**Strategic Developments (Ko Colijn/Clingendael/ 2e Kamer March 16th 2016)**

**Thank you for giving me the opportunity to inform you.**

* **Starting with a very basic, but inevitable point: the world is a dangerous place, and even more so during the last 5-10 years or so. This increase is not so much reflected in the slightly rising number of conflicts (mostly landbased to be sure, not between rival nation) but between transborder or intraborder groups, and in majority about political power, dominant ideology if you will, rather than about territory or resources. The increase is but on a deeper security level.**
* **This increased deep insecurity follows from: (1) a rapidly changing world order: towards a multipolar world, new kids on the bloc, old revisionist ones trying to reassert their influence, and resisting their becoming marginal, (2) more fragile states, or non-states, giving way to non state actors (eg pirates, militia’s, maritime terror groups) that profit from lack of governance and control 🡪 in this regard also coastal control : breakdown of essential security governance and (3) very fundamental developments in technologies, which may alter traditional stable *balances* between defensive and offensive weapons, between small and large countries, between state and non state actors, between the logic of deterrence and the logic of the actual use of force.**
* **Projected on today’s theme of submarines, or seapower if you will, all these developments warrant first a very carefull analysis of what contributes to security or can be done by alternative means to ensure the public good (security) less good or better, for that matter. The word “replacement “ may be the most misleading in this context since all the systemic conditions of the best system available 25 years ago (1990) are not present for the follow up system carrying the same name in 2030: the conditions may have changed completely.**
* **This is not to say that future submarines are worthless of course, they are not to be sure, but is it simply not the case that submarines are to be replaced by submarines, or aircraft by aircraft, tanks by tanks, or missiles by missiles. Even oldiers are not to be replaced automatically by (human) soldiers !**
* **To give you an idea of what I mean: manned aircraft can be replaced by drones, surface ships by unmanned maritime vehicles, suprresion of air defese systems by missiles and a/c can now be done by advanced cyber systems, earth based intelligence can be done by spacebased systems, soldiers by robots, and so on.**
* **Going back to submarines: *“trends in technology are favourable tot he submarine as against the surface ship”*. This may sound great to the submarine guys, but hold on a second: this was a quote from a Foreign Affairs piece called The Future of he Submarine, back in 1959! The future was bright for submarines, but its main functions at that time mentioned were nuclear deterence, protecting or attacking merchant vessels, laying mines, searching and attacking sumarines from the enemy, and even cargo transport. Hunting Soviet submarines was considered essential, as it was argued that 78% of the urban population of Europe was within the range of THEIR submarine based missiles , the only way the Soviets could unseen launch a surprise attack to Europe, all the other means at the time available being too visible and therefore too vulnerable. In the 1980s of course nobody talked about this kind of threat anymore, the landbased Soviet threat of long and medium range missiles having become much more urgent. Nobody thought of the potential cargo function of submarines, yet they were still seen as a cost-effective instrument of sea lane protection. I recall that nowadays the very arguments in favor of the Dutch submarines are that they collect intelligence others are not able to, or that they can operate in shallow waters very near coastlines and afford SOF to conduct necessary raids in nearby landstrokes: two functions never mentioned 30 years ago, let alone in de that Future of the Submarine article of 1959.**
* **Again, this is not to say that these two functions are unimportant or even constructed, but it only underlines that the logic of automatic replacement simply is not adequate.**
* **All that said, and recalling my opening sentence that the world is becoming a more dangerous place, this simply dictates for you having to analyze the threat anew and anew, on a constant base, think of the best ways to respond to it, and not fall victim to the trap of 1:1 replacement logic, simply because 2030 will not be 1959 or 1995.**
* **The Russian submarine fleet has returned to the North Atlantic and the inner waters of Europe (near the Baltics and Sweden). In the words of Nato-commanders ‘there is more activity than we’ve seen since the Cold war’. One new observation is the Russian interest in undersea fiber optic cables, so the protection against their tapping or even sabotaging destroy our underwater communication lines might be a new strategic priority. But what are the most cost-effective means of having right this counter capability? Is it by having a new set of dieselelectric subs, which can put some SOF ashore in Somalia, or which can intercept communications from drugs barons or warlords in faraway countries? Another example: Dutch submarines are very usefull indeed in loitering around Scottish waters (Clyde) where the British nuclear Tridents/Vanguards are spied upon by Russian subs, but the real question is what will happen to this British nuclear deterrent and is it in Nato’s interest to maintain this very expensive extra deterent force, and therefore to help it protect? One of the more or less deliberate, but remarkable decisions by the US and British Navies is that they resolutely have opted for nuclear submarines rather than conventional ones. This makes us appreciated training partners for their Navies as we can simulate excellent silent ‘attacks’ on them like the quiet Russians dieselelectrics might envisage, but is it really the most cost –effective way to perform this function, in 2025 as well as in 2040. To what extent is our freedom of decision bounded by this type of division of labor within the alliance? I only mention reports by DARPA last year and BASIC (David Hambling) very recently, in which it was indicated that unmanned subdrones, or UUV’s, and USV’s (unmanned surface vessels) pose a very real and cheap threat to any type of future submarine, but technology falls outside the scope of this part of the session.**
* **And by the way on training other Navies: we have indeed a very usefull and honourable role in doing that ( Swedish subs as well), but the only way of detecting quiet conventional submarines is considered by the US via active sonar,wich is not guarateed to be used near the west Coast because of recent wildlife protection legislation (dolphins, whales).**
* **Once again, I am certainly not denying the deteriorating security environment, and to the ominous return of the Russian sub threat passing the Greenland/Iceland-UK or GIUK/gap of late. This threat has to be adressed, somehow. Apart from that, the very fact that some 40 countries in the world possess some 400 dieselsubmarines right now , in itself warrants that we ask ourselves: why not we? Most of them are popular and rising in sea contested areas, like the South China Sea. Most of them are Russian stuff, like Kilos’. China’s Song class submarines are tracking US Navy ships operating near Taiwan and Japan, easily threatening ‘invulnerable’ platforms like the Kitty Hawk a/c carrier, and according to admiral Walsh of the Pacific Command more than 140 diesel electric subs now threaten the critical choke points in that particular region, rendering it unavoidable that the US shifts more assets from ist Atlantic flee to the Pacific. But the real questions then again are: Do we backfill, do we participate, and if yes, why do we have a stake in that competition? My answer is cautiously yes, as is my answer to the more general question of we willing to employ submarines in 2025, but it would really all too easy to follow the logic of replacement: we had a submarine fleet in the past, we currently have one, so we will have one in the future. Each time we have to weigh our options, and face the threat, in this regard the threats of 2030 and thereafter. We are dealing with three different generations of a system having the same name, submarine, which have operated and wil, operate in three completely different contexts.**