

THE NETHERLANDS ARMED FORCES PROMOTING THE INTERNATIONAL RULE OF LAW AND STABILITY: MATCHING AMBITIONS, STRUCTURES AND FUNDS

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INTRODUCTION

One of the three main tasks of the Netherlands Armed Forces is to promote the international rule of law and international stability. The other two are protecting the integrity of national and Alliance territory – including the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba – thereby supporting civil authorities in upholding the law, and providing disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, both nationally and internationally.¹ This chapter focuses on the capabilities and approaches of the Netherlands Armed Forces in fulfilling the ‘international task’ in a constantly changing political and military environment. These issues are at the core of the current debate on the future of the armed forces that has been organized by the Dutch government. This debate is channelled through the ‘Future Policy Survey’ – a joint project of the ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs, the Interior and Justice – which should result in ‘a sound judgment on the armed forces and the level of defence expenditure associated with it.’² This chapter aims to contribute to this debate by analyzing the problem of the enormous challenges posed by high political ambitions, limited means and new requirements. In addition it discusses various choices that need to be made to make sure that the Netherlands Armed Forces can continue to fulfil their international task in the years to come. Basically, a decision has to be made between the so-called ‘Venus option’ – structuring the armed forces for peace operations – and the ‘Mars option’ – which means focusing on expeditionary capacities to participate in combat operations.

¹ Ministry of Defence of the Netherlands (hereafter: Ministry of Defence), *Facts and figures about the armed forces*, October 2007.

² Ministry of Defence, *Future Policy Survey. A foundation for the armed forces of 2020*, Summer 2008.

DUTCH FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

After the end of the Cold War there was a brief feeling of euphoria around the world. The then United States President, George H.W. Bush, spoke of a 'new world order', an era in which worldwide peace and prosperity seemed closer than ever. However, very soon the situation in Somalia and the civil war in the former Yugoslavia brought an end to this optimism. The Cold War situation, in which the major threats to security were relatively clear, changed into a situation characterized by uncertainty. Open hostility between (blocs of) states made way for an increase in intrastate conflicts in failing and fragile states, and a wide range of risks and threats posed by non-state actors: terrorism, international organized crime and piracy. Some of the most life-threatening Cold War challenges remained, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In addition, ongoing globalization made the world more vulnerable to economic disruption. Collapsing stock markets, a dollar crisis, or rising food prices may ultimately have unpredictable consequences for international security. And finally, climate change may cause floods and pandemics may claim hundreds of thousands of victims. In other words, the overall international security landscape has become more complex and less predictable.

What position does the Netherlands take in this uncertain and unstable world? Despite its small size, the Netherlands is an important economic power. As one of the top ten exporting countries in the world it has economic and political interests worldwide. Due to its geographical location, the Netherlands also plays an important role in international trade as the main port of Europe. As a consequence, the prosperity and security of the Netherlands is strongly linked to stability elsewhere in the world.

In accordance with its position in the world and a dependence on what is happening outside its borders, Article 90 of the Constitution of the Netherlands states that the government should promote the international legal order. As a consequence Dutch foreign and security policy takes a very proactive stance when the international legal order and international stability are threatened. This implies a general willingness to intervene at an early stage in crisis situations in other parts of the world, preferably under the auspices of the United Nations.

However, self-interest is not the only reason why the Netherlands promotes the international legal order and contributes to international stability. The rule of law and peace are also very important values that are anchored in Dutch culture and traditions. The same holds true for democracy and human rights.

THE ROLE OF THE NETHERLANDS ARMED FORCES

In line with the Netherlands foreign and security policy, the Netherlands Armed Forces actively contribute to stability and freedom in the world. This is expressed in one of its three main tasks, which is ‘promoting the international rule of law and international stability.’ The two other main tasks are ‘protection of the integrity of national and Alliance territory, including the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba,’ and ‘supporting civil authorities in upholding the law, providing disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, both nationally and internationally.’ In this chapter, however, we focus on the first-mentioned task.

Every year, thousands of Dutch military personnel are deployed for peace support operations abroad, or contribute on a rotational basis to (NATO and EU) rapid response forces. Currently, more than one hundred of them contribute to peace and stability in the Balkans, mainly in Bosnia Herzegovina. In the Middle East, the navy patrols the coast of Lebanon and the army participates in the NATO Training Mission in Iraq. And already for decades Dutch armed forces provide observers to the UN Truce Supervision Organisation in Israel, Syria and Lebanon (UNTSO). Most of the Dutch military personnel that are currently deployed abroad are based in Afghanistan. About 1,650 of them are part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). In early 2008, the Netherlands Council of Ministers decided to take part in the EU operation in Chad and the Central African Republic (EUFOR Chad/RCA). The Netherlands Armed Forces have deployed a marine reconnaissance unit of approximately sixty troops. In the Democratic Republic of Congo some forty Dutch military personnel serve in the EU mission. Smaller groups of observers and advisors are seconded to the International Military Advisory Team (IMAT) and the UN mission in Sudan (UNMIS), as well as the UN mission in Eastern Congo (MONUC).³

The number of missions and that of military personnel express a strong commitment by the Netherlands to international security and international organizations (UN, NATO, EU). The figures also indicate a heavy workload for the Netherlands Armed Forces. Set against the background of the new and ever changing security environment, trying to successfully contribute to these missions has become an increasingly difficult task. It requires armed forces capable of working in a complex political environment, working together with traditional and new allies, and operating in hostile and difficult geographical environments. The question is to what extent the armed forces possess the capabilities and the right approaches to effectively fulfil their task.

³ Ministry of Defence, *supra* n. 1.

CAPABILITIES

The capabilities needed to operate in the current security environment are very different from those during the Cold War. In today's security environment, the Netherlands Armed Forces must be quickly deployable, flexible and able to react swiftly to unexpected developments and threats, in different parts of the world. Increasingly, this includes conflict and crises areas located in far-away places; such as Chad, Eritrea or Afghanistan. As a consequence, the armed forces must be equipped to deal with lines of supply that are very much longer. Also the operational areas are much larger. Compare, for instance, the Srebrenica enclave in Bosnia with the province of Uruzgan in Afghanistan. In addition, the Netherlands Armed Forces have to be capable of operating within larger, international contingents that are composed of not only the traditional (NATO) allies, but also new partners, some of them with quite a different cultural background. At the same time, the Netherlands Armed Forces are increasingly deployed for national tasks. In particular the terrorist threat and nature-related incidents have made the third main task of the armed forces, 'supporting civil authorities in upholding the law, providing disaster relief and humanitarian assistance,' much more relevant.

These new circumstances and developments require a Defence organization that is flexible and that has enough capacity to fulfil a wide range of tasks. How are the Netherlands Armed Forces currently doing in this respect?

Matériel

In the field of *matériel*, the Netherlands Armed Forces are implementing an ambitious programme. In the coming years the armed forces will see the introduction of the NH-90 helicopter, additional Chinook transport helicopters, ocean-going patrol vessels, and new infantry combat vehicles. Other improvements include equipping the mechanized howitzer with precision ammunition, modifications to the deck guns of the Air Defence and Command Frigates, and equipping the F-16 fighter aircraft with new target designation assets. Owing to these measures, the Netherlands Armed Forces will continue to be one of the most modern ones in the world.

However, due to current budgetary constraints and the unexpectedly high expenditure incurred by the Uruzgan Task Force as part of ISAF, in 2007 the Ministry of Defence had to take additional financial measures by reducing a number of operational capabilities. These included the sale of 28 of the current 88 Leopard II main battle tanks; 12 out of 36 self-propelled howitzers and 18 out of 90 F-16 fighter aircraft.⁴ In addition, the Netherlands decided to with-

⁴ Ministry of Defence, Policy Letter to Parliament 'Service worldwide', 18 September 2007, p. 29.

draw from NATO's Alliance Ground Surveillance project, which consists of a mix of manned and unmanned airborne radar platforms that can look down on the ground and relay data to commanders. The Ministry of Defence also scrapped plans to acquire tactical Tomahawk cruise missiles for its frigates as well as medium-altitude long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicles. Some of these projects and *matériel* would be very welcome in Uruzgan and other areas of operation. This particularly holds true for the extra sets of 'eyes in the sky'.

The limited budget and the mission in Afghanistan make it difficult to do something about a number of *matériel* shortcomings. One of them is the shortage of strategic transport, especially in the air. This is an important bottleneck in logistics, especially now that the Netherlands Armed Forces increasingly operate in far-away places such as Afghanistan and Chad. The alternative to acquiring one's *own matériel* is leasing, hiring or outsourcing. Another solution is the pooling of means and tools. NATO's Strategic Airlift Capability C-17 initiative is an example of this. NATO will buy three C-17s Globemaster heavy transport aircraft as NATO-pooled assets with multinational crews. The Netherlands Ministry of Defence and of Foreign Affairs will invest • 130 million in this project. Participating countries will receive allocated flight hours relative to their participation. The Dutch Minister of Defence has signed a Memorandum of Understanding and will participate to the extent of 500 flying hours per year.⁵

The most important project on which the government has to decide is without doubt the replacement of the F-16 fighter aircraft. The Netherlands has taken part in the development of the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) since 2002. In the next few years a number of intermediate steps need to be taken before a definitive decision can be made to procure the aircraft. The final (formal) decision-making phase on the replacement of the F-16 is planned for 2010, but all intermediate steps seem to indicate a choice (at a very early stage) for the JSF. Of course, the JSF is a controversial project, both in the United States and the Netherlands, as it is very costly and it can be argued that there are other, more pressing needs than replacing the – regularly modernized – F-16 fighter aircraft that are still militarily superior in all the areas in which they operate.

One of the more pressing needs is the further enhancement of the expeditionary capabilities of the Netherlands Armed Forces. This is the chief priority of the Ministry of Defence. According to the Minister, Eimert van Middelkoop:

'First of all, operational capabilities need to be improved. It is not just a matter of the number of troops or weapons systems, but of finding the right balance between all key capabilities, including intelligence, command and control or logistics. While we are quite advanced in terms of the expeditionary capability of our armed

⁵ Ministry of Defence, Letter to Parliament, 6 June 2008.

forces, we also note that the effectiveness of expeditionary operations increasingly depends on those support capabilities.⁶

Personnel

People are the core of the Netherlands Armed Forces. In order to fulfil its tasks, the Netherlands Armed Forces employ about 50,000 military men and women. According to the Defence Plan 2008-2017, the total personnel strength should grow slightly in the coming years to 51,000 in 2012.⁷ However, recruiting new personnel seems increasingly difficult. Currently the armed forces cannot fill about 7,000 vacancies.⁸ Explanations include better opportunities for youngsters elsewhere, as the Dutch economy is doing rather well, and the fact that serving in military missions abroad is not attractive to all youngsters. The latter particularly holds true for people with young families. Also the more than twenty serious injuries and the more than a dozen fatalities in the Uruzgan mission have a negative impact on recruitment.

A personnel problem of a different kind is attracting enough highly qualified persons. More than ever, the armed forces rely on high-tech transportation and weapons systems. In general there is a shortage in the Netherlands of people with technical expertise and therefore the armed forces have to compete with companies that can pay much higher salaries.

In an attempt to deal with these challenges, the Netherlands Armed Forces are, increasingly, making use of civilian service providers. They do so at home and in operational areas. Examples include leasing ships and aircraft, as well as contracting local business for various services, some of which may even involve the use of 'private' forces. Civilian services are becoming increasingly important as the Netherlands Armed Forces engage in more and more operations, which are increasingly long term and complex in nature. However, the activities of an uncontrolled or poorly regulated private security industry can act as an obstacle to peace building, good governance and sustainable development. One principal question that has to be answered for the near future is what services may be outsourced and what preconditions should the Dutch government observe when doing so?⁹

⁶ Interview in: 45 *Jane's Defence Weekly*, Issue 5 (30 January 2008) p. 34.

⁷ Ministry of Defence, *supra* n. 1.

⁸ 'Defensie heeft tekort van 7.000 militairen', *NRC Handelsblad* (29 August 2008)

⁹ For the current discussion, see: Advisory Council on International Affairs, 'Employing Private Military Companies, A Question of Responsibility', December 2007, and the response of the government, Ministry of Defence, 25 April 2008.

APPROACHES

3D

In the attempt to contribute to international stability, the Netherlands Armed Forces are involved in stabilization operations in which peace, security and development are more interconnected than ever before. As a consequence, one of the cornerstones of the current Dutch foreign and security policy is the implementation of a comprehensive approach. Different labels are in use to indicate more or less the same. The one that is used most often is the ‘diplomacy, defence and development approach’, or ‘3D approach’. The then Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Bernhard Bot, stressed that security is a precondition for development and that development contributes to lasting peace and security. At a conference of the Society for International Development and the National Commission for Sustainable Development he stated that

‘[...] to achieve success, we will have to make sure that we establish an overall framework in which our political, military and development instruments can be put to good use in a logical and coherent manner. That is why I spoke today of the trinity of politics, security and development, which we should treat as an inseparable trinity. [...] When the trinity of politics, security and development is broken, the work of soldiers, police officers, diplomats and development workers will lack direction, lack coherence and lack impact, and, at worst, will become counterproductive.’¹⁰

‘Hearts and minds’

The success of integrated approaches in stabilization operations not only depends on the cooperation between the 3 ‘Ds’ but also on the involvement of the local population. It is very difficult to ‘win’ a military mission without a successful ‘hearts and minds’ campaign: aimed at gaining and maintaining the support of the population in order to isolate the insurgents. For instance, in Afghanistan, the insurgency by the Taliban is not only a military problem, but a social and political problem as well. Although NATO military power may be far superior, political considerations make it less desirable to use all the available destructive power. The military must understand the relative value of using force and how easily excessive force, even when apparently justified, can undermine popular support. This requires the ability to use force in an aimed, subtle and implicit way, which will often not be massive or aimed at other armed forces.

¹⁰ Speech delivered by Dr Ben Bot at a conference of the Society for International Development and the National Commission for Sustainable Development, 7 April 2006.

The military are therefore faced with the necessity to think less in terms of 'combat' and to focus their attention on the political 'effects' of their operations. The military must be able to see issues and actions from the perspective of the domestic population. In other words, in addition to the skills of the diplomats and development workers, they also need social and political skills in order to be successful.

Consequences

The implementation of the idea that military deployment can only be successful as part of a larger and integrated approach to security and stability, involving a wide range of partners, has very much widened the scope of the work of the Netherlands Armed Forces. As a consequence, military deployment, in day-to-day practice, involves a great deal more than the deployment of military units. Moreover, the military operations are more complex than ever. Often, the armed forces fulfil several military tasks within the same region – sometimes under different mandates. As a result, peace support operations have evolved into complex stabilization operations, being a mix of the following elements:

- Classic peacekeeping
- Peace enforcement
- Police tasks
- Counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations
- Rebuilding and reconstruction, and
- Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

In addition, the operations not only involve managing certain acute crises, but also projects aimed at addressing some of the root causes of security problems. Security Sector Reform (SSR) is a good example of the increasing array of tasks for the armed forces. SSR refers to the development of democratic, professional and effective security structures so as to enable civilians to live their lives in security and freedom, and to resolve internal conflicts within the form of government without resorting to force.¹¹ The aim is to establish a well-functioning security sector under political control. The Netherlands Armed Forces show an increased interest in this field, contributing to the reform of the security sector in fragile states such as Afghanistan and various African countries. However, the total personnel involved remains limited.

¹¹ Ministry of Defence, *supra* n. 2, p. 9.

CHOICES NEEDED

At least the nominal range of activities and competences of the Netherlands Armed Forces has become enormous. As a consequence, the defence organization as a whole is facing the problem of becoming overstretched. The military men and women have to be able to fulfil many different tasks: to assist civil authorities in evacuation operations or counterterrorism activities, to fight around the world together with allies in the highest spectrum of violence, and to be able or to work together with aid workers and local leaders in the reconstruction of post-war regions, just to mention a few. Moreover, they have to be able to participate in sustained operations with (too) limited means. In the medium and long run, this challenge is simply too much to ask for, especially against the background of the gradually declining defence budget. Basically, there are two answers to the questions posed by this challenge: either one spends more money on defence, or one has to decrease the number of tasks and to lower ambitions.

To the military, the most favourable of the two answers is to pour in more money. They point at the (informal) NATO standard of two percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) to be spent on defence. According to the State Budget 2007, the Netherlands expends less than 1.5 percent. This standard, and especially the large amount of tasks given to the military, have been presented as compelling arguments to demand a higher budget. However, political reality is that the budget has declined for almost two decades under post-Cold War governments, whatever political colour. It decreased from three percent of the GDP in the late 1980s to the above-mentioned figure of about 1.5 percent. Within the same time period, the political ambitions have never been 'decreased' by the same rate, thus creating a growing gap between capabilities, on the one hand, and demands and expectations, on the other.

High political ambition level

The Defence Priorities White Paper of 1993 introduced the concept of 'political ambition level'. The contribution to crisis management operations was set at one battalion or its equivalent (an F-16 fighter squadron, two frigates). The capabilities would have to enable Dutch participation in four simultaneous operations that could be sustained for a specific period. In previous years, this ambition level was only adjusted once. Due to budgetary limitations the government decided to reduce it from four to three simultaneous military operations.

In practice Dutch military contributions are generally composed on the basis of the specific demands of the mission in question. For instance, the current contribution to ISAF, including the Air Task Force, consisting of F-16 fighter

aircraft and helicopters, is seen by the government as three contributions with a task force of battalion size or the equivalent. At the same time, the Netherlands Armed Forces are also involved in other missions, such as the naval contribution to UNIFIL and the naval protection of food transportations near Somalia. In other words, the Netherlands Armed Forces are still organized in such a way as to be able to cope with 'any' kind of conflict. This sounds 'robust', but in practice it is not. The government can always say 'yes' to requests and contribute to missions in a rather political and 'symbolic' way instead of a concrete way. In operations such as in Iraq or Afghanistan, the armed forces run the risk of missing the mark, because the capabilities have thinned out to the extent that a robust operation has become impossible.

As mentioned above, the 'simple' answer to this risk is to pour in more money. However, it is highly unlikely a political majority may be found, now or in the near future, that would support such an answer. In fact, one must expect a further decrease in the budget for defence. Therefore, the military, the Ministry of Defence and politicians should start considering to abandon the idea of armed forces that are able to cope with 'any' situation.

This will not be easy, as it requires having to say 'no' to certain requests. Moreover, it requires making difficult choices: On what tasks should the Netherlands Armed Forces concentrate as part of its obligation to promote the international rule of law and international stability? On what particular operations and concrete tasks will the future Netherlands Armed Forces specialize? Basically there are roughly two different options that could be labelled as the 'Venus option' and the 'Mars option', with a different set of political ambitions and different structures for the armed forces.

The Venus option

According to the Venus option the Netherlands Armed Forces will be fully structured for peace operations (including reconstruction and rebuilding) in relatively stable environments. A second task would be to support humanitarian operations. The Venus option emphasizes the use of military capabilities to support civilian authorities, private parties and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The often protracted deployment in this option is aimed at achieving a state of law and order as well as offering a 'security umbrella'. A sustained presence in a country or region would allow the armed forces 'to finish the job', instead of being a temporary pawn in a larger game in which it is a minor player.

Regarding combat capacities and operations, the armed forces will be able to perform such tasks only to a very limited degree. In the case of the Venus option, this capacity is primarily earmarked for self-defence in case the strategic environment proves less stable than expected or cases where the distinction

between operations at the higher and lower ends of the conflict spectrum are less clear.

The Venus option allows substantial reductions of major weapons systems. The battalion will become the basic unit in the Army and Marine Corps. Regarding the other key task of the Netherlands Armed Forces, protecting the homeland, it requires close cooperation with the armed forces of Germany. The Venus option also demands a substantial capability for supporting civil tasks, for instance a 'CIMIC battalion' and a battalion-size 'riot and crowd' unit. This option also envisages a bigger role for the fourth entity of the Netherlands Armed Forces, the Marechaussee (Gendarmerie).¹²

As this option focuses on peace operations and post-conflict reconstruction, the armed forces will need to closely cooperate with the other two 'Ds', diplomats and development experts. This requires additional investments in training and exercises between these actors. It may even necessitate joint staffs at the ministries in The Hague as well as joint headquarters in the field.

The Mars option

Choosing for the Mars option means specializing the Netherlands Armed Forces into an 'expeditionary force' that can participate alongside major allies in combat operations. The core task of the armed forces is to protect national interests and that of our closest partners, through NATO, EU, UN or *ad hoc* coalitions of the willing. They have to be able to operate in extremely violent situations, also against well-equipped military opponents. Post-conflict peace-building missions or the support of civilian authorities are not neglected in this option, but these tasks are not leading when the decisions are made on the capabilities that will have to be developed.

For the armed forces as a whole, the first criterion of this option is the power of force projection. In other words, they have to be able to project stability to protect and enforce the international rule of law. The means and tools the armed forces will use must be modern and of high quality. They also have to be interoperable with the main military partners, as the Netherlands Armed Forces are not in a position to independently carry out larger operations. In other words, they have to become 'complementary' armed forces, offering a 'credible contribution' to international coalitions. Modularity and multi-readiness at the level of both the unit and the organization are important factors in that respect. A further increase of strategic (air or sea) lift capabilities will be necessary in

¹² Many elements of the Venus option can be found in the defence plans of the Dutch Social democrats as formulated in, e.g., *In dienst van Nederland, in dienst van de wereld*, *Een plan voor een actieve en doelmatige krijgsmacht*, PvdA Tweede Kamerfractie, Den Haag, November 2007.

order to improve the mobility of the force, which requires additional investments in assets of the Air Force and, to a lesser extent, the Navy.

The contribution of the Netherlands could be a range of tasks, but should preferably fill in lacunas in NATO's operational capacity (as part of NATO's Response Force [NRF]), or that of the Battle Groups of the EU). The final consideration regarding the Mars option concerns the coherence and balance of the toolbox as a whole, with a view towards military effectiveness. This is determined by the entire collection of weapons systems, sensor, communication and information systems, intelligence and logistics support.¹³

CONCLUDING REMARKS

One of the main obligations of the Netherlands Armed Forces is to promote the international rule of law and international stability. Given the 'challenges' in the field of *matériel* and personnel and the need to participate in more and more comprehensive approaches to security, this task is an increasingly difficult one. Add to that today's complex and ever-changing security environment and we may have to speak of a sheer impossible task.

This means that in order to be able to effectively contribute to the international rule of law and international stability the Netherlands Armed Forces should focus on certain tasks and abandon or disregard others. This requires a fundamental choice with regard to the Netherlands defence policy and the future shape and orientation of its armed forces.

The *Venus option* with its focus on peace operations contributes to the goal of promoting the international rule of law and international stability as part of a more 'reactive security policy'. The Netherlands Armed Forces are mainly used in peace operations, with an emphasis on reconstruction and rebuilding. This option is more or less equivalent with the defence profiles of countries like Ireland and Austria.

The *Mars option*, with its focus on combat operations, is part of a more 'proactive security policy'. It requires building up an expeditionary military organization that can be deployed worldwide to participate in combat operations. The Mars option allows substantial reductions of some major weapons systems – such as submarines – but requires more budget than the Venus option.

In our opinion the expeditionary armed forces are better equipped to deal with and operate in the new international security environment. Therefore the

¹³ Many elements of the Mars option can be found in the defence plans of the Dutch Christian democrats as formulated in, e.g., 'Zo ver de wereld strekt. Ambities voor de Nederlandse krijgsmacht in een veranderende internationale omgeving', Rapport Wetenschappelijk Instituut voor het CDA, Den Haag, May 2007.

Mars option should be preferred if one considers promoting the international rule of law and stability the prime task of the Netherlands Armed Forces. This option also underlines the principles of 'solidarity' and 'sharing risks', which are the cornerstone of a well functioning NATO and European Security and Defence policy.

Looking at the political ambitions of the government as well as at the current defence plans and investments, it seems that both the government and the Netherlands Armed Forces favour expeditionary armed forces. While in the Defence White Paper 2000 the words 'expeditionary force' had still been explicitly avoided, in the text accompanying the State Budget 2003, the 'Expeditionary Force' became the *Leitmotiv* of plans and investments. Also the recent letter to Parliament in which the government unfolds its plans regarding the transformation of the Netherlands Armed Forces considers strengthening expeditionary capacities as a priority.¹⁴

A majority in Parliament probably shares this position, as politicians like to have a well-assorted military toolbox at their disposal from which – depending on the situation – the right tools may be selected for either a peace mission or a combat one. At the same time, however, it is highly unlikely that a majority in Parliament, as well as a majority among the general public, are willing to pay for what such armed forces need. Breaking this deadlock requires more political courage than was available in the last decade or so. Perhaps a bit more daring will emerge from the current 'Future Policy Survey' on future ambitions, the structure of the armed forces, and the defence budget, which will produce its findings in 2009.¹⁵ For the time being, the gap between capabilities and expectations and demands will continue to exist. Unfortunately, this carries serious risks, for the missions in Afghanistan and elsewhere, and for the armed forces as a whole. It is therefore high time that Government and Parliament find the courage needed to let go of the idea that the Netherlands Armed Forces can participate in 'any' kind of conflict and all types of operations. And next, they have to decide on what the armed forces will focus; on peace operations or on combat operations. The latter are more expensive and less safe than the former. However, given the new security environment, a focus on combat operations, the so-called Mars option, seems to be the most appropriate one.

¹⁴ Ministry of Defence, *supra* n.2, pp. 22-27.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, *Project Verkenningen* (April 2008), 'Verslag startconferentie verkenningen' <www.yourdefence.nl/file.php/1/Verslag_startconferentie.pdf>.