dutch interventions abroad and the persistent instability in Europe's surrounding regions.

Chapter 6 analyses the choices that have to be made to ensure the armed forces remain future-proof. The modernisation of the Dutch armed forces has been accompanied by significant spending cuts, rising operating and investment costs and wear and tear to equipment as a result of demanding missions abroad. There are deep-rooted problems as a result. The conclusion therefore has to be that the armed forces are not sufficiently future-proof. The problems have become even more urgent with the deterioration in the security situation around Europe, the agreements made in Wales (2014) and Warsaw (2016) to strengthen the alliance's defences and increase defence spending, and the increased vulnerability of the Netherlands and its inhabitants. This chapter describes the five conditions that a policy designed to create a sharper focus and make additional investments in the armed forces would have to meet.

Chapter 7, finally, presents the consequences of the analysis and presents the conclusions and recommendations for a future-proof Dutch international security and defence policy, and their implications for the armed forces.

Endnotes

- 1 Drent, M. & Zandee, D. (2016).
- 2 In this book the WRR uses the name Da'esh (Al Dawla al-Islamyia fil Irak wa'al Sham) rather than IS, the abbreviation commonly used in the Netherlands. Although the term IS ('Islamic State') has become commonplace, it reflects the incorrect claim of the movement's leaders and its supporters that such a thing as an Islamic State has been established by them, which is not the case. Furthermore, Islamic scholars have clearly distanced themselves from the term 'Islamic'. Although the WRR realises that the term Da'esh is less common, it has nevertheless chosen to use it for the reasons given here.
- 3 Ministry of Defence (2017: 5).
- 4 HCSS. (2017: 23–38).
- 5 Clingendael (2017: 2).
- 6 Parliamentary Documents II 2014–2015, 34,000, no. 1, 16 September 2014.
- 7 Letter to the House of Representatives with a report on the NATO summit in Warsaw on 8 and 9 July 2016, DVB/VD-156/2016.
- 8 Parliamentary Documents II 2015–2016, 28,676, no. 241, 24 March 2016.
- 9 Zandee, D. (2016).
- 10 Cf. Wæver 1995; Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998; Balzacq, Guzzini, Williams, Wæver and H. Patomäki (2015).
- 11 Graaf, B. de (2012a).
- 12 Ducheine, P. (2016: 126).
- 13 Reports on, for example, Dutch foreign policy (Attached to the World [*Aan het*

buitenland gehecht], 2010b), Dutch development policy (Less pretension, more ambition [*Minder pretentie, meer ambitie*], 2010a), Dutch policy towards Europe (Rediscovering Europe in the Netherlands [*Europa in Nederland*], 2007), Dynamism in Islamic activism [*Dynamiek in islamitisch activism*], 2006) and economic resilience (Towards a Learning Economy [*Naar een lerende economie*], 2013).

- 14 See also the Dutch Defence Doctrine from 2013. Defence policy is part of the extended foreign and security policy.

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