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## PRÉSENTATION

The footprint of the JSF/F-35 Lightning II  
military jet in the Netherlands  
Geopolitical and geo-economic considerations in  
arms procurement and arms production.

VIRGINIE MAMADOUH ET HERMAN VAN DER WUSTEN

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## RÉSUMÉS

Français **English**

While the European Union aims at developing a common foreign policy and a common arms market, European states still collaborate poorly in the field of actual defence procurement. National firms (each furtively supported by its national government) often compete with each other as much as with American ones, European initiatives compete with Transatlantic ones. At the same time the relations between the European Defence and Security Policy (EDSP) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) remain a much debated issue. While the positions of the larger member states (France, UK and Germany) are well known in this field, the views and practices of the smaller member states are hardly discussed in the literature. This paper explores the geopolitical and geo-economical dimensions of policy making regarding military technology and production in the Netherlands. A neutral country until German invasion and occupation (1940-45), the Netherlands is a founding member of the European Communities and NATO, and a close ally of the US and the UK. Around 2000 it was in absolute terms the sixth spender in the EU regarding both military Research & Development and Equipment Procurement. What are the geopolitical and geo-economical arguments of the Dutch government to procure a new generation of jet fighters and to participate in the Joint Strike Fighter programme to develop and produce the Lockheed Martin-F-35 Lightning II rather than to purchase the French *Rafale* or the *Eurofighter*? What does this mean for the further development of the EU as a territorial actor in international affairs?

## ENTRÉES D'INDEX

**Mots-clés** : États-Unis, Pays-Bas, Union Européenne, acquisition d'armes, industrie aérospatiale, Joint Strike Fighter, F-35 Lightning II

**Keywords** : European Union, The Netherlands, arms procurement, aerospace industry, Joint Strike Fighter, F-35 Lightning II, U.S.A.

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#### TEXTE INTÉGRAL



## 1. INTRODUCTION: A NEW JET FIGHTER FOR THE ROYAL NETHERLANDS AIR FORCE

- 1 The procurement of a new generation of fighter jets is a rare event in Dutch politics (Kreemers 2009 provides a historical overview). In fact, once initiated, the policy process aimed at procurement, turns out to be a protracted process. It can be debated from several different perspectives and it can be treated as either an arcane subject of high politics largely outside the sphere of general public debate or it could arouse broader interests and become part of the ongoing general public discussion. At the previous occasion when the F-16 contract was discussed in the 1970s, the policy process developed into a general bone of contention beyond the pale of parliament. The minister of defence Vredeling at the time had to warn the delegates at his party congress (Labour Party) that 'congresses do not buy military planes' after a detailed and heated discussion on various variants of the contract had occurred reflecting differences of opinion in the larger population regarding the eventual roles of the aircraft and the budgetary consequences of procurement. The expression became proverbial for a considerable period. This time the politics of the JSF have been protracted, have concentrated much more on procurement conditions, technicalities and budgetary constraints than on military strategy and geopolitical considerations at large, have repeatedly engaged and divided parliament and have involved a considerable amount of lobbying activity but so far hardly aroused the wider public. This could still change.
- 2 Initiating a policy process for the procurement of new jet fighters from within the military and the circle of politicians concerned with the sector, could take off in one of the following ways. Either the existing jets supposedly can no longer satisfactorily fulfil their role as they are ageing (economic or technological inadequacy) or new tasks are defined while old ones are abolished as a result of either changes in the threat environment or inability to maintain the current levels of effort and expenditure (operational failure). The Dutch case has developed along these different lines simultaneously with still an additional driving force: the offer from elsewhere to participate in a new jet building program with new economic opportunities for high tech production and highly qualified jobs in the national economy. While the simultaneous operational, technological and economic ageing of F-16 's by 2010 was announced on dubious grounds by 2000 and an apparent need for starting replacement was thus indicated, possibilities to participate in a new US defence programme (see section 4) opened up. The obvious geopolitical question how much needed a new generation of jets now was on the basis of international threats and military ambitions, was answered in general ways on a number of occasions. But it was hardly authoritatively treated, at least in public, in direct relation to the decision to participate in the new US programme. Consequently a definite decision on the procurement of the product of that programme has consistently been postponed and is still not taken at the time of writing. In the meantime Dutch firms and other actors with an interest in the Dutch aerospace industry have become deeply committed to the program and its product. This geo-economics and the geopolitics that logically precede it from a security perspective make up our case description.
- 3 In this paper we aim at contrasting the geopolitical and the geo-economical arguments invoked in the decision making process around the procurement of new jet fighters for the Royal Netherlands Air Force and to suggest interpretations for the apparent predominance of geo-economic arguments. In the next section we will first elaborate upon the differences between these two perspectives on arms procurements.

## 2. ARMS PROCUREMENTS: GEOPOLITICS AND GEOECONOMICS

- 4 Mankind's fighting tools have become ever more differentiated, numerous and lethal. Used to attack or defend, to threaten or deter, their production has developed into a high tech branch of activity. Weapons can be produced by the same actor that will acquire them for use or they can be obtained as gift or bought in the market. Their domestic production guarantees the safety of

supply (notwithstanding the doubtful availability of all possible resources needed) and keeps accompanying technological innovation available within the national economy (this also creates opportunities to deny access to rivals and enemies). Arms acquisition is not merely to be considered in terms of a functional necessity of an organization dedicated to their use, it is also a matter of significant expenditure, and in addition a source of income for commercial manufacturers and exporters. With very few exceptions states have armed forces. Consequently they have to deal with the procurement of weapons and in case they are domestically manufactured with their production.

- 5 From the perspective of those in charge of the armed forces of a political unit, decisions concerning arms procurement and production have to be based on geopolitical and geo-economic considerations. It is not so easy to demarcate these concepts succinctly. Geopolitical notions stem from a long intellectual tradition that has repeatedly been renovated and that is also marked by polemics, among other things concerning the focus and the scope of the concept (Ó Tuathail 1996, Mamadouh 1998, Agnew 2003). The idea of geo-economic notions, in addition to geopolitical ones, was born as the fruit of one such polemic (Luttwak 1993).
- 6 The 'geo' in both terms, it seems to us, refers to territorial actors (states, local governments, regional organizations) in particular. They are the most obviously space oriented, location bounded kinds of actors. Territorial control is part of their definition and identity. That is why they all have strong geo-referents. Basically, all assets on their territory (material resources, human capital) can be accessed by the territorial actor, but the actual mobilization of all these assets for the purposes of the territorial actor is by no means uninhibited. The ability to use territoriality as a spatial strategy (Sack 1986) of these actors affects their actions. Their location conditioned identity helps shape their political, military and economic preferences and impacts on the environments that also co-determine their actions.
- 7 If we follow the geopolitical/economic divide, the aims of these territorial actors are in political and in economic terms. Political in this context refers to security (from physical violence), economic refers to (material) prosperity. This argument follows Gottmann's (1973) logic in his work on the significance of territory. The politics in geopolitics covers the political as well as the military aspects of security. Culture is in this context an all pervasive notion that colours the security and prosperity in which territorial actors find themselves. It encompasses material, external conditions; the ways in which these are translated into relevant perceptions and public images that are the basis for policy-making and public opinion; and the arguments mobilized to support them through discourse.
- 8 The dichotomy security/prosperity appears clear-cut at first sight, but in fact is not. While security is in the dominant policy perception primarily connected to defence hardware as a way to manipulate threat perceptions, to act to counter them and ultimately to resist physical assault, prosperity is a condition for the ability to acquire that hardware and provides extra means to pacify an unfriendly environment. From the other side, prosperity is often deemed to increase in a pacified – more secure - environment, pacified among other things also by an adequate supply of defensive hardware. Finally, the successful development of defensive hardware and increasing prosperity are both dependent on technological advances. The links between technological advances in the military and the civilian domain vary (reciprocal, one blocking the other, starting in one of the two domains and then systematically spilling over to the other etc.), but they are important to better understand the occasionally combined realization of security and prosperity in different countries at different times.
- 9 Consequently, a geopolitical and a geo-economic approach to issues within the realm of international relations can be distinguished but there is necessarily a large overlapping part. In both approaches territorial actors are the main characters. In a geo-political approach, threats with violence and physical assault are the primary focus of attention, and enforcement and fighting the primary actions; in a geo-economic approach wealth creation and destruction and resulting prosperity levels are primary. One important difference between the two approaches is in the different roles of security and prosperity in the purview of territorial actors. Security is originally a definitional attribute, prosperity is not. But these relations seem to be shifting. While security tasks seem to be increasingly privatized, the role of territorial actors in wealth creation and prosperity has increased over time, although it is now again disputed.
- 10 In addition arguments justifying policy choice in weapon procurement can be qualified as geopolitical or geo-economic arguments (see also Warf 1997, Smith 2002, Pollard & Sidaway 2002, Pritchard 2006). The first type of argument refers to security goals, giving priority to the defence of the national territory and national citizens and assets abroad. Geopolitical reasoning also encompasses choices that strengthen the general position of a territorial actor in the global arena, such as participation in military alliances and contributions to geopolitical groupings. The second type of argument

refers to prosperity goals: giving priority to the creation of jobs for national employees, the capture of new markets for national firms and the stimulation of technological innovation for national key economic sectors.

- 11 In this paper we approach the current high level of complexity regarding the procurement and production of weaponry with the conceptual distinctions of geopolitical and geo-economic perspectives. Both perspectives are highly relevant in this instance as we deal with a policy aim that is primarily security oriented but in its realization has all kinds of economic consequences. We narrate one case of a major arms procurement and production process by a small NATO ally in order to demonstrate:
  - the enduring relevance of connections stemming from Cold War practices despite a radically altered geopolitical world map (dominant static two blocs situation changed to widespread volatile failed state syndrome) and new policy devices (high dependency of two external superpower actors shifted to European actor capability)
  - due to the force of military organizational tradition (driven by geopolitics) and the creation of new arrangements in the field of arms production (driven by geo-economics).
- 12 The case revolves around the eventual replacement of F-16 (the current jet fighter in the Royal Netherlands Air Force) by a new fighter plane (possibly the JSF/F-35 Lightning II) and the participation of Dutch industries in the development and production of the new plane. We describe the policy-making in its successive stages first from a geopolitical (section 5) and then from a geo-economical perspective (section 6). We conclude that geo-economic considerations have been far more prominent than geopolitical and geo-strategic arguments.
- 13 These two timelines are put against the background of two relevant and – we submit – highly significant contexts. They are therefore preceded by two sections on these contexts. The first one is the position of the Dutch armed forces in the longer run (national independence, colonial role) and as part of the Cold War NATO Alliance (section 3). The second relevant context is the emergence and development of the JSF programme of the American armed forces since the 1990s that has now culminated in the production of the F-35 (section 4). In our view these two constellations have tended to suppress the geopolitical side of the issue and to enhance the role of the geo-economic arguments during the long drawn out policy process.
- 14 There are two other contexts that could have been significant, but were not. One has to do with the shifts in the geopolitical map around 1990 that suggested at least the consideration of a different profile of the Dutch defence force in which jet fighters would be less prominent. The other regards the new European ambition to construct new actor capability, such as a defence force which would imply more European coordination of weapon procurement and production than actually happened. We will briefly comment their eventual insignificance in the concluding section (section 7).

### 3. THE DUTCH MILITARY TRADITION

- 15 Dutch military tradition has long roots (the following is largely based on Klinkert 2008, see also De Wijk 2010). Independence came about as a result of long drawn out war (1568-1648). Even before the United Republic was politically more or less established in 1581, its initiators had founded an army in 1572. Soon thereafter Dutch naval power became awe-inspiring. The armed forces of the successor state, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, were initiated in 1814. Their evolution largely followed the modernization of armies across Europe following the projects of Napoleon Bonaparte and Heinrich von Moltke. The navy remained important to back up the security of the routes that connected the motherland with the colonies. In the East Indies the model of an expeditionary force developed as it did in other colonial empires. In 1913 there were first attempts to organize an air force. While neutral in World War I the first efforts were nonetheless made to merge civil and military professional abilities: military men consulted on a regular basis with industrialists who could also produce arms and professors from the technical universities plus some Nobel prize winning physicists from general universities. These small groups from different corners laid the groundwork for new forms of weapons procurement by purchases on the international market and domestic arms production.
- 16 The Dutch military tradition is embedded in an experience of centuries with long distance commerce and a habitus to consider international affairs through the lens of international law (Grotius after all was of Dutch origin). The Dutch crafted an early great power role that then disappeared despite a long term oversized set of colonial possessions. As a modest participant in international affairs they engaged their armed forces only rarely and then mostly with only temporary, useless or disastrous results: Belgian independence 1830, German opening offensive World War II 1940, Indonesian independence 1945-49, Dutch-Indonesian conflict in New Guinea 1962,

Srebrenica 1995, Afghanistan 2006-2010. The urge to play at least some role has always remained. As the Cold War subsided and armed intervention in failed states became a pressing concern, the Dutch military were put forward under the uncertain ethical 'protection' of expanding international law easily taking up traditional roles that had earlier been executed in colonial environments. At the same time reflexes of a more recent experience of advanced forms of international cooperation under American command were also continued.

- 17 This last episode has given an extra twist to the Dutch military tradition that is of particular significance for the subject of this paper. During World War II the Dutch military apparatus was partially rebuilt under allied tutelage. The air force got a Royal Netherlands Military Flying School in Jackson Mississippi from 1941. The air force had practically to be rebuilt from scratch and was soon inserted in the integrated NATO force structures. It only became a separate organization in 1953. This suggests that the Dutch air force in particular has from 1945 been intimately connected to the American air force through shared facilities, common training and the like. Consequently the air force was even more than the Dutch military in general and also Dutch foreign and defence policy at large highly impregnated with the Atlanticist perspective that dominated the Western part of the Cold War conflict formation.
- 18 Defence cooperation within Western Europe, and then Europe at large, only took off very gradually after the demise of the Cold War and is still in its infancy. But all further steps give rise to new discussions about their potential impact on the Atlantic alliance. Collaborative efforts regarding arms procurement at European level are recent. The Western European Armament Group (WEAG) was created in 1992 by 13 members of the Western European Union. The WEU was a military alliance that had long lived in the shadow of NATO and later was incorporated to the European Union, with as objectives the opening up of the national defence markets, the harmonization of armament requirements and the strengthening of the European defence industry. The WEAG was replaced in 2005 by a new EU agency: the European Defence Agency (EDA). One common project has been the Eurofighter Typhoon, a jet fighter developed since the 1980s by the UK, Germany, Italy, and Spain. The Netherlands did not choose to participate in this programme, but joined an American venture instead: the Joint Strike Fighter Programme.

#### 4. AMERICAN OPPORTUNITIES: HOW THE JSF PROGRAMME CAME ABOUT, WAS PLANNED AND FARED SO FAR

- 19 During the later 1980s the different departments within the US Department of Defense started to think about successors to a whole series of fighter jets within the different commands. As these processes got underway the strategic environment drastically changed. The Soviet Union shifted course and then disintegrated in 1991. The American administration wanted to reap the 'peace dividend' and the pressure on the Pentagon for defence cuts grew. This resulted on the one hand in renewed efforts to design a multi purpose jet to be produced in a few versions that should be much cheaper than a whole range of unconnected new types.
- 20 In 1996 the Pentagon officially started the Joint Strike Fighter program The time planning of the different stages, to be mixed up and stretched in due course, was as follows:
  - 1996-2001: Selection of concept on basis of prototype and main contractor
  - 2002-2011: Engineering and manufacturing development
  - 2006-2011: Initial production low rate
  - From 2011 onwards: Initial production full rate
  - Until 2052: Production and total service.
- 21 From the very start the new jet had also been considered as a product that could serve in numerous other armies. This had happened in earlier times with the Starfighter, the F-5 and the F-16. But it was clear that this time procurement by the allies from an American supplier would have to take considerably more hurdles. Military budget cuts were threatening the replacement of older American jets everywhere. In addition European initiatives to strengthen military cooperation in general and more specifically common policies in the field of weapon procurement and creating a common market for weapons were threatening the dominance of the American firms, both in commercial and technological terms (Hayward 1998, Hébert 2001, Koehane 2002, 2004; Hartley 2003, 2008, Mawdsley 2004, Schmitt 2005, Darnis et al 2007). Several European alternative jets already existed or would soon be ready for delivery.
- 22 In an attempt to be more attractive for partners, the American government decided that firms residing in other countries would be welcome in the consortium of the corporation winning the initial competition for the overall contract (Adams 1998, Kapstein 2004). The countries in which they resided had to sign on to the program and pay a share in the development costs but would not be committed to purchase the jets until much later in the process.

Countries and firms should obviously not pose a security/information risk for the US and its military equipment (Kapstein 2004: 127). Firms could assist in the design and development of parts on the basis of technological qualifications and price considerations. All this was nominally contrary to earlier occasions when multilateral procurements of armaments were implemented by licensing agreements or accompanied by compensating orders for domestic industries: the *juste retour* principle. Many countries have policies that defence orders to foreign firms should be compensated by orders to national firms for the same amount of money: in the Netherlands the Ministry of Economic Affairs made that compulsory for defence contracts over 5 millions euro. Until the 1960s badges of jets had even been partly donated by the US as military aid to allied countries (the so-called Mutual Defense Aid Program MDAP). In the new venture high tech industries in participating countries could benefit from their role in networks of new technological developments and make profits, just like the American partners, on planes sold to friends anywhere in the world. They would have to acquire contracts by winning bids in a (somewhat restricted) market situation. Co-development was however disputed in the US, not so much for the competition for bids as US firms were quite confident as to their market position, but for liabilities regarding the sharing of new technology, like the stealth technology.

- 23 Despite the absence of definitive commitments to order the planes, the numbers of aircraft to be produced and sold could on this basis be estimated on the basis of the apparent needs of the participating countries. Within NATO the UK, Netherlands, Denmark and Norway were particularly encouraged to take part. They had already used the F-16. The UK was committed to the program through the co-development of one particular version, the Harrier plane successor. The others were users of advanced jet aircraft without a domestic competing design. In the course of time more countries showed an interest like Italy, Turkey, Canada, Australia, Singapore and Israel. In the initial stage (just after 1996) the total production for the US (all versions together) was estimated at 3,000 planes, the UK would take 150 and the additional number for allied countries was left open (perhaps in the order of 1,000). This suggests a total run of somewhat more than 4,000, the same order of magnitude as the total F-16 production had in the end turned out to be.
- 24 In 2001 the main contractor was indeed selected according to plan. Of the giant corporations left after a number of mergers in the 1990s, McDonnell-Douglas had been eliminated at initial bidding in 1996. Subsequently Lockheed-Martin and Boeing had competed on the basis of prototypes and Lockheed-Martin had won the contract for JSF, the most expensive defence programme in US history. But it was clear that a host of technical problems still had to be solved. Not the least was the uncertainty concerning the optimal technology needed for the Harrier successor with its short take off and vertical landing. There were also ongoing disputes about the weight and the number of engines among the different end users of the plane.
- 25 In 2002 the next stage started. It was now called System Development and Demonstration (SDD). Apparently there was still more initial design work to do than originally planned at this stage. Nine countries signed on; signatories had now to pay part of the development costs and their companies were admitted to the bidding procedures for different parts of the plane.
- 26 There are different levels of partnerships in the multilateral projects: the US is - by far - the main customer financing the lion's share of the development (over 80%) and the purchases; the UK is the level 1 partner and contributes to less than 10% of the project. It is followed by two level 2 partners (Italy and the Netherlands) with contributions of about half or a third of the British one, and five level 3 partners (Canada, Turkey, Australia, Norway and Denmark) with much smaller contributions. Finally Israel and Singapore became Security Cooperative Participants with preferential slots for delivery but without financial contribution in the development costs). Compare in Table 1 these participants to those in alternative projects.

Table 1: JSF compared to other jet fighters considered by the Netherlands

Project	Main	Partners	Other Users/ clients	Potential clients*
JSF F-35	<u>USA</u>	1 <u>UK</u> 2 <u>Italy</u> <u>Netherlands</u> 3 <u>Turkey</u> , <u>Canada</u> , <u>Australia</u> , <u>Norway</u> , <u>Denmark</u>	Israel, Singapore	<u>Brazil</u> , <u>Finland</u> , <u>Spain</u> , <u>Greece</u> , Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, UAE
Eurofighter Typhoon		<u>UK</u> , <u>Germany</u> , <u>Italy</u> , <u>Spain</u>	<u>Austria</u> , Saudi Arabia	India, Japan, <u>Greece</u> Oman, <u>Denmark</u> , <u>Romania</u> , Malaysia, Serbia, Qatar ( <u>Turkey</u> considered the Typhoon but decided otherwise)
Rafale	<u>France</u>			(India, Morocco, Libya, <u>UK</u> , Switzerland, Brazil, Dubai, Kuwait, UAE, considered the Rafale but decided otherwise)
Saab JAS 39 Gripen	<u>Sweden</u>		<u>Czech</u> <u>Republic</u> , <u>Hungary</u> , South Africa, Thailand, <u>UK</u>	Brazil, Croatia, <u>Denmark</u> , India, <u>Netherlands</u> , Switzerland, <u>Bulgaria</u> , Serbia, Oman ( <u>Finland</u> , <u>Norway</u> , <u>Romania</u> considered the griffin but decided otherwise)

NB: NATO members; EU-members; NATO and EU-members, and other states. 

\*Reported interests in articles on each of the jet fighters in Wikipedia:

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lockheed\\_Martin\\_F-35\\_Lightning\\_II\\_procurement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lockheed_Martin_F-35_Lightning_II_procurement)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eurofighter\\_Typhoon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eurofighter_Typhoon)
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dassault\\_Rafale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dassault_Rafale)
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gripen>

- 27 In 2006/7 the next stage now called Production, Sustainment and Follow-on Development (PSFD) was initiated, again with nine countries signing on. This stage deemed to last 45 years should cover the entire life cycle of the JSF and charted the outline of the main different processes that had to be implemented. In the meantime the SDD stage was elongated until 2013 as technical and political delays cropped up. Three variants were developed: F-35A is the Conventional Take Off and Landing variant (CTOL) for the US Air Force and other air forces, F-35B is the Short Take Off and Vertical Landing variant (STOVL) for the US Marine Corps and the UK Navy, and F-35C the carrier variant (CV) for the US Navy. First flights with the three variants of the plane were successfully executed in 2006, 2008 and 2010. But the ensuing test flight programmes were slow and the delivery of test planes fell more and more behind schedule. Expectations for the final total production were scrolled back to roughly 3,100.
- 28 By 2010 it had become clear that all was not well with the F-35 Lightning II. The financial and then economic crisis put additional constraints on government budgets, postponement downsizing and even cancellation being discussed in most countries. Technical problems were still by no means solved. The production of test planes was much too slow. Only 9 of the 22 test planes scheduled for 2011 were ready in 2010. This stage of the program, originally to be finished in 2011 when the preparations for full production should have been completed, was now expected to continue until 2016. F-35 had by now a delay in development of over 4 years. The program was haunted by cost overruns. The total cost of the programme was now thought to be 65% over the 2002 estimate, when the main contractor had already been selected. The cost price per plane was now thought to be 85% higher than in 2002 and operational cost overruns could still not be determined. The US Congress enforced a much sharper control by the Department of Defense, the main contractor made shifts in the management of the program to curb this rise.
- 29 Governments confronted with severe budget crises began to consider withdrawal from the program or lower numbers of planes to be bought or simpler versions. The British in their October 2010 strategic review (British Government 2010) proposed both last options simultaneously. Popular resistance against the procurement of new jets in these times of austerity seemed on the rise. For the moment the future of the program is in jeopardy as regards dimensions of the apparatus, delivery dates, cost and support. The upbeat JSF website within the Department of Defense fell silent by summer 2010: further news on the plane was announced 'temporarily unavailable'. It was reactivated in early 2011 after extensive disputes and significant restructurings of the program by the American Ministry of Defense had been implemented (<http://www.jsf.mil/news/latest> accessed March 2 2011)).
- 30 At this moment in time a renewed course for the JSF programme seems to have been set but major uncertainties regarding budgets, solutions for technical problems and the ability to deliver on time remain. We now look at the involvement of the Dutch in the programme as they considered a successor for the current generation of fighter jets for the Royal Netherlands Air Force. We consider Dutch arguments and actions first from a geopolitical and then from a geo-economic perspective.



## 5. THE GEOPOLITICS OF DEFENCE PROFILING: THREAT NARRATIVES AND MILITARY AMBITIONS

- 31 In 1993 the Dutch Labour Party minister of Defence reacted to the momentous geopolitical changes of 1989-1991 with a report to Parliament (*Prioriteitennota* 1993). It detailed a radical shift in the profile of the armed forces (announced in the decennial defence review of 1991) and a considerable cut in defence spending. The profile was to shift from a contribution to an allied static defence of the East-West border that had divided Europe for half a century to a greatly expanded participation in peace keeping and peacemaking operations in the conflict zones of the world that were full of weak polities. UN secretary general Boutros Ghali (1992) had just pointed towards a much more prominent role of the UN in enabling intervention and asked for support by member states. More immediately influential had probably been the outcome of a West European Union meeting of defence ministers near Bonn in the previous year that had reached similar conclusions with some sense of the practicalities. These Petersberg tasks were a sign of renewed life of the WEU, an old handmaiden of NATO that was now seen as a kernel for new defence cooperation within the just founded European Union (Maastricht Treaty 1992). At this juncture violence in Yugoslavia had just got underway by way of practical challenge in the backyard of the EU.
- 32 Following the *Prioriteitennota* the reform of the Dutch armed forces should enable participation in a maximum of four operations simultaneously. Part of the necessary forces would have to be 3 squadrons of F-16 jets. Control of the air space after day one, and the continuous availability of air support in the following period, was seen as indispensable. Before all the necessary changes could be implemented the Netherlands got itself involved in the 'peace keeping' operation in Yugoslavia. The ensuing disastrous events in Srebrenica on 11 July 1995 put the new concepts to a very hard test. Among many other things it sharpened the view particularly in the Netherlands that air support would have to be given by one's own air force, that therefore now would remain as an intrinsic part of the newly profiled defence force. As two of the most respected Dutch military analysts recently put it: deployed troops and air support should operate jointly and be retained under Dutch full command. (Colijn & Homan 2010: , 21)
- 33 The *Defence review 2000* by a Liberal-Conservative minister elaborated the same concept, slightly diminished the maximum number of simultaneous interventions and scrapped one of the squadrons. In fact this was not implemented at the time. In 2003 the next minister of Defence from the same party in a more rightwing coalition wrote an explosive report disguised as a letter to Parliament at the occasion of its annual opening in 2003 (this so called *Prinsjesdagletter* had a title: 'Towards a new equilibrium', no epistolary beginning) in which he announced a number of changes in the makeup of the Dutch armed forces again making further cuts in the overall budget, shifting the balance between running costs (particularly personnel, down) and investment (up) in order to realize the model of a well equipped professional expeditionary force (the one initially described in 1993 and now more pointedly put forward) but again on a somewhat diminished footing. The squadron that was to be abolished according to the earlier review now really had to go. Two remained as no more had been needed in the preceding decade. At the same time a standard scenario for these interventions was put forward with a highly violent initial phase in which it was the Dutch ambition was to take part. Cruise missiles were planned to be part of the Dutch arsenal. In 2007 a new minister (this time of a small Christian party) finished the ambition for the Dutch armed forces to take part in those initial stages and plans for Cruise missiles were withdrawn, the air support by the remaining F-16's was maintained.
- 34 The minister also initiated a major discussion on the future of the Dutch armed forces with various scenarios, levels of ambitions and preferences that was broadly discussed among defence specialists. The final report (*Verkenningen*) appeared in March 2010 when the cabinet had just fallen after a disagreement between coalition partners about the prolongation of the Dutch intervention in Afghanistan. The consequences of the financial and economic crisis were in the Netherlands read as an urgent need to diminish the budget deficit by critically assessing all public expenditure. Exercises in the order of 20% diminution of all departmental budgets were published at exactly the same time. The defence budget proposals of the incoming cabinet point to a further 10% decrease over the next four year period (2011-2015) (*Regeerakkoord bijlage*). Finally, a serious effort to consider the geopolitical consequences of the current period in the political arena and to confront them with Dutch military ambitions to provide security was drowned in an ocean of financial trouble.
- 35 During this period the reshaping of the armed forces from a static, iron curtain oriented defence force to a dynamic expeditionary force able to operate far from base with its own logistic support was considered incomplete

without the availability of constant air support as an inherent part of that force. It should be added that the numbers of planes involved were much lower than those that were actually present in the air force. The legitimization for the remainder was a reference to NATO planning (with its own geopolitical justification, that remained however out of sight of Dutch public and political debate altogether). Consequently there is a geopolitical argument in the context of the current Dutch military doctrine for a successor plane to the F16's if they would no longer be up to date. There is some dispute about the moment when this is the case and one could also question the numbers needed. In addition the precise qualifications of such successor planes have hardly been formulated as a function of the geostrategic doctrine in which they have to operate. The assessments of different types of planes use different criteria and those criteria are not clearly related to the eventual tasks the planes are supposed to do.

- 36 Finally the striking absence of references to the EU efforts to develop a common defence and security policy (Dreighton 2002, Eilstrup Sangiovanni 2003, Winn 2003, Toje 2005) and a common weapon procurement policy ((Hayward 1998, Hébert 2001, Hartley 2003, 2008, Mawdsley 2004, Schmitt 2005, Darnis et al 2007) is worth noting. The European alternatives were hardly considered. In fact in 2008 when the Dutch parliament enforced a reassessment of the JSF against alternatives to replace the F16, Dassault and NETMA (the NATO Eurofighter and Tornado Management Agency) did not bother to present the Rafale, respectively the Eurofighter Typhoon, arguing that the decision had already been made (see also below).

## 6. THE GEO-ECONOMICS OF JSF: STIMULATING THE DUTCH KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

- 37 Right at the start of the American JSF program in 1996 the Dutch platform NIDV launched a subplatform for the Dutch participation in the JSF program called NIFARP. NIDV (in full *Stichting Nederlandse Industrie voor Defensie en Veiligheid*) is a non-profit meeting point for more than 200 companies and research institutes in the Dutch defence and security industry and the Ministry of Defence. It was created in 1984 by the Ministry as a portal for Dutch business to Dutch defence procurements (about 2 billion US dollars a year). NIDV has created specialized platforms for larger industrial projects like the JSF. One is the *Netherlands Industrial Fighter Aircraft Replacement Platform* (NIFARP). In these institutions, not lobbies but parts of the corporatist networks that have operated in many European countries since World War I (an early predecessor in this field was already mentioned in section 2), retired high military officers often play prominent roles. This one had a naval officer who later went into public government (mayor, secretary of state) and another who became a governing member of the major technical consulting body for military affairs in the country upon retirement. In 1997 the state and the Dutch companies started to take a very limited part in the preparatory stages of JSF. At that stage no public discussion whatsoever on the actual phasing out and eventual replacement of the F-16's had occurred. About 55 companies now participate in NIFARP.
- 38 Two years later in 1999 the Dutch government initiated a WEAG procedure (see above) to explore the possibility of a European project for the replacement of the F-16 and, strangely enough, three years later in 2000 the need for replacement was officially determined. A comparative assessment of 6 candidates (Joint Strike Fighter; F/A-18E/F Super Hornet; Eurofighter Typhoon; Dassault Rafale; Saab JAS39 Gripen; Advanced F-16 (F-16 Block 60) conducted in 2001 in line with the WEAG procedure, showed the JSF to be superior. A major difficulty of this exercise was the fact that the JSF (but also other candidates) did not yet exist. Much technical and financial information was necessarily either lacking or unreliable (*NRC Handelsblad* Dossier JSF)..
- 39 In 2002, in a highly volatile political situation, a parliamentary majority could rather unexpectedly be found for Dutch participation in the coming (later: SDD) stage of the JSF programme. The Dutch government paid \$800 million in the JSF development budget. This provided potential gains for the state when the plane or the technical inventions that it contained, would eventually be widely sold. It provided also access for companies residing in the Netherlands to take part in the bidding on subprojects during the development of the plane. A small part of this sum could be used to pay Dutch companies that won bids in the program, but only under certain conditions. However, as the Dutch government considered this money as part of the price it was willing to pay for the jets that it would eventually buy, a business case was developed of JSF acquisition costs when bought 'from the shelf'. Companies were required to pay back the difference as a proportion of their turnover on the relevant projects as the government had promised that the tax payer would not have to pay a cent more for this development stage. This became a bone of contention. For the companies what mattered primarily was the total turnover that participation generated. Disappointments occurred. It was also difficult to enforce the agreement. Free riding companies simply refused to pay. The administration of the obligations was complicated. But not the least

problem was the impossibility to agree on the 'from the shelf' price. As a matter of fact there are no planes there as yet and for a considerable time to come. Perhaps the strangest thing was the assumption that the Dutch government would buy from this particular shelf eventually, as no political decision to that effect was in fact taken. In the planning of the Ministry of Defence, the situation of the project is to the present day still called 'acquisition preparation'.

- 40 To make things worse there were quite a lot of uncertainties about the benefits of the participation of the Dutch industry to the project (Van de Vijver & Vos 2006, 2007): Estimates of the industry (NIVD and NIFARP backed by reports of consultancy firm Price WaterhouseCoopers – a participant in NIVD - and the University of Tilburg) of the number of jobs involved were much more optimistic than those of the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB 2009). Nevertheless municipalities were competing with each other to attract a new production Fokker factory despite all uncertainties about the very input of Fokker in the eventual production line (Derix 2010).
- 41 In 2006 the Dutch government took a further step and signed on to the Production, Sustainment and Follow-On Development or PSFD stage, the entire life cycle of the eventual jet until 2051. The entrance fee now was \$359 million. There was also a place reserved on the initial assembly line for \$3.1 million to get the first of the two anticipated test planes that would take part in the Initial Operational Test & Evaluation phase or IOTE phase, for which the government signed up in 2008.
- 42 In a new political constellation there was renewed uncertainty about the future of the JSF as a replacement of the F-16. A new assessment was done in 2008. Some competitors refused to take part as they thought that the choice had already been made and the dice were loaded against them. The assessment was done in a quite different way from the one executed in 2002. The JSF after all was now closer to realization. Anyway, JSF again came out first (for details on the differences between the two assessments see *NRC Handelsblad* Dossier JSF). As a result, with much difficulty, parliament agreed to buy two test planes. The next year, total costs of eventual procurement were estimated \$400 million higher than predicted earlier. Definite parliamentary agreement for the purchase of only one test plane was given. Then in 2010 just after the premature fall of the government, the parliament voted a motion to withdraw from the test phase altogether. The minister refused to do what was asked by a parliamentary majority in the motion, postponing any decision to the installation of a new government. The high level of conflict also within the governing coalition concerning JSF is also illustrated by the recent disclosure of American embassy cables from The Hague through Wikileaks as published in the Guardian newspaper (2010a, 2010b). During 2005-2009 at least 21 cables with JSF as their subject were sent. There was clearly intense interest on the American side in the matter and apparent willingness to talk from the side of various well positioned Dutch politicians and high civil servants. Apart from the apparent unwillingness to openly communicate all available information to parliament in a timely manner (see below), perhaps the most revealing piece of information is the incoming Minister of Defence in 2007 telling the Americans that he only got the position because one of the larger coalition parties was not willing to be responsible for the JSF issue as it was in fact opposing the acquisition but felt forced to accept it as part of the overall coalition agreement.
- 43 The new cabinet installed in October 2010 announced the purchase of a second test plane in 2011. According to the planning of the Ministry of Defence the decision on purchasing the planes to replace the F-16 will be taken in 2012 but the new prime minister quickly indicated that a definitive decision on acquisition had to be postponed to the next cabinet period (if all goes well for him, this suggests a further delay of four years). Within the long term budget cuts announced by this same new cabinet, currently planned numbers (85 in total down from an initial 100) can not be accommodated. Definite contracts will have to be made in badges 4 years in advance of actual production, so it is not unlikely that the purchasing orders will ultimately be sliced into 4 year packages.
- 44 In the meantime a conflict between the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the companies taking part in the SDD stage of JSF had to be solved. This was finally done through arbitration by the Netherlands Arbitrage Institute. The final agreement was reached in 2010. The state had to give in about two thirds of what it had originally asked. Within the logic of the original arrangement, it results in a further price rise of the JSF if finally procurement of F-35 takes place, or an extra loss on the project 'replacement F-16' if the final decision is not to purchase F-35s but to do something else instead.
- 45 It is obvious that the construction of the JSF program committed the Dutch government through geo-economic means to a considerable extent in a very early stage. The possibility to participate created a powerful lobby for the program. It has been called a Trojan horse. The relatively small role that the Dutch government could play in the final outcome of the program gave very little room for specifically Dutch geopolitical and geostrategic considerations in its execution. Once the initial commitments to the JSF were made, it turned

out to be very difficult for alternatives to arouse an interest. The entire process of F-16 replacement was shaped as if the successor had been selected from the outset. Indeed, two additional assessments were made to comply with European agreements regarding arms procurement, but the first one was completely in function of the stage of (early) development of the JSF in which in fact lots of uncertainties existed, and the second was enforced by the political situation when positions had been taken, money had been spent in one direction, and it had already become very difficult to take a fresh and impartial look.

- 46 The JSF was less important in the 2010 electoral campaign than in 2006. Accordingly only 9,5 lines of the 46 pages long coalition agreement between the two parties forming the new minority government were about defence; but 2 of these lines were about the JSF, the only reference to the air force and the only item on arms procurement (VVD & CDA 2010). All this indicates the low priority of defence generally and thus of JSF, but at the same time the strong lobby for the participation in the JSF programme and the eventual acquisition of the jet. It was significant that in the agreement on the parliamentary support of the anti-immigration party (PVV) necessary to ensure majority support for the minority coalition on some critical issues the PVV acceded to some further steps in linking Dutch companies and the Dutch air force to the JSF programme despite campaigning on a contrary preference.
- 47 The new Minister of Defence started conversations to realize the necessary budget cuts and suggested that the eventual number of planes might have to go down to about 60, due to both higher prices for the planes and higher operation costs in the long run. Similarly in other countries, budget cuts were translated into delays and cancellations, most notably in the UK which cancelled its purchase of the STOVL variant (British Government 2010). The American government currently plans the acquisition of 2,443 jets in three versions (News, Adjustments put F-35 on track, Program Director says on <http://www.jsf.mil/news/> (down from initially about 3,000) Obviously less purchases means higher prices per unit and less benefits for the firms involved in the development and production of JSF.

## 7. CONCLUSION: JSF AGAINST ALL ODDS - INTERPRETING CONTINUITY

- 48 By 2011 the conclusions on the Dutch involvement in the JSF programme can only be preliminary. The case is not closed and the ongoing disputes in the Dutch debate are many: they pertain to the necessity to replace the F-16 in the first place, the suitability of the F-35 regarding its huge noise nuisance, the costs and the extra costs, the number of jobs created or secured, the embeddedness in the Netherlands of the firms benefitting from these contracts, the financial contribution of the contractors to government spending. The purchase of a second test plane by the new government, was announced just a few days after its installation in October 2010, but at the time of finishing this paper (March 2011) this still has to be discussed and agreed on in parliament. The publication of US embassy cables from The Hague pertaining to the JSF led to commotion: they suggested that information about rising costs which was known within the Dutch Ministry of Defence had not been properly and timely communicated to parliament.
- 49 In this paper we have described the long and messy process of two thoroughly intertwined decision making processes: one regarding the participation in the development of the American initiated Joint Strike Fighter/F35 Lightning II programme and one regarding the replacement of F-16. There were hardly any geopolitical arguments for the early participation in the development of the new jet: attention was focussed on possibly cheaper planes and technical sophistication (stealth technology). Geo-economic arguments were dominating the public debate. Early participation in the development pertained to advantages for the Dutch aerospace industry with development contacts, technological innovations, participations in American networks of development and production, and eventual royalties from purchases by third countries. Geopolitical arguments were also relatively secondary and subdued in the public debate on the purchase of the F-35. They were more prominent in the US perspective on the Dutch participation in the JSF programme as shown by US embassy cables made public through Wikileaks and *The Guardian* (2010a 2010b). On the Dutch side the tradition based status of the Netherlands among smaller western allies was important, as was the partnership with the US particularly in the case of the Royal Netherlands Air Force where the continuation of a close collaboration with the US Air Force was key. In the end, for the purchase of the F-35, geo-economic advantages also dominated the public debate. Arguments included production contracts, maintenance contracts, and economies of scale thus lower prices. If all those arguments were really valid is doubtful.
- 50 Military organizational tradition and new productive arrangements instigated by the American side largely nullified the effects of geopolitical shifts dating from the 1990s and new political arrangements that put European ambitions further in the foreground. The geopolitical shifts were accompanied by an

increase in relatively small scale interventions in which modern jets turned out to play a vital role and the protection of forces on the ground by closely connected air power became part of the conventional wisdom. In this entire episode it is particularly striking that the Netherlands seems to prefer being a very small partner of the Americans to being a fairly small player in a EU team: in other words being a small military partner of the US is more attractive than being a small player in the EU defence policy, or for Dutch firms being a subcontractor of a US firm is more attractive than being a small player in a European conglomerate. This might be read as a significant warning for France and Germany, the larger Member States that tend to be obsessed with their bilateral relations and neglect smaller member states when they work at a European common defence policy or a European common weapon procurement policy. It remains to be seen what a more emphatic role of the UK in this European military concert may signify by way of breathing space for smaller countries in future dealings.

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