

European guarantees for Ukraine's security

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Advisory Council on International Affairs

The AIV is an independent body which advises the Dutch government and parliament on foreign policy. It produces advisory reports about international affairs both on its own initiative and on request. Its main areas of expertise are European cooperation, human rights, international development and security policy.



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Re Advisory letter, 'European guarantees for Ukraine's security'

Dear Ministers,

After four years, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has turned into a war of attrition. The extraordinary human suffering, the proximity of the violence and the security risks facing the Netherlands mean that the focus must turn to reaching a lasting ceasefire agreement. Against this background, and in line with previous advisory letters on Ukraine by the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV), it will be necessary both to modernise Europe's (and thus also the Netherlands') armed forces and to better equip, and accelerate support for, Ukraine. President Zelensky has emphasised that hard security guarantees for Ukraine will be an essential component of any future ceasefire agreement or peace deal ('ceasefire agreement'). European leaders have expressed their support for this position.

Despite the lack of visible progress in negotiations on a lasting ceasefire agreement, it is important that the Netherlands and Europe help shape this process and prepare for various possible outcomes. The Netherlands should play an active role in this regard, and together with other EU member states strive towards a lasting peace for a sovereign Ukraine. That peace should be the result of diplomatic consultations that involve Russia and Ukraine, as well as the EU and the United States.

Europe wants to contribute to Ukraine's security after a ceasefire agreement has been reached.¹ In this connection, deterrence will be an essential element of a broader package of security guarantees. The presence, composition and mandate of any reassurance force will play a crucial role in this regard. The core requirement is that both the ceasefire agreement and the response to any violations of international law must not be loosely made commitments, and that Ukraine must in any event be supported by troops from European countries. A leading role on the part of Europe does not exclude the possibility of other countries' participation.

Experience has shown that a ceasefire agreement often results in a frozen conflict. This is precisely the point at which a robust and credible international presence is needed in order to prevent the ceasefire becoming just a temporary pause in hostilities. This AIV advisory letter therefore specifically elaborates the concept of the international reassurance force as the core element of any hard security guarantees for Ukraine.



In this advisory letter, the term 'reassurance force' refers to a potential fighting force that can provide effective security guarantees in practice. The aim of such a force is to prevent violations of the ceasefire agreement and provide protection against armed attacks by Russia. There can be no compromising in this regard: this force would not be a monitoring mission, and its tasks would not include neutral or technical verification activities. Such tasks should be assigned exclusively to the parties to the ceasefire agreement and ideally to an organisation such as the UN or the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (see section 1.3).

From Ukraine's point of view, the main requirement is concrete, reliable and enforceable security guarantees. Owing to its preventive character, deterrence will play a crucial role in this regard. At the same time, the primary aim of the reassurance force would be to enforce the arrangements set out in the ceasefire agreement and protect Ukraine from armed attack (see sections 1.2 and 1.5). There is a distinction between deterrence and intervention action taken by a reassurance force. Deterrence is an effect intended to dissuade an adversary from engaging or re-engaging in acts of aggression. The credible possibility of effectively deploying military assets in an armed conflict, and the willingness to do so, forces the adversary to reconsider and then refrain from aggression, as the costs will be higher than the expected benefits.²

Deterrence can also be achieved without a full physical presence on Ukrainian territory. A reassurance force, by contrast, is aimed at enforcing concrete arrangements laid down in a ceasefire agreement by means of a physical presence, protection and – in the event of attacks that qualify as an 'armed attack' – proportionate use of force to neutralise the violations or threats.³ This makes deterrence an essential resource within the broader framework of security guarantees; a reassurance force makes those guarantees both concrete and visible on Ukrainian territory.

In addition to the presence of an effective reassurance force, it is essential that the Ukrainian armed forces have sufficient military assets to enable them to operate effectively. The war has already led to up-scaling and innovation in the Ukrainian defence industry, and in various European countries the defence industry is both learning from and actively responding to these developments. However, there is a need for more integrated efforts to build a defence ecosystem that meets the demands of the Ukrainian armed forces of the future, with sufficient combat power and sustainment capability in all military domains. Integrated action and European cooperation, including that in the context of the Coalition of the Willing (COTW) (see Chapter 1) are also important steps in the development of a European security identity.

The AIV has drawn up this advisory letter at its own initiative, building on two previous advisory letters concerning Ukraine. The topics covered by those letters include Ukraine's accession to the EU, the European security architecture and defence industry, Ukraine's reconstruction, the global implications, and public support in the Netherlands. These advisory letters sketched out a clear message: the war in Ukraine is also a test of our own security. For many years, the Dutch armed forces have undergone a process of erosion. The Netherlands must invest in modern armed forces and a stronger European defence industry. This is the only way we can help Ukraine in concrete ways and safeguard our own security and resilience in the longer term.⁴

In an advisory report on EU enlargement published at the same time as this advisory letter, the AIV argues that Ukraine should be allowed to officially join the EU as soon as possible, subject to compliance with the joint EU-Ukraine 10-point plan of December 2025 concerning the Copenhagen criteria and the condition that a lasting ceasefire agreement with firm security guarantees be reached.⁵



It is important that the Netherlands help ensure that Ukraine does not stand alone in its fight against the Russian aggressor and in the struggle to preserve our collective freedom. At the same time, the adaptability demonstrated by Ukraine in terms of warfare shows that the country is not merely a recipient of support, but can also provide lessons for the Netherlands and other countries. In this advisory letter the AIV will concentrate on the military domain and the defence industry.

The AIV concludes that a lasting peace for a sovereign and viable Ukrainian state is achievable only with a coherent combination of hard security guarantees, an international reassurance force and a fundamentally strengthened European and Ukrainian defence industry. The AIV therefore recommends (1) anchoring security guarantees for Ukraine and an international reassurance force in a single, integrated legal and political framework based on an invitation from Ukraine to that effect, the right of collective self-defence enshrined in Article 51 of the UN Charter and robust rules of engagement; (2) opting for a leading European role within a Coalition of the Willing that takes on the political and military leadership of the reassurance force, in close coordination with NATO; (3) ensuring from the outset the robust democratic scrutiny and public legitimacy of the Netherlands' participation in the Coalition of the Willing, through transparent decisionmaking, clear communication and the ongoing involvement of both houses of parliament; (4) investing simultaneously in Ukrainian selfsufficiency and European defence industrial capacity, whereby the reassurance force is bolstered by predictable, multiannual support and accelerated industrial upscaling informed partly by lessons learned from Ukraine; and (5) developing a national as well as a European longterm defence-industry and innovation strategy in which Ukraine is positioned as a strategic, equal partner in terms of production, technological development and knowledge exchange.

In order to contribute to sustainable security guarantees and a stable, sovereign Ukraine, this advisory letter addresses the following questions:

1. How can the Netherlands, working in concert with EU member states and other like-minded countries, help develop a reassurance force to provide security and a peaceful solution for a sovereign Ukraine? (Chapter 1)
2. What joint industrial capacities need to be developed in order to operate in an international context in Ukraine? (Chapter 2)



1. An international reassurance force for Ukraine

Ukraine needs security guarantees in order to resist Russian aggression. The Netherlands must contribute to such guarantees, as these are a key requirement for our own security, both internal and external and at both EU and NATO level.

The reassurance force will discourage renewed aggression, expose any violations and, where necessary, enforce the restoration of whatever arrangements are laid down in a ceasefire agreement or peace deal. In that sense, the reassurance force will also be essential in regard to Europe's position in any peace negotiations.

The success of such an international force will depend in part on the way in which Ukraine organises its own defence, and on the political and military strength of the COTW. The United Kingdom and France have now explicitly pledged that they will send troops if a peace agreement is reached. President Macron and Prime Minister Starmer have indicated that multiple countries will take part, though which countries is not yet clear.⁶ Past experiences, such as in the case of the Minsk agreements, have shown that political declarations and intentions offer insufficient protection when they are not underpinned by appropriate implementation and verification mechanisms and genuine capacity for action.⁷ Although European countries are showing solidarity with Ukraine, they are operating without a clear security strategy of their own.⁸ Partly on the basis of the lessons of the past, Europe now needs to quickly develop such a joint strategy. The COTW is already focusing at both political and military level on the future of Ukraine, and thus can help to shape this process further.⁹

The Dutch government has rightly pointed out that Europe needs to take more responsibility for the security of both Ukraine and Europe itself, and that European allies should be closely involved in this process. In a recent parliamentary debate marking the fourth anniversary of the start of the war in Ukraine, the prime minister indicated that the Netherlands aims to play a more active role in the COTW.

The words of the Dutch government reflect the idea that the COTW could be a first step towards a specifically European security identity. The Netherlands is showing that, together with other EU member states, it wants to take on responsibilities that have previously always been borne by the US. Although countries will continue to look primarily to NATO, thanks to its long-standing cooperative framework and trusted relationships, there will now be a greater emphasis on equal sharing of responsibility.

Broad military support for the COTW from EU member states is therefore essential.¹⁰ In this way the Coalition can help ensure stability and security for Ukraine, without eroding Ukrainian sovereignty or shifting primary responsibility for the defence of its territory. The AIV therefore advises establishing an international reassurance force in the event of a ceasefire agreement, in order to provide a critical security guarantee for Ukraine to which the Dutch government contributes both politically and militarily. The willingness to create and deploy an international reassurance force should therefore be an explicit component of negotiations on a ceasefire agreement with Russia.



1.1 Mandate for a reassurance force

The negotiation of a ceasefire agreement and the willingness to create and deploy a reassurance force are aimed at the achievement of a lasting peace for a viable Ukrainian state. This will require intensive diplomacy. Ukraine and Russia must in any event be parties to the peace negotiations, but so too must the EU and the United States.

This advisory letter will set out the context and three options for a mandate, each of which offers a different degree of likelihood with respect to the success of the reassurance force. In terms of diplomacy, it is important that all three options remain on the table in principle. The AIV would note that option 3 is both a desirable and an achievable option.

An international reassurance force can operate effectively only if it is deployed in the context of a ceasefire agreement that fulfils a minimum set of conditions. The precise form of any ceasefire agreement will primarily be the result of diplomatic negotiations and is beyond the scope of this advisory letter. The AIV would highlight the importance of the following elements:

- Clear geographical delineation: an unambiguously established ceasefire/partition line (see also sections 1.4 and 1.5), including agreements on demilitarised zones and permitted troop concentrations.
- Verifiable restrictions: e.g. arrangements concerning weapon systems, troop strength and movements within agreed zones, which can be monitored by an independent monitoring mission with access to both sides (see section 1.5).
- Access for observers to conduct monitoring and verification of the ceasefire agreement: international observers must be granted guaranteed, safe and unimpeded access to relevant areas, and must be able to report their findings without political interference (see section 1.3).
- Escalation mechanism: there must be pre-arranged procedures for reporting, investigating and addressing alleged violations, including time frames and points of contact on both sides (see section 1.5).

The AIV would emphasise that the absence of such a minimum framework would seriously undermine the effectiveness and credibility of a reassurance force.

Option 1: A reassurance force based on a UN resolution

The most preferable option for the deployment of an international reassurance force would be a mandate authorised by the United Nations Security Council under Chapter VII of the UN Charter,¹¹ which would be an expression of major international commitment.

A decision by the UN Security Council ensures the support of the United States, China and Russia.

Although the AIV considers this option the most preferable, the feasibility of such a solution is by no means a given, in view of the positions of the various countries with a permanent seat on the Security Council. Nevertheless, it remains an option worth pursuing.

Option 2: A mandate that forms part of a ceasefire agreement

The mandate for a reassurance force could also be an integral part of the ceasefire agreement between Ukraine and Russia. A relevant example in this regard is the Dayton Peace Agreement, which brought the Bosnian War to an end in 1995.¹² This too was a peace agreement between parties to a conflict, with European heads of government serving as co-signatories. In a comparable format, the presence, tasks and powers of the reassurance force would preferably be laid down explicitly and unequivocally in the text of the agreement.

The AIV considers that this option currently has a limited chance of success. If the ceasefire agreement becomes part of the European security architecture and is explicitly linked to the COTW as an initiative led by EU countries, the EU would be an individual party, alongside Ukraine, Russia and the US. In such a situation Russia will prioritise its own security interests and make its participation conditional on addressing those interests. Naturally the Netherlands should take account of this in its diplomatic strategy.

At present the US, precisely because of its role as co-guarantor of Ukraine's security, is still the main actor capable of ultimately persuading Russia to sign such an agreement.

Option 3: Collective self-defence at Ukraine's request

The Paris Declaration (the document in which the COTW formulates the guarantees and components associated with an international presence) states: 'We confirmed that these reassurance measures *should be strictly implemented at Ukraine's request once a credible cessation of hostilities has taken place*.'¹³

There are two conditions in this regard: there must be a credible cessation of hostilities, and a ceasefire agreement must be in place. In this situation, Ukraine would remain primarily responsible for the defence of its own territory. This implies a ceasefire/partition line, yet to be determined, along which Ukraine's armed forces continue carrying out their defensive tasks.¹⁴

A reassurance force would underline the international community's commitment, at Ukraine's request, to contributing to Ukraine's security following the conclusion of a ceasefire agreement. The Paris Declaration does not specify to whom or in what way Ukraine should submit such a request. Under Article 51 of the UN Charter, Ukraine has the inherent right to defend itself against armed attack and request other countries to support the defence of its territorial integrity. In so doing Ukraine would agree to the presence on Ukrainian territory of troops from countries participating in a coalition, which can respond in the event of an armed attack.

This is what distinguishes such a presence as a reassurance force: it would help defend Ukraine's territorial integrity, thus supporting a lasting peace for a viable Ukrainian state. This option also assumes the existence of a ceasefire agreement, but the legal basis for the international presence and the mandate of the reassurance force would rest on Ukraine's issuing an invitation to that effect. Russia's permission is not a legal requirement. Collective self-defence would be a response to an armed attack by Russia, making any such response by the reassurance force inherently legitimate.

In the AIV's view, this third option has a greater chance of successfully guaranteeing Ukraine's security. In the present circumstances, in which Ukraine is not yet a member of the EU, this basis would make it possible to form a solid coalition (which may include like-minded countries outside Europe that are willing and able to contribute constructively), without being dependent on Russia's position.¹⁵ After Ukraine's accession to the EU, Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union will also provide a potential basis for such a scenario. This is discussed in section 1.6.

Although Ukraine, as a sovereign state, is entirely free from a legal point of view to invite troops onto its own territory, it is necessary to maintain a diplomatic dialogue with Russia as much as possible when it comes to the deployment and mandate of the reassurance force. The choice of when and how the reassurance force should be deployed is a clearly political decision: since the presence of international troops on Ukrainian territory will inevitably be taken into account by Russia in its own security considerations, it is essential that the willingness to create and deploy such a force be made an explicit part of the talks. The establishment of the reassurance force will be led by Europe, but European countries must act at the invitation of and in close

coordination with Ukraine, and must in any event take account of Russia's position and its possible consequences. Although conducting these negotiations at UN level is not expected to be a simple matter, it is important to keep the multilateral options on the table wherever possible. It is also advisable to explore other ways of exerting political pressure, separate from the United States. In this connection Europe could invest in the development of closer cooperation and relations with countries that could potentially be influential, such as India and Japan.

The AIV would emphasise that military security guarantees cannot be seen separately from diplomatic efforts. A ceasefire agreement will be reached only after a lengthy period of intensive diplomacy. Although this advisory letter focuses on the military and industrial domain, the AIV believes it is important for the Netherlands to simultaneously invest in the diplomatic expertise, personnel capacity and instruments necessary to bring about, safeguard and – if necessary – renegotiate a ceasefire agreement. Such efforts should be aimed at active diplomacy within the EU and NATO and with the region, using special envoys and mediators, knowledge of monitoring or verification missions (see section 1.3), and institutional platforms for confidential dialogue.

The scope for deploying a reassurance force and enforcing a ceasefire agreement depends entirely on continued military and financial support for Ukraine. Without sufficient ammunition, air defence, logistics and recovery capacity, there will not even be a scenario in which negotiations on a ceasefire agreement and reassurance force can take place.

The AIV therefore considers it essential that European countries, including the Netherlands, commit to providing long-term, predictable financial and material support to Ukraine, regardless of when and in what form a reassurance force is established.

1.2 Legal framework for intervention

Legal basis for intervention: self-defence and Article 51 of the UN Charter

The legal basis for an intervention by the reassurance force in the event of an armed attack by Russia primarily lies in the first exception to the prohibition (laid down in Article 2, paragraph 4 of the UN Charter) on the use of force: the invocation of the inherent right of self-defence laid down in Article 51 of the UN Charter.¹⁶ This right of self-defence may be exercised individually or collectively (including in the context of NATO), and any intervention would come at the request of a sovereign state that requires support.

Since the deployment would be with the permission, and at the request, of Ukraine, the reassurance force would be operating within the existing framework of international law. This provides the participating states with a clear and robust legal basis for their contribution to the force. Explicitly linking the mandate to both the ceasefire agreement and Article 51 of the UN Charter creates a legally and politically coherent basis for the reassurance force, whereby security guarantees are not viewed separately from Ukrainian sovereignty but are directly derived from it.

In-depth analysis of the mandate

The presence of the reassurance force would be based on Ukraine's invitation. Basing any response to an armed attack by Russia on Article 51 of the UN Charter would make clear that the international reassurance force is operating as a supportive instrument in protecting Ukraine against the risk of renewed aggression. This is in keeping with the nature of the deployment of troops as a reassurance force, which is aimed at enhancing the security situation and not at conflict management or monitoring.



During its deployment the reassurance force must at all times act in accordance with the obligations imposed on it pursuant to international law. Legitimate military action involving the use of force is therefore possible *only* as a response to an armed attack within the meaning of Article 51 of the UN Charter. This threshold will be closely supervised. The purpose of the reassurance force is to achieve peace for Ukraine, and the scope for military action in the event of an armed attack is aimed at deterrence and restoring stability. The stance adopted by the reassurance force will not be escalatory in nature. Nevertheless it is important to recognise that, following a legitimate response on the grounds of self-defence to an armed attack, it may be some time before the situation has fully stabilised. The mandate will have to offer scope for proportionate and timely military action to effectively ensure the protection of Ukrainian civilians and critical infrastructure on the one hand, and support for military units on the other. Above all, the reassurance force must meet its obligations under international humanitarian law at all times¹⁷ and respect the principles set out within it,^{18 19} even if its use of force is based on the right of self-defence.

The mandate and legal framework for the use of force – the various situations and the scope for action within them – are laid down in rules of engagement.²⁰ Rules of engagement should be robust in order to ensure credible deterrence and ensure that violations in the form of armed attacks can be tackled effectively and predictably. Each participating state can impose additional restrictions on the rules of engagement by means of caveats,²¹ but it is very important that all countries strive for the greatest possible degree of unity when it comes to the interpretation and application of the rules. Government restrictions on armed forces during military operations should therefore be prevented or harmonised wherever possible.

1.3 Political leadership and governance: the Coalition of the Willing

The countries participating in the international reassurance force, i.e. the COTW, are responsible for its political governance. This includes Ukraine: it is essential for Ukraine itself to be a part of the force's political governance. The coalition's success depends on being able to operate flexibly and decisively and having sufficient political coherence. Within the coalition, strategic objectives must be set, the mandate interpreted and political guidelines for military action formulated. Two levels should be distinguished in this connection. The first is the political-strategic level. This is also the level at which the evaluation of the force's deployment should take place. The foreign ministers and defence ministers of the participating states are responsible for the regular political and military-strategic leadership of the reassurance force. The second level consists of a military committee, which advises the strategic leadership. This military committee comprises the most senior military representatives of the participating states: the Chiefs of Defence (the customary abbreviation in NATO and EU context is CHODs). The political leadership of the reassurance force is explicitly separate from diplomatic or political mechanisms aimed at monitoring the ceasefire agreement.

The force's military governance will be designed by a Joint Task Force (JTF) led by a force commander. The JTF is responsible for planning, directing, implementing and coordinating all military activities within the mandate. The JTF should also have a liaison component with regard to the verification/monitoring mechanism, in order to ensure mutual coordination of activities. It is also important for the reassurance force to have independent intelligence and intelligence-gathering bodies. Unity of command and control (C2)²² is another key requirement: units deployed to the reassurance force will not be under national command.



Although the reassurance force would not be a NATO operation, the JTF would maintain a structural liaison relationship with Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum (JFC Brunssum).²³ A liaison relationship of this kind is aimed at relevant information sharing, situational awareness²⁴ and coordination of activities with a view to avoiding excessive overlap or discrepancies (deconfliction). This will enable the force to be embedded in the broader European security architecture, which will reflect the role that European countries play with regard to security on the European continent. The AIV would emphasise that NATO will play no role in enforcing the ceasefire agreement; that will be done by the COTW.

It is also essential to have a verification or monitoring mission in place to supervise compliance with the ceasefire agreement. This should preferably be a neutral organisation, or a group of countries, that is separate from the reassurance force. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) could fulfil this role by taking responsibility for the monitoring and verification of compliance with any future ceasefire agreement, functioning both as a coordination and verification mechanism between the various parties, and as an interlocutor for Russia. The OSCE does not necessarily have to be the organisation selected for this purpose, however. The most important thing is that the verification/monitoring mission be able to carry out its tasks and, in this connection, have access to both sides of the ceasefire line, which has not always been the case in the past. The role of the verification/monitoring mission is to observe and report. The role of the reassurance force is to enforce and take action. The observers taking part in this mission must be protected. The reassurance force can be assigned responsibility for protecting these individuals.²⁵

For a ceasefire agreement to be credible there needs to be a clear dividing line between verification and enforcement activities in the event of an armed attack.

- The OSCE or a comparable organisation would be responsible for neutral monitoring and verification of compliance with the ceasefire agreement. It would identify, document and report on violations of the agreement, and maintain contact with all relevant parties, including Russia.
- The reassurance force would be responsible for enforcing the ceasefire agreement within the scope of the mandate in the event of an armed attack by Russia. This would mean protecting key civilian objects, protecting observers and if necessary taking proportionate military action aimed at ending violations and restoring the situation agreed by the parties.

This division of tasks prevents the verification mission from being seen as a party to the conflict, while the reassurance force has the resources to prevent violations taking place without consequence. A close but clearly delineated liaison arrangement between the verification/monitoring mission and the JTF will be essential in this regard.

Structural support for the transition of the Ukrainian armed forces falls outside the mandate of the reassurance force. Ideally such support will be arranged at NATO level and provided in accordance with the current remit of the NATO Senior Representative in Ukraine (the head of the NATO Representation to Ukraine (NRU)).²⁶ The duties of the Senior Representative, who is appointed by the NATO Secretary-General, include advising the Ukrainian security and defence sector in support of the Ukrainian armed forces' transition to full interoperability with NATO.²⁷ The Senior Representative also plays a role in the development of the defence industry in Ukraine. Chapter 2 of this advisory letter focuses specifically on the defence industry ecosystem and on lessons that can be identified in the course of this transition. In this connection it is crucial that European defence efforts can support the build-up of Ukraine's future armed forces. This distinction between the activities of the reassurance force and those of NATO is essential: the



reassurance force provides direct security, while NATO helps to foster Ukraine's long-term self-sufficiency. The mandate of the reassurance force will be strictly military in nature, and therefore politically separate from NATO and the role the alliance plays in Ukraine. Although the resulting stability will make reconstruction possible, the reconstruction process, election monitoring and civilian law enforcement are not part of the reassurance force's remit.

The AIV foresees a lengthy presence on the part of the reassurance force, as well as its possible deployment in response to armed attacks. As far as possible, the down-scaling of the force should be conditions-based (i.e. dependent on circumstances) rather than primarily time-based (i.e. dependent on any fixed timetable). Examples of such conditions include the reorganisation and reconstitution of the Ukrainian armed forces, the proven durability of the ceasefire agreement, and the development of a defensive and diplomatic stance on the part of Russia. In addition, it is very important that a successor to the Netherlands be appointed in good time, so that a country with equal capacity can take over the Netherlands' military tasks in the reassurance force with sufficient time to prepare. It is also important to explore whether, following its rotation, the Netherlands could continue contributing in a non-military capacity, and to consider what specific form this contribution could take.

Strategic communications will be an integral part of the reassurance force's activities, and should be arranged from the very start of the planning process. At international level, communications should focus on the objective and character of the deployment, the parameters of the mandate and the consequences of violations of the ceasefire agreement. The reassurance force will contribute directly to the security of Europe's eastern flank, and of NATO as a whole. With regard to Dutch communications, too, it is important to make clear that providing security guarantees for Ukraine is not simply an expression of solidarity. Above all it is an investment in the security of the Netherlands itself.

In addition, the reassurance force will need to have a mechanism for making contact with Russian counterparts at political and military level and communicating with them in the event of perceived violations of the agreement. To this end there will need to be a strong link with the diplomatic service. If the decision is made to establish an OSCE mission or appoint a comparable organisation for this purpose, this body will be tasked with maintaining contact with Russia and promoting détente. If the political and legal set-up of the reassurance force as outlined above is to succeed, it must be clear how it will be organised and how it will operate in practice. This operational structure is discussed in more detail in the following sections (1.4 and 1.5).

1.4 Structuring the reassurance force: a multi-domain approach

Ukraine's security cannot be guaranteed one-dimensionally in an international reassurance force. Such a force must be structured on the basis of a multi-domain approach, in which land, air, cyber and maritime capabilities strengthen each other.²⁸ The strength of the reassurance force lies in the cohesion among these domains. Together they make it possible not only to proclaim the establishment of security guarantees but also to make good on that commitment in operational terms.

When establishing the structure of the reassurance force it will be necessary to make a clear distinction between presence on Ukrainian territory and capabilities outside Ukraine. Part of the land and air component will need to be physically present in Ukraine, particularly along the ceasefire agreement line or partition line, and around critical infrastructure. At the same time, it is expected within NATO and EU member states that key support capabilities – such as logistics hubs, ammunition depots, strategic air transport and certain air and maritime assets – will be positioned outside Ukraine.



The Netherlands should contribute responsibly. In the event of long-term involvement it need not cover all domains at all times, or always take place in the same domain. The AIV would stress that the issue of what capabilities the Netherlands contributes is explicitly a political decision. Dutch participation and the deployment of Dutch units require a political decision, with Parliament being informed through an 'Article 100 letter' setting out the nature, duration and scope of the participation. On the basis of the mandate for the reassurance force, a decision on participation in the COTW by the Netherlands and the ensuing political process, it will become clear which domains should be selected at what time for the Dutch deployment.

Land domain: stability and enforcement on the ground

The land domain would form the visible and tangible core of the reassurance force. Some units would be physically present on Ukrainian territory, others would not. Units present in mission areas would be combat units (e.g. infantry), combat support units (including fire support, engineers and intelligence), as well as logistics units. Their tasks would include maintaining a presence near the ceasefire agreement line or partition line, particularly in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine, without taking over responsibility for these regions from Ukrainian units. Ukrainian troops would operate close to the ceasefire line and the international troops further back, in accordance with the distinction between first and second responders (see section 1.5).

Air domain: information, speed and protection

The air domain is crucial for information dominance, early warning²⁹ and rapid response. High-quality intelligence capabilities are indispensable for adequate situational awareness and in order to build up predictive capability. It is important to have sufficient manned and unmanned aerial systems available. This also provides an asymmetric, rapid and powerful escalation option. Tasks in this domain include a continuous ISR capability³⁰ above and along the ceasefire line and in Ukraine's operational depth³¹, air policing in support of the ceasefire agreement, rapid air support for elements of the reassurance force in the event of incidents, strategic and tactical air transport, and support of Ukrainian air defence to the extent that this is in line with the mandate. The air domain deployment is expected to take place not from Ukraine, but mainly from surrounding countries.

Maritime domain: strategic depth and economic security

The maritime domain is of particular importance in the south of Ukraine and around the Black Sea. Tasks in this domain concern securing maritime supply routes to and from Ukrainian ports, mine countermeasure operations and maritime situational awareness, protection of critical maritime infrastructure and countering hybrid and 'below-threshold' activities. A maritime deployment requires a clear delineation of the area of operations³² and harmonisation with the relevant regional legal frameworks, including the Montreux Convention.³³ The maritime domain supports economic recovery, reduces strategic vulnerability and consolidates integration in international trade flows.

Cyber domain: critical infrastructure protection, information sharing and cyber operations

The cyber domain³⁴ is important when it comes to, for example, disrupting enemy command structures and protecting a force's own network and information systems. It can support traditional kinetic effects. Cyberattacks are generally below-threshold activities³⁵ that may be part of other hybrid activities such as sabotage and disinformation operations. Adequate protection must be guaranteed. In the Netherlands at the moment it is often not possible to share important types of data on threats and vulnerabilities between the Defence organisation and other government bodies and the industrial sector, or between the Netherlands and other states. Action is needed within the cyber domain to address this.



The Netherlands already plays an important part in providing support to Ukraine and should also make an active, proportional contribution to the reassurance force. Support for Ukraine is covered by the defence budget, in which defence expenditure is being ramped up in order to meet the NATO target of 3.5%.³⁶ A Dutch contribution would enhance the credibility of the reassurance force and underscore the Netherlands' responsibility for Europe's security.

The details of the contribution in the various domains will depend first and foremost on the scope of the reassurance force's mandate, which may have consequences for the choice of assets that can be deployed. The AIV considers it desirable for the Netherlands to make a targeted choice, making contributions in areas where it can genuinely provide added value and explicitly calling on other allies to take on tasks in areas where it cannot. Such a focus will enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the Dutch deployment. The potential length of the mission also plays a role; following consultation within the COTW the Netherlands could rotate various capabilities and units periodically.

1.5 Operational readiness: scenario planning for escalation control and decision-making

The international reassurance force must be able to operate effectively in the event of an armed attack, in a variety of circumstances. Traditionally, this is achieved by means of scenario planning. Scenario planning is a continuous operational process, and as such it is an essential part of the operational readiness of the international reassurance force. The aim is to guarantee predictable, timely and effective operations, and to prevent ad hoc decision-making under time pressure.

Besides being governed by the mandate based on international law, the presence and deployment of the international force will also be highly dependent on the actual circumstances and the specific applicable arrangements in the ceasefire agreement, concerning matters such as boundaries, zones and permitted military presence. After all, a planned deployment would be organised with a view to taking predictable, legally justified, responsible and controlled action in the event of imminent or actual violations of the ceasefire agreement or imminent or actual armed attacks. To this end, the participating countries will draw up a layered escalation and decision-making framework before any deployment.

In all cases the Ukrainian armed forces will act as the 'first responder', with primary responsibility for the defence of Ukraine. The international reassurance force takes on the role of 'second responder'. It operates in accordance with the powers derived from the mandate to protect its own units, stabilise the situation and prevent further escalation, but also to escalate where necessary in order to neutralise the violation of the ceasefire line. Within the scope of the mandate and the established rules of engagement, the force commander can take action immediately, which may include the use of force if necessary and in proportion to the threat. It is especially important in this respect to remain in close contact with the monitoring mission. In the event of serious incidents that go beyond the three scenarios outlined below, political consultation will take place in parallel within the COTW and with Ukraine, and national decision-making will take place if there are to be substantial changes to the nature, scope or risk profile of the national contributions. This is aimed at, on the one hand, ensuring rapid and effective military action and, on the other, safeguarding political scrutiny, risk management and transparent information provision to parliaments, taking into account operational, personal and national security.

It is likely that any violations of a ceasefire agreement will develop along an escalation continuum, whereby the distinction between military activities and hybrid and below-threshold activities becomes blurred. If parties carry out such activities, this creates risks with regard to respect for and compliance with international law and the protection of civilians and civilian objects.



Ideally there would be long intervals between armed attacks, allowing time to consider a response. However, such incidents can occur and escalate in rapid succession. It is therefore crucial for units to be able to defend themselves in the event of an attack and take measures against threats and imminent actions. Commanders must be able to take well-considered decisions on the basis of the available information. The reassurance force must therefore have at its disposal an integrated ISR picture, clearly determined escalation triggers, and pre-agreed response options for each scenario, so that it can respond appropriately.

Three scenarios are outlined below, which could occur in parallel or overlap each other (e.g. scenarios 1 and 2). The reassurance force is bound by obligations under international law concerning the use of force, and in particular – should it come to that – international humanitarian law.

Scenario 1: Below-threshold and hybrid undermining activities

This scenario involves activities such as limited troop movements, electronic disruption, disinformation, intimidation of local authorities and pressure on critical infrastructure without the use of open military force.

The response focuses on detection, attribution and visible presence through enhanced ISR use, heightened patrols and an explicit international presence. Military action remains limited, but the readiness level is heightened. Strategic communication, diplomatic efforts, cyber resilience and military operational readiness measures are all integral parts of the response.

Scenario 2: Limited tactical violations

This scenario concerns firing incidents, limited attacks on or near the ceasefire line, local territorial gains or sabotage of critical infrastructure.

The Ukrainian armed forces are the first responder; the reassurance force is the second responder and must be able to scale up, provide force protection and – where necessary – engage in appropriate military action within the scope of the rules of engagement. The focus is on restoring the agreed situation, deterring further escalation and protecting friendly units and key civilian objects. This requires short decision-making chains, a common operational picture shared between Ukrainian command structures and the Joint Task Force, and pre-defined response options with the necessary authorisations for the force commander.

Scenario 3: Large-scale and serious violations

This scenario involves large-scale or coordinated action at the high end of the spectrum of force, such as simultaneous attacks at various locations, use of heavier weapon systems or explicit provocations against the reassurance force.

The Ukrainian armed forces are still the first responder; the international reassurance force acts as the second responder – in a complementary and supporting role – but with sufficient authorisation to act quickly and in proportion to the threat. The presence of international troops acts as a tripwire: any undermining activity or attack has direct political and military consequences and thus strengthens the deterrence.

Political coordination within the COTW will be needed, but must not paralyse the military response. The force commander must have sufficient previously mandated powers to take immediate action to protect friendly units, restore deterrence and prevent further escalation. This scenario places heavy demands on C2: interoperability, robust logistics capabilities and escalation control, including coordination with NATO structures for situational awareness and deconfliction.

Overarching operational parameters

For all scenarios, effective scenario planning will be dependent on:

- a common, up-to-date ISR picture;
- pre-determined escalation triggers and response levels;
- clear C2 agreements and a clear mandate for the force commander;
- robust, harmonised rules of engagement;
- integrated strategic communication.

1.6 Article 42(7) TEU and strengthening European support to Ukraine

What is the scope of the obligation of EU member states to provide each other with military support in the event of an attack on one of them? Can Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) be used to further strengthen European support to Ukraine, and if so, what might that support entail?

Article 42(7) TEU – the mutual assistance clause – obliges EU member states to provide another member state with assistance, possibly military, if that member state becomes the victim of armed aggression on its territory.³⁷

As it is part of the EU treaties, Article 42(7) is legally binding. There are, however, important constraints. Firstly, this provision applies only among EU member states. It does not create an obligation for the Union.³⁸ Member states can invoke this clause, as France did in 2015 following the attacks in Paris. The provision would apply to Ukraine only *after* accession to the EU, and it can therefore certainly not be invoked at this time.

Secondly, Article 42(7) TEU does not, in legal terms, automatically create a military intervention obligation. The assistance can also be non-military in nature, which could be preferable for neutral member states in particular, although others point out that ‘all the means’ could also include military intervention. As Article 42(7) TEU is derived from the Treaty of Brussels (WEU) the intention would indeed appear to be the provision of military support, unless a member state does not have the necessary capabilities, or if neutrality precludes it.

Thirdly, the EU currently does not have an integrated command structure comparable to that of NATO, which is needed as an institutional framework for any coordinated response by the member states. The possibility of progressing towards ‘a common defence’ is provided for in Article 42(2) TEU, but to date the member states have not taken this step. Moreover, any military assistance should preferably take place through NATO.³⁹ There being no dedicated EU headquarters, if the EU itself did want to take military action it would have to do so through one of the five military headquarters that EU member states are allowed to use.⁴⁰



Although EU member states cannot formally invoke Article 42(7) TEU in relation to Ukraine while Ukraine is not a member state, they can take a functional approach to the underlying logic of this provision – collective responsibility, political solidarity and deterrence. This can be done by stepping up support measures and ensuring they are politically embedded beforehand, without this automatically leading to the deployment of EU member states' troops on Ukrainian territory.

It follows from the above that, in the event that Ukraine accedes to the EU, Article 42(7) could be used to further embed security guarantees for Ukraine in legal terms within the European security architecture. However, possible security guarantees for Ukraine as a potential future EU member state do make it necessary to actively prepare for the effects of Article 42(7) TEU in relation to Ukraine once the country has acceded to the EU.⁴¹

2. Towards an integrated defence ecosystem, with Ukraine serving as a catalyst

Chapter 1 of this advisory letter showed that a credible reassurance force for Ukraine is possible only if participating countries have sufficient rapidly deployable and sustainable military capabilities. That requires not only political willingness, but also a defence industrial base that can withstand a protracted, industrial conflict.

This second chapter therefore looks at how Europe – partly driven by the need to support Ukraine – can develop a defence ecosystem that can actually strengthen the deployment of a reassurance force. The industrial and technological choices being made now will determine the extent to which security guarantees for Ukraine can be put into practice.

When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Europe's production capacity was insufficient to meet the demands of the ensuing conflict due to its scale, intensity and industrial requirements.⁴² In this war, industrial capacity has become a decisive factor again. While Europe has relied on technological superiority, precision-guided weapons and small-scale interventions since the 1990s, Ukraine is showing that large-scale conventional warfare requires a different kind of economy.

This mismatch between supply and demand is not a temporary problem, but a structural weakness, as concluded by the AIV in previous advisory reports.⁴³ For decades, Europe's defence industry has been optimised in terms of efficiency, not resilience. Production lines are lean, supply chains are global and stocks are minimal. The war has shown that this logic is not suited to a war based on industrial competition. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Russia has ramped up its defence industry to levels not seen since the Cold War.⁴⁴ China, too, has an industrial base that, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) is capable of outpacing the US and Europe when it comes to ammunition and drone production.⁴⁵

The rise of inexpensive drones, commercial satellite services, open source artificial intelligence (AI) models and civilian electronics has led to what RAND analysts and others have dubbed the 'democratisation of violence': the ability to generate strategic effects using relatively simple means.⁴⁶ The war in Ukraine is thus not only a geopolitical shock, but also a military technological and industrial upheaval.

In this context, Ukraine has emerged as an unexpected but crucial partner for Europe. Not primarily as a recipient of assistance, but as a source of innovation, industrial capacity, technological adaptability, system integration and operational expertise. In record time, the country has built up a defence ecosystem that, according to the Kyiv School of Economics and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), is among the most dynamic in the world.⁴⁷ It consists of hundreds of businesses, thousands of engineers and an innovation culture that is driven by urgency, improvisation and direct feedback from the battlefield. Ukraine is employing a radically decentralised model in which brigades, battalions and even individual units test, adapt and implement new technologies. The use of Ukrainian drone interceptors and interception technology in the war with Iran in March 2026 confirmed that it



is a testing ground for a new form of warfare. Efforts aimed at disarmament and arms control, including nuclear disarmament, autonomous weapons and the arms race in outer space,⁴⁸ must continue unabated. At the same time, security interests compel us to have a credible deterrence, so that aggression can be prevented and arms control and disarmament can be supported.

2.1 The new reality of warfare: lessons from Ukraine

The war in Ukraine has yielded a number of insights that are radically changing the foundations of European defence planning. These findings are based on, for instance, millions of hours of combat data, thousands of drone attacks and an unprecedented confrontation between modern technologies and industrial warfare.

One of the key observations is that inexpensive systems, the loss of which is acceptable during deployment (attritable, i.e. expendable, systems), can generate strategic effects which previously were the preserve of expensive platforms. Drones costing a few hundred euros can locate artillery, disrupt logistics and even attack strategic targets. RAND and CSIS analysts have shown that defence can cost a hundred times more than attack in this context,⁴⁹ which makes traditional European air defences financially unsustainable.⁵⁰

A second insight gained is that electronic warfare has become a continuous, software-driven fight. The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) has described Ukraine as the most electronically disrupted battlefield in the world. GPS jamming (blocking the signal), spoofing (manipulating the signal by transmitting false data), cyberattacks and sensor blinding are a daily reality.⁵¹ This requires systems that do not depend on a single layer of communication, but instead work with redundancy (duplication of functions to increase reliability), edge processing (collecting, analysing and processing data directly on the front line) and adaptability.

A third insight is that AI can provide added value by accelerating decision-making, although it does involve considerable risks. AI models are used to analyse images, identify targets, plan routes and filter information. In some Ukrainian systems, AI shortens the decision-making cycle by 30-70%.^{52, 53}

A fourth insight is that deep attacks need not be dependent on expensive, precision-guided weapons. Ukraine has shown that a campaign of repeated attacks using inexpensive assets can generate strategic effects that are comparable to those generated by expensive missiles. IISS and CSIS point out that the effectiveness of deep attacks is determined by saturation, repetition and economic damage caused, rather than by precision alone.^{54, 55}

Together, these insights form a new paradigm for Europe's defence. They show that, besides precision-guided weapons/high-end capabilities, other key factors determining the future of warfare include innovation capacity, scalability, speed, software and adaptability. They also show that Ukraine is a crucial partner in developing a defence industry that is suited to that future. At the same time, these insights will continue to evolve – not everything relevant in this war will remain relevant in the next. This must be taken into account at system level and at the level of risk analysis (for instance with regard to autonomous weapons).

How can these findings be translated into industrial and policy-related implications? This will be discussed in the following sections.



2.2 European cooperation: towards prioritisation and regulation

Cooperation between Europe and Ukraine is developing rapidly. Some countries have opted to embed such cooperation deeply in their defence industries. Germany has localised production of infantry fighting vehicles and ammunition in Ukraine. The UK is carrying out maintenance on artillery systems on site and is working on local repair capacity. France has set up joint ventures in the areas of radar, electronic warfare and tactical communications. Denmark developed a model for financing Ukrainian production with Danish funds, an approach that has since been adopted by the EU. Despite key cooperation programmes, the Netherlands has not yet embedded its industrial capacity in Ukraine in this way.

Most countries regard Ukraine not just as a recipient of assistance, but as a strategic industrial partner. There is therefore a growing movement of companies locating production, maintenance and research & development activities in Ukraine. According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Strategic Industries, more than 25 foreign businesses now have a physical presence in the country. What motivates them is clear: access to the combat feedback loop⁵⁶, lower costs, rapid iteration and strategic positioning for future export markets.

There is also increasing cooperation in the area of knowledge and innovation. This development shows clearly that Europe cannot afford to leave the acceleration of its defence industry to spontaneous market forces or non-committal partnerships. Fragmentation is a strategic vulnerability.⁵⁷ The European Commission, NATO and the European Defence Agency agree that focusing on joint capabilities, production and cooperation is a requirement for future warfare. An example of this is the appointment of the NATO Senior Representative in Ukraine (the head of the NATO Representation to Ukraine (NRU), see section 1.3). The European Defence Industrial Strategy of 2024 states specifically that Europe can no longer rely on a self-organising market.⁵⁸ The Ukrainian demand for ammunition, drones, air defence assets and sensors is so urgent and massive that a form of strategic coordination based on priorities – and in some cases even regulation – is needed in order to achieve the scale necessary to deliver the support required for Ukraine's security. An instrument that could help in this respect – both nationally and at European level – is the proposed Defence and Security-related Industry (Resilience) Act (WWDVI). This legislation is intended for crises and situations of heightened tensions, which require rapid and transparent industrial up-scaling.⁵⁹

2.3 Implications for the Netherlands and Europe

The Netherlands is one of the largest providers of military support to Ukraine, but has relatively little in the way of an industrial presence in the country. However, the Netherlands does have strong sectors – autonomous platforms,⁶⁰ maritime technology, sensors, high-tech manufacturing, cyber technology and C2 software⁶¹ – that tie in well with Ukraine's needs and Europe's priorities. By localising production, setting up joint ventures and integrating Ukrainian innovations into the Dutch armed forces, the Netherlands can play a part in the European-Ukrainian defence ecosystem. The Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Economic Affairs can support businesses by selecting specific focus areas and helping companies in these areas by connecting them with the defence ecosystem in Ukraine (through public-private partnerships). The Ministry of Defence has already launched a national network of regional innovation partnerships, coordinated by its Orchestrating Defence Innovation (ODIN) office. Trilateral cooperation between the Netherlands, Ukraine and a third country is also desirable in this context.

In order to prevent fragmentation and stimulate optimal production, it is vital for Europe to move towards a model in which capabilities are prioritised at European level, countries commit to joint production, and industrial cooperation is supported by clear frameworks, incentives and



– where necessary – obligations. Integration with Ukraine’s defence industry will require Europe to set strategic priorities, institutionalise industrial cooperation and rise above national knee-jerk responses. It will also require Europe to regulate certain parts of the defence industry. EU member states could give the European Defence Agency (EDA) a coordinating role in this respect.

At the same time it is important that businesses are given certainty (by the purchasers of their goods). In a previous advisory letter, the AIV called for a new planning and procurement culture in the EU, based on closer cooperation on joint, coordinated development and the purchasing of defence material on the basis of harmonised user demands.⁶² The European Defence Industry Programme, to which Ukraine also needs access, is focused on precisely these aspects, but will have to prove its added value. It is vital for the security of Ukraine and of Europe that European and Ukrainian industries, research institutions and armed forces work together on production, innovation and doctrine. That choice must be made not just in the spirit of solidarity, but also with a view to protecting strategic interests.

3. Recommendations

1. Focus on establishing an international reassurance force as an essential element of hard security guarantees for Ukraine, and contribute substantially to this reassurance force.

The AIV advocates the establishment of an international reassurance force as an essential element of hard security guarantees for Ukraine. The AIV urges the government to press for explicit security guarantees for Ukraine and a reassurance force whose mandate is robustly embedded in international law. The presence of an international reassurance force should be an integral part of the negotiations, and should start if and when a ceasefire agreement is reached. The Dutch government is advised to ensure that the format for the negotiations is such that Ukraine and European countries – the members of the COTW at any rate – are included in the diplomatic consultations at all times and on an equal basis. The reassurance force has a clear legal basis, formed by Ukraine's invitation to deploy foreign troops on its territory. Any actual deployment in response to new armed attacks would then be justified on the basis of the right of collective self-defence enshrined in Article 51 of the UN Charter. Military action involving the use of force will take place only in response to an armed attack, as laid down in robust rules of engagement.

2. Opt for a leading European role within a Coalition of the Willing.

The Netherlands should advocate a prominent European role in the political and military direction of an international reassurance force through a Coalition of the Willing (COTW). Cooperation within the COTW is an important step towards a European security identity. The Netherlands can and should show that, together with other EU member states, it wants to take on responsibilities that have previously always been borne by the US. A leading role for EU member states does not by any means preclude participation by countries from other regions. This set-up will mean greater effectiveness while ensuring close coordination with NATO and a focus on embedding the force in the broader European security architecture. For the Netherlands it provides an opportunity to influence the mandate, escalation control and strategic communications.

3. Safeguard democratic scrutiny, transparency and public legitimacy for participation in the Coalition of the Willing.

It is important for the government to focus on transparent decision-making from the very beginning of participation in the COTW and establishment of the reassurance force. In accordance with article 100 of the Constitution, the government must inform the parliament in advance if the armed forces are to be deployed or made available. In addition, it is up to the government to ensure clear communication and ongoing engagement with parliament in the event of the Netherlands contributing militarily to the reassurance force. The deployment of an international reassurance force and extensive industrial cooperation will require enduring political and public support. Communicating clear objectives, boundaries and risks will prevent the deployment from being seen as an ad hoc or optional undertaking, and will enhance the legitimacy of the Netherlands' security policy.

4. Simultaneously invest in Ukrainian self-sufficiency and European industrial capacity.

The government should ensure that security guarantees for Ukraine coincide with accelerated up-scaling of Europe's defence industry capacity. The structural integration of Ukraine into European production and innovation chains is not an alternative to a reassurance force, but a necessary complement to it. This requires long-term political commitment, a willingness to make joint industrial choices at European level, and an active role for the EU as commissioning lead. The Netherlands will have to press for this explicitly and consistently.



5. In addition to a European strategy, develop a national long-term defence-industry and innovation strategy, with Ukraine as an equal partner.

The Netherlands needs to develop a specific long-term strategy that brings together the defence industry, technological innovation and security policy with regard to cooperation with Ukraine.

In this respect Ukraine should be approached not just as a recipient of support, but as a strategic partner in innovation, production and knowledge development. By connecting Dutch strong points – such as sensor technology, maritime systems, autonomous platforms and C2 software – with Ukrainian operational experience, the Netherlands can contribute to sustainable and credible security guarantees for Ukraine *and* help strengthen multi-domain operations, situational awareness and rapid decision-making. By doing so, the Netherlands will strengthen its strategic position within Europe.

Yours sincerely,

Bert Koenders

Endnotes

- ¹ [Robust Security Guarantees for a Solid and Lasting Peace in Ukraine - Statement of the Coalition of the Willing, Paris, 26 January 2026.](#)
- ² See section 1.2 for more information on the legal framework and the detailed workings of the mandate, and section 1.5 for more information on escalation and decision-making in the event of violations.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ AIV advisory letters 'The war in Ukraine: a geopolitical "time shock"' and 'Ukraine – resolve, resilience and prospects for the future'.
- ⁵ See AIV webpage announcing the advisory report on EU enlargement: <https://www.adviesraadinternationalevraagstukken.nl/documenten/2026/06/een-nieuw-momentum-voor-de-uitbreiding-van-de-europese-unie> (in Dutch).
- ⁶ See: CNN, 6 January 2026, <https://edition.cnn.com/2026/01/06/europe/uk-france-troops-ukraine-russia-peace-deal-latam-intl> and NOS, 6 January 2026, <https://nos.nl/artikel/2597209-coalition-of-the-willing-bereid-om-oekraïne-veiligheidsgaranties-te-geven>.
- ⁷ The Minsk agreements were aimed at ending the conflict in Luhansk and Donetsk. In practice they were regularly violated.
- ⁸ Deen, B., Stijnman, E., & Van den Berg, B. (March 2026). *Whatever it takes... to do what? Het gebrek aan een Europese theory of victory in Oekraïne* (Whatever it takes to do what? The lack of a European theory of victory in Ukraine), policy brief. Clingendael – Netherlands Institute of International Relations, <https://www.clingendael.org/publication/whatever-it-takes-do-what>.
- ⁹ Letter to Parliament of 6 January 2026 on developments concerning the Coalition of the Willing in the context of Ukraine: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2026/01/06/kamerbrief-inzake-ontwikkelingen-coalition-of-the-willing-oekraïne>.
- ¹⁰ Like-minded countries from regions outside Europe can also take part in the COTW if they are willing and able to contribute constructively. See p. 7 ff.
- ¹¹ Decisions of the UN Security Council based on Chapter VII ('Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression'), provide scope for a robust mandate to be granted to a reassurance force. Additional support generated by a decision of the UN Security Council based on articles 39 and 42 of the UN Charter could increase the international legitimacy of a military deployment.
- ¹² For the text of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ('Dayton Peace Agreement') see <https://bih.osce.org/bih/126173>.
- ¹³ See: Paris Declaration - 'Robust Security Guarantees for a Solid and Lasting Peace in Ukraine', issued by France – point 3: 'A Multinational Force for Ukraine' <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/01/06/robust-security-guarantees-for-a-solid-and-lasting-peace-in-ukraine-statement-of-the-coalition-of-the-willing-issued-by-france/>.
- ¹⁴ Paris Declaration, point 2: 'Support for the Armed Forces of Ukraine.'
- ¹⁵ Countries such as Japan, for example.
- ¹⁶ See Article 2, paragraph 4 and Article 51 of the UN Charter.
- ¹⁷ The waging of war is subject to restrictions. International humanitarian law both protects those who are not (or no longer) participants in the armed conflict and sets limits on the means and methods of warfare. Besides being referred to as international humanitarian law (IHL) this body of law is also known as the law of armed conflict (LOAC), a term more commonly used in a military context. The main sources of this body of law are 'Geneva' law (encompassing the protection of persons and objects), as laid down in the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols, and 'The Hague' law (restricting the means and methods of warfare), as laid down in the Hague Conventions of 1907 (as well as more recent agreements such as the Ottawa Treaty, the Oslo Accords and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction (CWC).

- ¹⁸ Humanity, military necessity, distinction, proportionality and good faith (in this context, the prohibition of perfidy).
- ¹⁹ Respect for international humanitarian law should be a given. Unfortunately, however, combatants in armed conflicts are regularly guilty of gross violations in this regard. The AIV has identified an alarming rise in attacks on aid workers, a category that enjoys special protection in international humanitarian law given that they provide neutral, humanitarian assistance to people in need. See advisory letter by the AIV and CAVV 'Aid under fire: protecting aid workers in conflict situations': <https://www.adviesraadinternationalevraagstukken.nl/documenten/2026/03/12/aid-under-fire>.
- ²⁰ Rules of engagement (ROE): Binding instructions on the use of force and rules of conduct that determine whether, when and to what extent force may be used during an operation. They are based on the mandate and on international humanitarian law. Each individual operation has its own tailored set of ROE. NATO and the UN each have their own system that features similar concepts, albeit defined in different ways.
- ²¹ National caveats: Additional restrictions or conditions laid down at national level that countries impose on their armed forces as conditions of their participation in a military coalition or operation.
- ²² Command and control (C2): the authority, responsibilities and activities of military commanders in directing and coordinating armed forces, and the execution of orders relating to the implementation of operations.
- ²³ Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum (JFC Brunssum) is one of the three NATO operational level commands, alongside JFC Naples (Italy) and JFC Norfolk (United States). It is responsible for planning, implementing and supporting military operations as part of its missions and tasks aimed at deterrence and defence against threats in all domains, with a view to safeguarding the freedom and security, national sovereignty and peace of NATO member countries and partners.
- ²⁴ Situational awareness: any military operation requires a constant and extensive level of situational awareness. This enables military personnel to prepare for and respond appropriately to changes in the operational environment. Examples of NATO units that specialise in providing the alliance with situational awareness in the air, on land and at sea include the NATO Airborne Early Warning and Control Force and the Alliance Ground Surveillance Force.
- ²⁵ This is the situation that arose prior to the conflict in Kosovo. At that time NATO had an Extraction Force stationed in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia whose task was to evacuate OSCE observers from Kosovo if the situation should escalate.
- ²⁶ Currently carried out by the Senior Representative in Ukraine, Patrick Turner. See: <https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/articles/news/2024/07/16/secretary-general-announces-new-head-of-the-nato-representation-in-ukraine>.
- ²⁷ The NATO Representation to Ukraine (NRU) facilitates political and military dialogue and cooperation between NATO and Ukraine. One of its primary tasks is advising the Ukrainian security and defence sector in support of the Ukrainian armed forces' transition to full interoperability with NATO. See: <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/partnerships-and-cooperation/relations-with-ukraine>.
- ²⁸ Multi-domain approach: Today's operational environment is characterised by increasing complexity and the blurring of traditional linear domain boundaries. A multi-domain approach formulates military activities across various domains, which then take place in a synchronised and coordinated manner, thus enhancing each other in order to achieve military objectives. See also the Multi-Domain Operations concept, the response formulated by NATO, which is defined as 'the orchestration of military activities, across all operational domains and environments, synchronized with non-military activities, to enable the Alliance to create converging effects at the speed of relevance'.
- ²⁹ Early warning: In the military context, this term denotes the early detection of hostile movements in the air, on land or at sea so that friendly troops and air and maritime assets can be warned at an early stage, thus enabling them to operate effectively in their area of operations. See also the definition of 'situational awareness'.
- ³⁰ ISR stands for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, and describes the continuous process of collecting, analysing and disseminating data so as to create information superiority and improve operational decision-making. This can be done using both manned and unmanned systems.

- ³¹ Depth, operational and strategic: In traditional military operations (with a front line at one end and a secure area behind it), and in the land, air and maritime domains: the physical distance to the rear area, where logistics, the command centre and reserves are located. The concept of 'depth' applies to both a force's own rear area and that of an adversary. Strategic depth refers to the distance between the opposing parties' combat sectors and their industrial core areas, capital cities, heartlands and other key centres of population or military production, and the vulnerability of these elements to enemy attack. In contemporary conflict situations, where both state and non-state actors operate simultaneously and across domains, it is relevant to consider depth in such a context (e.g. in the cyber domain) as a dynamic and situational concept.
- ³² An area of operations (AOO) is a geographically delineated area assigned by a higher commander. Within this area a commander is authorised to conduct tactical operations in order to achieve his or her overall mission.
- ³³ An agreement signed in 1936 that governs navigation through the Turkish Straits.
- ³⁴ Recognised by NATO as an operational, or war-fighting, domain.
- ³⁵ Below-threshold activities: activities that take place below the threshold of an armed attack within the meaning of Article 51 of the UN Charter in the continuum of competition, but which may disrupt states and the international legal order. Examples include cyber operations, sabotage, covert influencing and hybrid activities.
- ³⁶ This was set out in the 2026-2030 coalition agreement, see page 32 under 'Defence and international security' <https://www.government.nl/documents/2026/02/23/2026-2030-coalition-agreement-lets-get-to-work---building-a-better-netherlands>.
- ³⁷ See Article 42(7) TEU: *If a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. This shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States.*
- ³⁸ Cf. the 'Solidarity clause' in Article 222 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which obliges both the member states and the Union to provide assistance in the event of a terrorist attack or a natural or man-made disaster.
- ³⁹ See the last sentence of Article 42 TEU: Commitments and cooperation in this area shall be consistent with commitments under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which, for those States which are members of it, remains the foundation of their collective defence and the forum for its implementation.
- ⁴⁰ Established in 2017, the EU does have a Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), but it only commands non-executive military missions, i.e. missions that do not involve combat operations and do not comprise executive tasks involving the use of force.
- ⁴¹ For a further elaboration of this line of thinking, see the AIV's forthcoming advisory report on EU enlargement, which draws similar conclusions to this advisory letter, in the light of the institutional and political reform tasks the Union faces. See the AIV page announcing the advisory report on EU enlargement: <https://www.adviesraadinternationalevraagstukken.nl/documenten/2025/04/17/eu-uitbreiding>.
- ⁴² According to NATO analyses from 2023 and 2024.
- ⁴³ See endnote 4.
- ⁴⁴ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2023), SIPRI Yearbook 2023: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security. <https://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2023/summary/sipri-yearbook-2023-summary-english>.
- ⁴⁵ Center for Strategic and International Studies (11 October 2024), *Rebuilding the Arsenal of Democracy: The U.S. and Chinese Defense Industrial Bases in an Era of Great Power Competition* <https://www.csis.org/analysis/china-outpacing-us-defense-industrial-base>, pp.10-24.
- ⁴⁶ Morgan, F.E. & Cohen, R.S (2020), *Military Trends and the Future of Warfare: The Changing Global Environment and Its Implications for the U.S. Air Force*, RAND Corporation, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2849z3.html.
- ⁴⁷ Kyiv School of Economics (2026), *Ukraine Macroeconomic Handbook*, <https://kse.ua/about-the-school/news/international-support-underpins-ukraine-s-macroeconomic-stability-but-strikes-on-the-energy-system-remain-the-key-risk-ukraine-macroeconomic-handbook-by-kse-institute/> and OECD (2025), *OECD Economic Surveys: Ukraine 2025*, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-economic-surveys-ukraine-2025_940cee85-en/, p. 32.

- ⁴⁸ This refers to, among other things, the work of the Netherlands' Disarmament Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament Geneva. See for instance: <https://www.trouw.nl/binnenland/nederlands-ambassadeur-ontwapening-in-geneve-hier-praten-we-nog-met-rusland~b50049f3f/> (in Dutch).
- ⁴⁹ Center for Strategic and International Studies (2025), Calculating the Cost-Effectiveness of Russia's Drone Strikes, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/calculating-cost-effectiveness-russias-drone-strikes> and Morgan, F.E. & Cohen, R. (2020), Military Trends and the Future of Warfare: The Changing Global Environment and Its Implications for the U.S. Air Force, RAND Corporation, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2849z3.html.
- ⁵⁰ The EU is making €115 million available for SMEs and startups that develop new weapon systems, so that disruptive technologies can be used to achieve breakthroughs. This programme – AGILE – is also aimed at new players, enabling them to gain access to the defence market without having to go through established defence companies. See: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_26_687.
- ⁵¹ Bronk, J., Reynolds, N., & Watling, J. (2022), The Russian Air War and Ukrainian Requirements for Air Defence, Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, <https://rusi.org>.
- ⁵² The Cairo Review of Global Affairs (15 June 2025), Governing AI Under Fire in Ukraine. <https://www.thecaireview.com/essays/governing-ai-under-fire-in-ukraine/>.
- ⁵³ Responsible use is of key importance in this regard, of course. This is one of the areas the Netherlands' Disarmament Ambassador focuses on (see endnote 48).
- ⁵⁴ Center for Strategic and International Studies (25 September 2025), Russia's Massed Strikes: The Strategy of Coercion by Salvo, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russias-massed-strikes-strategy-coercion-salvo> and Barrie, D., Gwadera, Z., & Hinz, F. (November 2025), Deep Precision Strike: Europe's Quest for Long-range Missile Capabilities, International Institute for Strategic Studies. <https://www.iiss.org/research-paper/2025/11/deep-precision-strike-europes-quest-for-long-range-missile-capabilities/>.
- ⁵⁵ Here, too, the importance of compliance with IHL is emphasised, particularly the principle of distinction.
- ⁵⁶ Combat feedback loop: Decision-making model that makes it possible to complete a decision-making and action cycle more quickly, assess situations more rapidly and act faster than adversaries can adapt.
- ⁵⁷ Chevreuil, A., Svendsen, O. & Bergmann, M. How Europe Can Build Ukraine's Future Force, Center for Strategic and International Studies, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/how-europe-can-build-ukraines-future-force>
- ⁵⁸ European Commission (5 March 2024), A new European Defence Industrial Strategy: Achieving EU readiness through a responsive and resilient European Defence Industry (JOIN(2024) 10 final).
- ⁵⁹ See the proposed Defence and Security-related Industry (Resilience) Act (in Dutch): <https://www.internetconsultatie.nl/wetweerbaarheiddefensieenveiligheidgerelateerdeindustrie/b1>.
- ⁶⁰ Autonomous platforms: systems, such as drones, vehicles or ships, that can carry out tasks with little or no human intervention (on the basis of sensors or software).
- ⁶¹ C2 (command and control) software: digital systems that collect, process and coordinate information in order to facilitate coordination, direction and decision-making in operations.
- ⁶² AIV advisory letter [Ukraine – resolve, resilience and prospects for the future](#).



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