



Readiness as a Mission: Implications for Belgian Defence

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Readiness reflects the ability of the armed forces to accomplish their assigned tasks in time. Like many European counterparts, Belgian Defence disposes of some high readiness assets, but is lacking in readiness overall. This impacts its contribution to collective defence and its wider ability to support societal resilience. This Egmont Security Policy Brief explains the concept of readiness as a question of resource management and applies this to the ongoing defence review. Treating readiness as a meta-mission implies not only balancing the budgetary input parameters – investing in personnel, training, equipment and maintenance simultaneously – but also taking a selective approach towards operational engagement. Doing so will enable the force to regenerate as rapidly as possible, and boost Belgium’s ability to act both at home and abroad.

INTRODUCTION

In December 2020 Minister Ludivine Dedonder appointed a group of academic experts to assist with the updating of the 2016 Strategic Vision for Belgian Defence.

The recommendations that were put forward in the ensuing report contained one element that has received only scant attention, namely the pursuit of national readiness as a mission enabling all other tasks of the armed forces.¹ This has nonetheless a great bearing on the principles guiding the defence review, which the Belgian government approved on 23 July 2021.² In particular, this concerns the principle of maintaining a sound balance between capabilities, infrastructure, personnel, training and operations. These dimensions come together in the concept of readiness: the ability of the armed forces to execute their assigned tasks in time. Yet what does this entail?

“Although we may not know what readiness is”, Richard Betts famously wrote, *“we know it when we see it, or, more often, when we do not see it”*³ The recent non-combatant evacuation operations out of Kabul airport proved a case in point. The Belgian operation *Red Kite* showcased that the 15th Air Transport Wing and the Special Operations Regiment, operating in close cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were ready within days to undertake the challenging mission of rescuing over 1400 Belgian nationals, other EU citizens and Afghan partners. Yet the ability to swiftly secure and operate an airport in a highly contested environment like Kabul exceeded the capacity of the Belgian armed forces or their European counterparts – leaving them dependent on the United States as framework nation. One can only wonder how our forces would fare in more challenging missions even close to home. NATO has therefore put

considerable emphasis on upgrading the readiness of European armed forces. This included the Readiness Action Plan, the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force and the 4x30 Readiness Initiative.⁴

This Egmont Security Policy Brief seeks to elucidate the concept of readiness and apply this to the ongoing Belgian defence review. Understanding how readiness comes into being is of critical importance in managing the financial resources that Belgian Defence requires. It also provides a methodology for evaluating the advantages and limitations of multinational cooperation. Most fundamentally, a ready force provides us with the practical means and capabilities of achieving societal resilience: the proverbial holy grail of national security.

The argument proceeds in three parts. The first section analyses the concept of readiness as an organisational process that translates budgetary inputs into the operational ability to act. The second section zooms in on the financial input parameters contained in the Belgian defence budget. The third section discusses the matter of readiness outputs and explains that a deliberate approach to operational engagement helps to grow overall readiness faster. The conclusion returns to the relationship between readiness as a meta-mission and the different core tasks that the Belgian government has assigned to its armed forces.

Understanding readiness

The notion of readiness is frequently used, yet not always well-understood in defence policy debates. Part of the confusion results from the fact that readiness refers simultaneously to a state ('being ready', translated as *paraatheid* in Dutch or *disponibilité* in French) as well as a process ('getting ready', i.e. *paraatstelling* or *mise en condition*). A typical definition has military readiness referring to the "*prompt and immediate response capability for plausible missions*".⁵ This indicates that readiness implies three distinct sub-questions: *what part* of the force is ready, *for which mission* is it ready, and *for when* is execution required? Military units can operate at high readiness, i.e. being fully equipped, trained and thus able to undertake (politically defined) missions at short notice. Obviously, this comes at a significant cost. Alternatively, units

can be held at lower degrees of readiness, i.e. requiring more time and/or additional resources to prepare for missions. Different missions may themselves require different degrees of readiness. For air policing, for instance, the planes on Quick Reaction Alert must be airborne within minutes. Peacekeeping operations, in turn, imply response times that are measured in weeks or months. A 'ready force' is thus highly responsive for all politically defined missions within relevant timelines, whereas a 'hollow force' is unable to act timely because of a lack of personnel, equipment, training, or insufficient maintenance.

Like many of its European counterparts, the Belgian armed forces dispose of some high readiness assets, but the force is lacking in readiness overall. This state of limited readiness impacts the ability to execute more demanding missions because of shortages in personnel, equipment, or training.⁶ To understand readiness, it must be understood as a process of transforming budgetary inputs into (potential) operational output. A defence force must first be established – men and women being put into uniform – and then equipped, trained, and sustained over time. Such a force derives its size and capabilities from the core tasks that the government expects the defence establishment to be ready for. Based on military estimates analysing the mission at hand, a dedicated task force can be then generated from the pool of ready forces. Only when units have been properly trained and equipped by their respective service components are they ready to take on specific missions. This process is resourced with taxpayer money and gets reflected into the defence budget adopted by parliament. Drawing on the work of Todd Harrison, this can be visualized as in Figure 1 below.⁷

When understood as a question of resource management, readiness emerges from a balance between inputs and outputs. One side of the coin concerns the funding of the armed forces as appropriated by parliament. In the Belgian case, this concerns chapter 16 division 50 of the federal budget. This features a total of ten budgetary categories ranging from the subsistence of the force (mostly salaries) to various sorts of subsidies paid by Belgian Defence to entities such as the National Geographic Institute and the War heritage Institute.

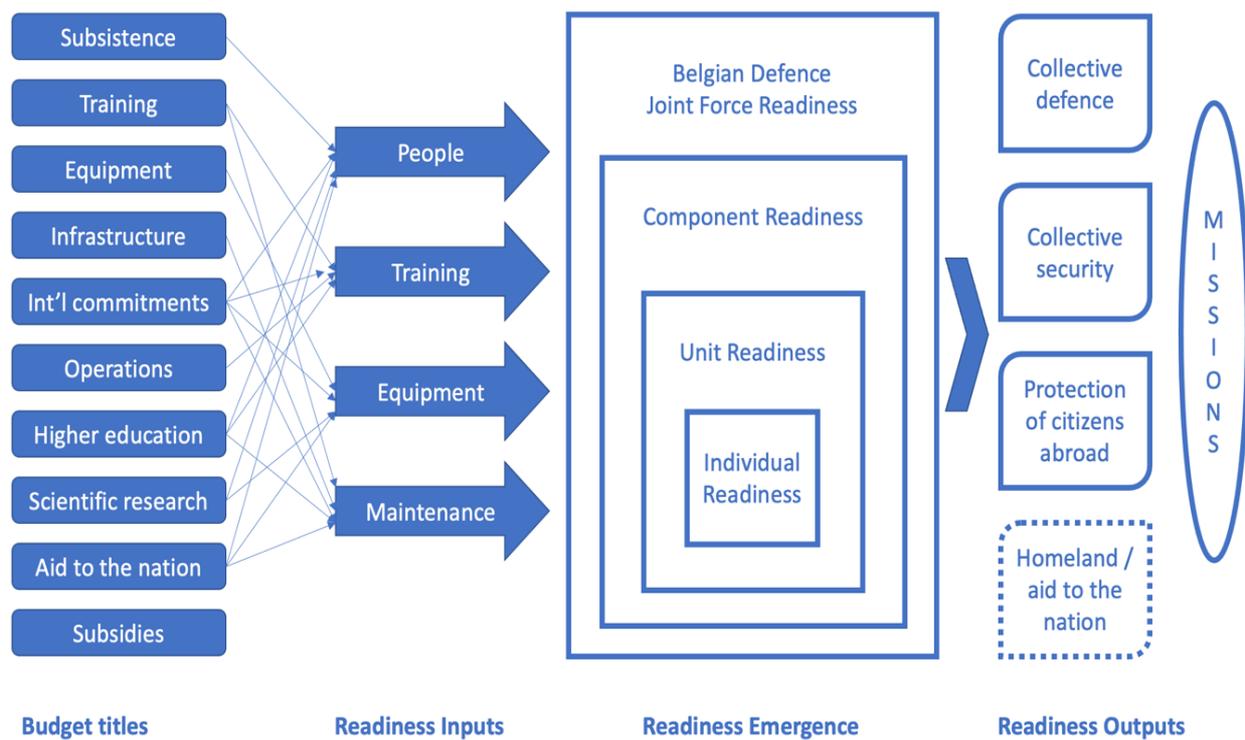


Figure 1: Military Readiness as a process of resource management (adapted from Harrison 2014)

The other side of the coin concerns the core tasks of Belgian Defence and the missions that can be assigned to the forces. In generic terms, these are collective defence (organised around NATO’s Article 5), collective security (via the conduct of crisis response, stabilization and/or security assistance operations), and the protection of Belgian citizens abroad.⁸ In addition, within the limitations of available means, military capabilities can also be committed to homeland security tasks and providing aid to the nation. This got recently illustrated by the military contribution to the coronavirus response in 2020 or clearing up the flooding damage in 2021. Within these broad categories, operational engagement can be executed in accordance with Article 167 of the Belgian Constitution. Once the military instrument is used, readiness gets spent, illustrating Clausewitz’ famous dictum that operational engagement is *“what cash payment is in commerce”*.⁹ Boosting Belgian Defence readiness therefore requires calibrating budgetary inputs as well as operational outputs.

BALANCING THE READINESS INPUTS

National defence spending buys the sovereign military ability to act. From an accounting perspective, readiness is a question of balancing and husbanding the budgetary inputs in function of tasks and objectives. This section disentangles the Belgian defence budget in its constitutive components and sheds light on what such a balancing act entails. Existing NATO and EU commitments provide some direction in this regard. Yet the key issue consists in avoiding the cannibalization of one budget category in favour of another. A ready force needs personnel, equipment, training and running costs for maintaining the defence establishment and investing in the constant modernisation thereof.

Table 1 below summarises the breakdown of the Belgian defence budget, excluding the cost of the ministerial cabinet.

Budget titles		2019	2020	2021
16.50.0	Subsistence	1.601.303.000	1.680.959.000	1.739.209.000
16.50.1	Training	403.156.000	562.208.000	590.817.000
16.50.2	Equipment	501.833.000	641.129.000	1.121.062.000
16.50.3	Infrastructure	37.257.000	62.848.000	76.057.000
16.50.4	International commitments	54.843.000	70.326.000	56.282.000
16.50.5	Operations	93.287.000	76.876.000	67.000.000
16.50.6	Higher education	38.345.000	40.865.000	40.443.000
16.50.7	Scientific research	4.475.000	6.607.000	8.735.000
16.50.8	Aid to the nation	13.050.000	14.355.000	13.885.000
16.50.9	Subsidies	32.632.000	33.817.000	34.153.000
16.50	Total Payment Appropriations	2.780.180.000	3.189.990.000	3.747.643.000

Table 1: Breakdown of the Belgian Defence budget (payment appropriations 2019-2021) ¹⁰

- The base layer consists in **subsistence** costs, which chiefly include military and civilian salaries and basic running costs. The size of the military contingent thus constitutes the most important factor driving force development. ¹¹ Raising military salaries and expanding the force to the level of our European allies without conscription constitutes the thrust of the ongoing defence review. As this implies a personnel growth from around 25.000 to a level above 32.000, we can expect to see this budget title grow significantly in the years ahead.
- The **training** title includes the bulk of running costs for the different components of the armed forces.
- The **equipment** title has recently been growing rapidly because of the payments following from the recent procurement of a new generation of major platforms. ¹²
- Under **infrastructure** comes mainly the construction of new military installations and major maintenance works. Given the worn-out condition of Belgian Defence

real estate, these payments will also increase in the years ahead. When looking at commitment appropriations (allowing for future payments, not displayed in table 1), the infrastructure title increases nearly tenfold to 691 million EUR in 2021.

- **International commitments** include *inter alia* the Ministry of Defence contribution to the NATO Military Budget and Security Investment budgets, common costs shared via the European Peace Facility and the European Defence Agency budget. ¹³
- Other, smaller budget titles speak largely for themselves.

Unlike the other Belgian Federal Public Services, the defence budget is managed based on the so-called ‘envelope principle’. This allows shifts from one budget title to another to achieve greater operational flexibility as well as budgetary efficiency. As such, the operations budget frequently gets topped up during the year with

resources from other headings. When urgently required, this can boost operational output. Yet if used repeatedly and extensively, this comes at the cost of squeezing out the other categories.

The question of what constitutes an appropriate balance across these budget titles gets partly answered in the multilateral forums in which Belgium participates. Most importantly, this includes the NATO Defence Investment Pledge, which got re-confirmed at the 2021 Brussels Summit with the explicit aim of improving readiness.¹⁴ This pledge includes not only the well-known guideline of spending 2% of GDP on defence, but also the target of spending 20% of defence expenditure on new equipment (including R&D costs.) In addition, Belgium co-established the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation in 2017.¹⁵ This commits the participating member states again to the collective benchmark of spending 20% of total defence spending on equipment investment. In addition, it specifies the need to collectively earmark 2% of total defence spending for research and technology budgets. In combination, these benchmarks are meant to ensure that NATO and EU states have constant access to modern equipment as well as a thriving defence industrial base. Note that both NATO and EU minimum targets refer to a broad definition of defence expenditure that includes military pensions, which in the Belgian federal budget are not included in the defence budget heading. Using this broad definition, Belgium reached 18,03% in 2021 as far as equipment spending was concerned – up from the dramatic low of 2,84% in 2013.¹⁶ On the R&T benchmark, in turn, Belgium only achieved a meagre 0,19% in 2019.¹⁷ These figures indicate that even with recent efforts in boosting equipment and defence research spending, there remains some way to go in first reaching and then sustaining these benchmarks over time.

Apart from these multilateral commitments, the question of balance also relates to a national (organizational) need to avoid swinging from one extreme to the other in different budget titles. Bluntly put, extreme underinvestment in any category eventually needs to be compensated by a drastic counterturn. This cannot help

but hurt readiness levels. We see this today in the equipment category, as a backlog of much-needed modernisation has built up over many years. Yet by extension, this phenomenon applies to all budget titles. The relative shares of different titles will fluctuate over time in function of modernisation cycles – a phenomenon that can be managed by spreading the acquisition of new systems over time. What must be avoided at all costs, however, is the cannibalization of one budget category in favour of another. Investing in equipment *or* in personnel *or* in anything else constitutes a set of false dichotomies: a ready force requires constant budgetary inputs across all categories simultaneously. Perhaps counterintuitively, any attempt at increasing the size of the force – i.e. growing the subsistence title – by compressing the training and equipment would unavoidably decrease readiness overall and only sustain a hollow-force.

High levels of training and maintenance of the defence establishment are of critical importance to bring units from all components into a high degree of readiness. Units can only assume missions at short notice if they have been fully trained and equipped. Also, the quality of the defence infrastructure will affect their ability to act swiftly and responsively, just as it will affect unit morale and the attractiveness of the military profession at the level of the individual soldier. Recruitment and retainment of personnel cannot be considered in isolation from the need to foster readiness overall. This implies a need to take the effects of attrition into account, as well as the need to replenish material and munition stocks for training and operations. As former Chief of Defence Marc Compernel explained in his 2019 new year's address, "*readiness has its price*", namely "*a coherent defence budget that enables the interplay between personnel, equipment and running costs.*"¹⁸ To evaluate whether a force is ready, however, one cannot limit the analysis to budgetary inputs. As always, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

A DELIBERATE APPROACH TO READINESS OUTPUTS

The output of readiness consists in the ability of the defence establishment to undertake all politically assigned

missions within the required timeframe. While it may appear simple in theory, this is more difficult to measure in practice for three reasons. For one, the ability to act does not appear out of thin air: it requires the “*ability to analyse the security environment, to plan and command operations, and to decide on the employment of the force*”.¹⁹ Maintaining a standing defence establishment precedes any operational action. Secondly, the most fundamental purpose of military power resides in deterrence. This refers to the ability of military force to persuade potential adversaries not to engage in aggression, or to change their behaviour, because of a cost-benefit calculus concerning hypothetical confrontation. In this sense, actual operational engagement usually represents only the tip of the iceberg. Thirdly, operational engagement spends the readiness that has been built up previously in time. Units may return from operations in a worn-out state materially as well as psychologically. They will require time to regroup, retrain and replenish the stocks and equipment. Keeping these intervening variables in mind, this section turns to the readiness outputs of Belgian Defence. From this perspective, a deliberate approach – only to engage the force when the national interest is at stake – constitutes the smartest way to nurture readiness.

Belgian Defence must be ready to undertake all missions that derive from the core tasks mentioned earlier, namely collective defence, collective security and the protection of Belgian citizens abroad. These tasks shape the force structure in terms of its size and capabilities. As the same capabilities can also be committed to homeland security tasks and providing aid to the nation, readiness for the three core tasks reinforces the resilience of society. In organizational terms, it is the Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Training (ACOS O&T) who determines the readiness framework for the force.²⁰ In doing so, the ACOS O&T consults and draws upon the resources of the Component Commanders. The latter act as force providers that are in turn supported by relevant Directorates-General, most notably DG Human Resources and DG Material Resources. To enable the Component Commanders to prepare their units in time, the ACOS O&T directs the overall readiness of the force via a 2-Year Readiness Plan codifying relevant priorities. These are

tailored to the core tasks as well as additional political guidance, enabling the Council of Ministers to engage the force when deemed appropriate.

Collective defence constitutes the most demanding task for Belgian Defence. Organised in a NATO framework, Belgium is bound by treaty to participate in the deterrence and defence posture of the alliance and to help mount an operational defence triggered by Article 5. The Belgian contribution to collective defence is determined in the framework of the NATO Defence Planning Process, in which capability targets derived from the Political Guidance statement get apportioned to individual allies.²¹ Some Belgian units provide an important contribution to NATO’s deterrence and defence. This includes participating in nuclear deterrence, air policing, enhanced Forward Presence and NATO’s Standing Maritime Groups. All these missions require (very) high readiness, which Belgian Defence can and does provide. Yet the logic of deterrence dictates that much greater numbers will be required when conventional deterrence along NATO’s eastern flank should fail. At present the Belgian force structure lacks the numeric depth to generate adequate reinforcements in times of crisis. In addition, the contemporary nature of collective defence features major challenges in the cognitive domain, such as the omnipresent manipulation of information and the blurring of the distinction between war and peace. The collective defence mission is the one where the road to readiness is the longest, but it is also the most urgently required. After all, the discourse about Europeans needing greater ‘strategic autonomy’ rings hollow if their territorial defence cannot be ensured because of a lack of ready forces.

By comparison, the collective security task is easier to accomplish. It implies contributing Belgian forces to various types of expeditionary operations for peacekeeping, military crisis management, post-conflict stabilization or capacity-building purposes. All these missions have in common that they tend to be missions of choice rather than necessity: they follow from a foreign policy calculus rather than Belgium’s vital interests or treaty imperatives. This means that the Belgian contribution can be tailored to what is feasible – sometimes resulting in little more than a token contribution.

At the same time, it must be understood that whatever the size, operational contributions require ready forces, trained and equipped for the mission at hand. These can usually be drawn from the same pool of forces that is built for collective defence. Yet this comes at the risk of draining the pool of finite resources: soldiers deployed in collective security operations cannot immediately reinforce the eastern flank in case of aggression against one of our allies. The pool of ready forces inevitably limits the size of any operational engagement.

multinational structures (such as the European Air Transport Command). What characterizes such operations is the need for an immediate response, a high degree of informational discretion and a willingness to accept high risks. The investment in a Special Operations Command, keeping rapid reaction forces on standby and maintaining close links with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant partners is essential in this regard.²² When the lives of Belgian citizens are at stake, the Belgian state must live up to its most fundamental responsibility in the social contract, namely, to

Component	Capability pool	Typical Engagement Formation	Sustainment capacity	Readiness time horizon
Air	Multirole Air Combat (54 x F16 → 34 x F35)	6 x high battle rhythm 2 x quick reaction	unlimited unlimited	days minutes
	Air Transport (11 x C130 → 7 x A400M)	4 x C130 / A400M	unlimited	days
	Helicopter (4 x NH90 TTH + 4 x NH90 NFH)	2 x TTH 1 x NFH MAR	12 months	days
Land	Combined arms Motorised Brigade (FHQ + 5 motorised battalions)	Battlegroup Company	6 months unlimited	weeks days
	Special Operations Forces (SOCOM, SFG, 2 x Bn Para)	SOF Task Group Task Force (SOTG + 1 Bn Para)	unlimited 2 months	days
	Combat Support (construction, CBRN, EOD, ISTAR, influence)	Functional teams	unlimited	days or weeks
Navy	2 Multipurpose Frigates	1 ship	4 months	days or weeks
	6 Mine Countermeasure Vessels	1 ship 1 MCM Task Group (3 ships)	unlimited 6 months	days
	2 Coastal Patrol Vessels	1 ship	unlimited	hours
Medical	AC / LC / MC support	Medical Task Force, Role 1, Role 2	4 to 6 months	days
	Joint Support	Strategic medevac	unlimited	permanent

Table 2: Belgian Defence force pool and readiness horizons ²³

The task of protecting Belgian citizens abroad is challenging yet imperative. Due to its very nature, it tends to unfold in a national setting and under highly unpredictable circumstances. The recent completion of operation *Red Kite* – the evacuation from Afghanistan – underscores the ability of Belgian Defence to undertake noncombatant evacuation operations, even if this can entail a significant degree of dependency on partner nations (like the US or France) or

keep its citizens out of harm’s way as much as possible.

Table 2 above provides a synthetical overview of the Belgian Defence force pool and some of the typical engagement packages it can generate, together with their sustainment and response timelines. This represents the output corollary of the budgetary inputs summarized in Table 1. In other words, this is what the defence budget buys in terms of the ability to act. However, the relationship between both tables is not linear and immediate. Both the personnel structure and the major equipment platforms are the consolidated product of

decades of budgetary inputs. Operational output capacity thus only follows budgetary investment with a significant time delay. This pool of ready forces illustrates where the problems are situated. While it will remain possible to generate modest force packages for collective security tasks, the force would be rapidly exhausted by either collective defence scenarios or large-scale collective security contributions. Five motorized combat battalions do not allow Belgium to deploy and sustain a brigade size force, which is nonetheless a key NATO target. Future aircraft numbers are too limited sustain a high intensity air campaign, especially one in which combat attrition must be considered. Combat support and combat service support are too scarce across all components. The assets available for the protection of Belgian citizens abroad – a mission that can materialize suddenly and simultaneously with other engagements – flirt with critical limitations (notably in airlift and SOF enablers). As such, the force must grow in both numbers and readiness levels to enable all the tasks to be fulfilled.

Against this background, a deliberate approach to readiness outputs is called for. Limiting operational engagement to those situations in which Belgium has a clear and overwhelming national interest at stake nurtures force readiness – especially when budgetary shortfalls persist. This does not mean that operational engagement must cease altogether. Sometimes an overwhelming case for these missions can be made. Missions also generate valuable experience and help to keep the force motivated. What it does mean is that *constant* and *maximum* operational output must not be treated as a desirable end: this exhausts the force and slows down the rebuilding of readiness for the fundamental *raison d'être* of the military, namely the ability to deter conflict and defend the country and its allies in case of attack. Instead of cannibalizing the force to keep up appearances, the pursuit of readiness as a meta-mission will strengthen Belgium's diplomatic position in multilateral fora. A hollow force can generate only the shadow of the credibility that only a ready force will provide.

CONCLUSION

What conclusions can be drawn from this analysis of readiness in the context of Belgian Defence? First and

foremost, this Security Policy Brief made the case that readiness constitutes a meta-mission for all the core tasks Belgian Defence has been given. For the Belgian armed forces to be able to deliver upon their core tasks, both the size and the readiness of the force need to be rebuilt. Balancing different budgetary titles – investing on all readiness inputs simultaneously, rather than in alternation – and taking a deliberate and selective approach towards operational engagement are the twin ways of doing so. This will enable the force to regenerate as rapidly as possible, boosting Belgium's diplomatic position and its ability to act both at home and abroad. This also requires Belgian Defence human and material resources policies to be duly integrated into the overarching logic of readiness.

Second, the analysis of readiness provided a useful framework for evaluating the promise of international cooperation. Most importantly, it showed that personnel expenditure – flanked by training, equipment, and maintenance costs – constitutes the driving force of readiness. As a result, the prospective consolidation of the European defence technological and industrial base may generate some modest efficiency gains, but these will not translate into major savings or have a significant positive impact on national readiness levels. A more radical breakthrough would require pooling personnel expenditure at a supranational level and forfeiting national decision-making authority when to commit the force to operations. Whether countries like (neutral) Austria, (presidential) France, (parliamentary) Germany or (insecure) Poland etc would be willing to entertain such a prospect is another matter. As the likelihood of such developments occurring in combination is very slim, the readiness challenge will remain one that national capitals must address individually.

Third and finally, this discussion of readiness highlighted how the ability to act comes into being. Readiness emerges in function of both input and output parameters. As the evacuation from Kabul and the floods in the Belgian summer of 2021 have reminded us, the ability to respond to crisis constitutes a binary proposition. Either the means to act are present – the mindset, the people, the training and equipment – or they fall short. In this sense readiness

underwrites the resilience of society at large. Belgian Defence provides the last mechanism for safeguarding the continuity of government and the interests of all Belgian citizens. For this reason, readiness requires the military to be firmly anchored into society. For the same reason, it requires society to commit itself to sustaining its armed forces – its very own ability to act.

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ENDNOTES

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³ Richard K. Betts, *Military Readiness: Concepts, Choices, Consequences*, Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1995, p. 5.

⁴ See e.g., John-Michael Arnold, ‘NATO’s Readiness Action Plan Strategic Benefits and Outstanding Challenges’, *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Spring 2016, pp. 74-105.

⁵ Michael E. O’Hanlon, *The Science of War*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 31.

⁶ For background see Alexander Mattelaer, ‘Belgian Defence in 2018: Regeneration Time?’, Brussels: Egmont Institute (Security Policy Brief No. 95), February 2018, <https://www.egmontinstitute.be/belgian-defence-in-2018-regeneration-time/>. Note that the general lack of readiness is also well-understood by the Belgian defence establishment and the military unions, see e.g. Yves Huwart, ‘Generaals, vertel de waarheid’, *De Schildwacht*, July-August 2021, p. 2, <https://www.acmp-cgpm.be/assets/DS-LS/DS-LS-Jul-Aou21/Schildwacht-2021-04-s.pdf>

⁷ Todd Harrison, ‘Rethinking Readiness’, *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Fall 2014, pp. 38-68.

⁸ As codified in the 2016 Strategic Vision document and confirmed by the Belgian Council of Ministers on 23 July 2021, cf. note 2 supra.

⁹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 40.

¹⁰ Data are drawn from the Law of 22 December 2020 concerning federal public expenditure budget year 2021, *Belgisch Staatsblad / Moniteur Belge*, <http://begroting.be/NL/Documents/01%202021%20loi%20du%2022%2012%202020.pdf>. The amounts concern past (2019 and 2020) and planned (2021) payment appropriations (*vereffeningen/liquidations*), all expressed in current euros.

¹¹ The size of the military contingent gets annually proposed by government and confirmed by parliament in accordance with Article 183 of the Belgian Constitution. For the most recent decision, see Belgian Council of Ministers, ‘Legercontingent voor 2021’, 11 December 2020, <https://news.belgium.be/nl/legercontingent-voor-2021>.

¹² See Mattelaer 2018, op. cit. in note 6, pp. 3-4.

¹³ Note that the Belgian cost share in NATO common funding accounts for 2,1043%, whereas it accounts for 3,4303% in the EDA.

¹⁴ NATO 2021 Brussels Summit Communiqué (§6.b), https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm. The NATO Defence Investment Pledge originally featured in the 2014 Wales Summit Declaration (§14), https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm.

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¹⁸ Marc Compernel, ‘Chef Défense opent nieuwe werkjaar - Le chef de la Défense présente l’année nouvelle’, 23 January 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33F5Jy7hzFk>.

¹⁹ Strategic Committee, op. cit. in note 1, p. 6.

²⁰ As spelled out by the Royal Decree of 2 December 2018 determining the general structure of the Ministry of Defence and the competences of certain authorities (the so-called O1), Articles 12, 13 (§2) and 35. <http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/eli/bsluit/2018/12/02/2018015479/staatsblad>.

²¹ For background, see Alexander Mattelaer, ‘Preparing NATO for the Next Defence-Planning Cycle’, *RUSI Journal*, June/July 2014, 159 (3), pp. 30–35, and Patrick Turner, ‘NATO at 70: what defence policy and planning priorities?’, Rome: NATO Defense College (NDC Policy Brief No. 23), October 2019, <https://www.ndc.nato.int/download/downloads.php?icode=615>.

²² For more background see Alexander Mattelaer, ‘Why Belgium needs a Special Operations Command’, Brussels: Egmont Institute (Security Policy Brief No. 70), April 2016, <https://www.egmontinstitute.be/content/uploads/2016/04/SPB70.pdf>

²³ Selected (non-exhaustive) data from the Level of Ambition contained in the 2016 Strategic Vision (chapter 5), author’s summary.