The Hague
Centre for
Strategic
Studies

Annual Report 2020

Introduction from our CEO

The year 2020 is one to remember. The corona crisis changed the world at an unprecedented rate and many developments are still ongoing. Existing trends are accelerating, geopolitical relations are under pressure and the way we travel, work and spend our free time has changed radically. How to manage economic improvement and planetary boundaries simultaneously? A more even distribution of wealth to fight social inequality, alienation, and exclusion? The power shift from West to East while avoiding conflict? Climate change and guaranteeing accessible resources? Balancing technological breakthroughs and its impact on life, information and social exchanges? Making sure the Netherlands and the European Union can operate more sovereignly?

Transitions lead to insecurities and instabilities. They put pressure on the way we relate to each other, who we identify with and on our social contract. We see the pandemic as an accelerator, an exacerbator and a catalyst of these transition-related security dynamics.

At the same time, we are approaching Christmas. A time to get together with friends and family, sharing food and drinks, and to celebrate past, present, and future. However, with the current COVID-restrictions we must adapt and look for alternatives to share our thoughts and spend our time. This Annual Report contains food for thought, as we focus on some of the 2020 highlights and on future developments in the world. This can help us to look ahead to a brighter future beyond the gloom of the daily headlines.

At HCSS we do not pretend to know the future, to solve all highly complex problems with our analyses, or to instantaneously improve the relations between nations or mankind in an age of technology breakthroughs. But we expect that our fact-based analyses contribute to an increased understanding of the future path of the world and to provide ideas of how governments, businesses, individuals, and all of us can help to make this world a better and safer place to live in.

The HCSS team wishes you a merry Christmas and a happy new year!

Paul Sinning

A message from the Founder

2020 was a year unlike any other. It was the year of the worst pandemic in a century, the sharpest economic downturn since the Great Depression, and the most significant civil rights movement in more than fifty years. Suddenly we were faced with concepts, such as lockdowns, curfews, mask mandates and social distancing, that only a year ago were unknown to us. Not only did the coronavirus change the way we conduct our business and lives on a day-to-day basis, but it also posed a major global challenge to nations as they try to deal with this major public health disaster.

Initially, the pandemic was described by superlatives. But like other pandemics in history, it did not cause a major paradigm shift. Instead, it exposed our vulnerabilities, and accelerated existing power shifts and divisions that affect the international balance of power. It marked the first major contemporary crisis where American leadership was clearly lacking. In its refusal to lead the response, others have stepped in to fill that vacuum. China continued their duplicitous bid to be a world leader by offering economic and medical relief for African states while engaging in "face mask" diplomacy with much of the Western world.

The power vacuum left in the wake of a lackluster American presence has been especially difficult to maneuver for Western Europeans, especially as the EU has not looked unequivocally strong in 2020. Europeans have been pre-occupied with Brexit, and some member states have been chipping away at European democratic values – leaning ever closer towards their authoritarian neighbors. At the same time, others are starting to translate what "European Strategic Autonomy" means as an effective program of work for the Union.

However, challenges to traditional conceptions of statecraft were not our only concern. The veil of the Coronavirus allowed many Western rivals to use new technologies to continue their hybrid operations. There have been a number of attempted cyberattacks on critical infrastructure, including power grids, ports and water and sewage facilitates. Even hospitals treating COVID-19 patients have been targeted and the World Health Organization reported a fivefold increase in attacks on its networks. The UN Secretary-General also drew attention to this year's "infodemic" – the wave of COVID-19 misinformation and disinformation that fits neatly into the "post-truth narrative".

Despite the dominance of the pandemic and its related threats, we should not forget that 2020 would still remain an exceptional year. After all, only in the first days of January we were on the brink of a renewed war in the Middle East following the assassination of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani. While war eventually did not take place, we did see increased Chinese investment in Iran, as well as treaties such as the Abraham Accords, which promise to have lasting effects on the geopolitical landscape there for years to come. We saw major strategic rivals continuing to expand their sphere of influence, largely at the expense of European states and their partners. This was most evident in the expansion of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative and Beijing's military buildup and posturing in the region, as well as in the Southern Caucuses, where Russia was able to expand its influence in the region by acting as a peacekeeper and mediator to end the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict without Western involvement.

Given these developments, an observer would imagine that we may at least see a new aptitude for international cooperation arise, especially in European states who have traditionally thrived off multilateral cooperation. Sadly, this has not really been the case. At least not to the extent that we hoped for. Rather than trying to find global solutions to a global problem, unilateralism seems more appealing. Yet, as the rising coronavirus cases keep accentuating, it becomes ever clearer that there is a growing need for more and better multilateralism to not only address the current pandemic, but also its aftermath and the crises that will follow.

Where do we go from here?
With a vaccine and a change in American leadership on the horizon, it is appealing to say that many of 2020's woes will be behind us and addressed in the early days of next year. However, this would ignore the underlying trends that made 2020 into what it was. The events we saw in 2020 were not an anomaly. Instead, they were an accumulation of existing international trends spurred on by one focal event. We need to be sure that they are understood, addressed, and mitigated.

Think tanks, such as *The Hague* Centre for Strategic Studies, were founded exactly for this reason. They inform national decision makers and facilitate expert-driven solutions that are fact-based and data-driven. They help us understand the complex nature of today's threats, and challenges. They help us better understand who our partners, and, perhaps more importantly, our competitors are. Throughout 2020, these characteristics have guided HCSS to produce relevant research and spearhead pressing initiatives that directly tackle many of today's challenges and threats. This annual report highlights some of the important contributions we have over the past year. Allow me to highlight two important lessons for the year to come.

First, there is a need for strong transatlantic leadership and multistakeholder cooperation to improve multilateralism. In 2020 the power asymmetries between our strategic rivals and individual European states became stark and evident. As such, from a geopolitical perspective, the role of the EU and NATO, as a collective body which can rival these powers, is crucial. Only then can the Netherlands have a seat at the table and engage with its competitors at the same level.

President-elect Biden's foreign policy and diplomacy goals indicate that the US-Europe relationship will take a much more central role. As such, knowing how to navigate and prioritize a re-emerging transatlantic relationship should be a key goal for any forward-thinking institution. To this end, HCSS established the Initiative on the Future of Transatlantic Relations.

2020 has also proven that the world today is more interconnected than ever. This creates mutual dependencies that will be difficult to untangle. If we want to retain our liberal democratic values, we ought to strengthen multilateralism within a strong transatlantic leadership and alliances that go beyond traditional state-led coalitions. HCSS has especially been at the forefront of this changing nature of diplomacy by facilitating a multistakeholder governance approach through the Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace and climate and security program and the cyber program.

Second, new forms of conflict require us to rethink and upgrade our deterrence. Great power competition may be back, but conflicts between states are taking on new forms. States have a growing capability to interfere in each other's economies, politics and societies but have so far failed to develop any restraints on these capabilities. Russian and Chinese hybrid activities are intended to circumvent detection, existing norms and laws, and response thresholds. They minimize the basis for decisive responses and have introduced a new model of conflict fought by proxy, across domains and below the conventional war threshold to advance a country's foreign policy goals. As such, many of our traditional approaches to deterring aggression, from resilience to punishment, need to be updated. And perhaps more importantly, there needs to be the political will to signal to hybrid transgressors that these attacks will not go unpunished.

Looking back, the underlying theme that we should hope future generations to remember from 2020 is also one of resilience: where we resisted war in the Middle East, where we refused to accommodate authoritarianism, where we survived a global health pandemic. While these efforts were often far from perfect, they were a testament to our ability to adapt and innovate.

Rob de Wijk

Content

RESEARCH PROGRAM

Geopolitics & Global Governance

HCSS explores the complex dynamics of a globalized world and examines future developments of strategic importance. Where do these developments originate, how will they evolve over time, and how can they affect interests and decisions for governments, businesses, and citizens?

Recent Publications

Adjusting the Multilateral System to Safeguard Dutch Interests

The changing global balance of power is putting pressure on multilateralism, with potentially disastrous consequences for the Netherlands. In this urgent and timely study, Rob de Wijk, Jack Thompson and Esther Chavannes highlight the importance of a well-functioning multilateral system for a middle power like the Netherlands, and suggest ways in which the Dutch can contribute to revitalizing this system.

Flow Security in the Information Age

In a hyper-connected world, the ability to influence or control flows is key to new coercive strategies. This HCSS report aims to improve our understanding of flow security and lay out policy options for the Netherlands and Europe to effectively contribute to flow security to protect vital interests and values.

Strategic Communications Capability Building in the Western Balkans

Experts from the Western Balkans, the European External Action Service and the Austrian Ministry of Defence convened in Skopje, the Republic of North Macedonia, for the expert workshop on the Western Balkans StratCom Game, in October 2019. This paper describes the results.

RuBase

Russia is back. After two decades of attempts at rapprochement between the West and Russia, the Russian leadership has opted for a more confrontational and assertive foreign and security policy. All along Europe's periphery, Russia is once again a factor to be reckoned with, also for the Netherlands.

The epistemic backbone of Russia-knowledge relied upon by Western decisionmakers during the Cold War needs to be rebuilt and possibly rethought and retooled. To shed new light on Russia's international thinking and acting, HCSS not only uses "tried and tested" methods but also examines new tools and techniques such as natural language processing and machine learning.

This multi-year research project explores new text- and number-based datasets, -tools and methods, using a corpus systematically compiled through relevant search queries, combined with different additional data sets like elite opinion surveys, event data sets (GDELT, ICEWS, Phoenix, TERRIER), economic, demographic, military, and political datasets.

The result, a knowledge base on Russia called **RuBase**, will serve as a platform for Russian experts to explore new collaborative ways of cumulative knowledge-building. The project is spearheaded by Georgia-Tech and HCSS, and funded by CCNY.

Countering Violent Extremism

By promoting empathy and reducing stigmatization, lifestories can be a powerful tool in efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism. HCSS has published a suite of papers explaining how to effectively design, execute, and assess the results of a lifestory strategic communications campaign to combat radicalization in a community.

Countering and Preventing (Non) Violent Extremism: Research and Fieldwork Challenges

This report outlines the challenges researchers face as they engage with local communities in countering and preventing violent extremism. It focuses on the lifestory approach used in interviews, and its impact on both researchers and participants. Key challenges include gaining access to participants due to trauma, taboo and distrust; as well as accessing funding given the time-consuming nature of this type of research. Researchers must balance the demands of both efficient work and respectful treatment of local communities. Security is additionally a concern given the volatility of these regions, putting workers at risk of backlash from the communities, violent organizations, and even governments. These and other challenges must be considered when designing a safe, effective, and ethical research project.

Far-Right Trends in South Eastern Europe: The Influences of Russia, Croatia, Serbia and Albania

Far-right violent extremism is thriving in several parts of South East Europe (SEE), but despite its widespread influence, relatively little research has been done on its alarming reach. Therefore, this paper assesses the origin and perpetuation of far-right violent extremism in SEE and finds that the situation uniquely facilitates the spread of far-right ideology, particularly in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia. Understanding this trend is extremely important for global security as SEE is a bridge between the East and West; the politics in this region can affect the rest of Europe and its unifying institutions like the EU and NATO.

Strategic Monitor 2019-2020 - The Writing on the Wall

To stay ahead of rapid changes in the international environment, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence have tasked HCSS and the Clingendael Institute to conduct research within the framework of the Strategic Monitor, which monitors trends and developments in the international order and presents a risk analysis of the national security of the Netherlands.

The Strategic Monitor 2019-2020 consists of the summary report "Between Order & Chaos: The Writing on the Wall", and ten individual research papers. The executive summary of the report is available in English and Dutch. The individual research papers are available in English.

The title of this year's report "The Writing on the Wall" is a reference to the warning of impending disaster in the biblical tale of Belshazzar, King of Babylon, described in the book of Daniel. In it, Daniel reads the writing on the wall as a warning to Belshazzar that his days as king were numbered. Sudden, structural change such as the end of Belshazzar's kingdom is emblematic of discontinuity, a central feature of today's world. Power is shifting, technological progress is accelerating, rules are changing. The Strategic Monitor seeks to decipher the writing on the wall, describe the key trends as they unfold, and understand how they shape our future.

HCSS Founder Rob de Wijk, Director of Research Tim Sweijs and colleagues from Clingendael present the Strategic Monitor to the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, Stef Blok, on January 27, 2020

Looking towards the future - Strategic Monitor 2020-2021:

- De Veiligheidsimplicaties van de Pandemie
- De Geopolitieke Gevolgen van de Coronacrisis
- Strategic Alert: Space
- Gaat de Coronacrisis de wereld veranderen?
- Reimagining Deterrence: Towards Strategic (Dis)Suasion Design
- Securing Critical Materials for Critical Sectors
- Standards for Critical Raw Materials
- Flow Security in the Information Age
- Adjusting the Multilateral System to Safeguard Dutch Interests
- From Blurred Lines to Red Lines: How Countermeasures and Norms Shape Hybrid Conflict

RESEARCH PROGRAM

Defense & International Security

HCSS identifies and analyzes the developments that shape our security and defense environment. Our experts highlight the intricate and dynamic relations between the political, military, cultural, economic, social, environmental, and technological drivers that together shape today's policy- and decision-making.
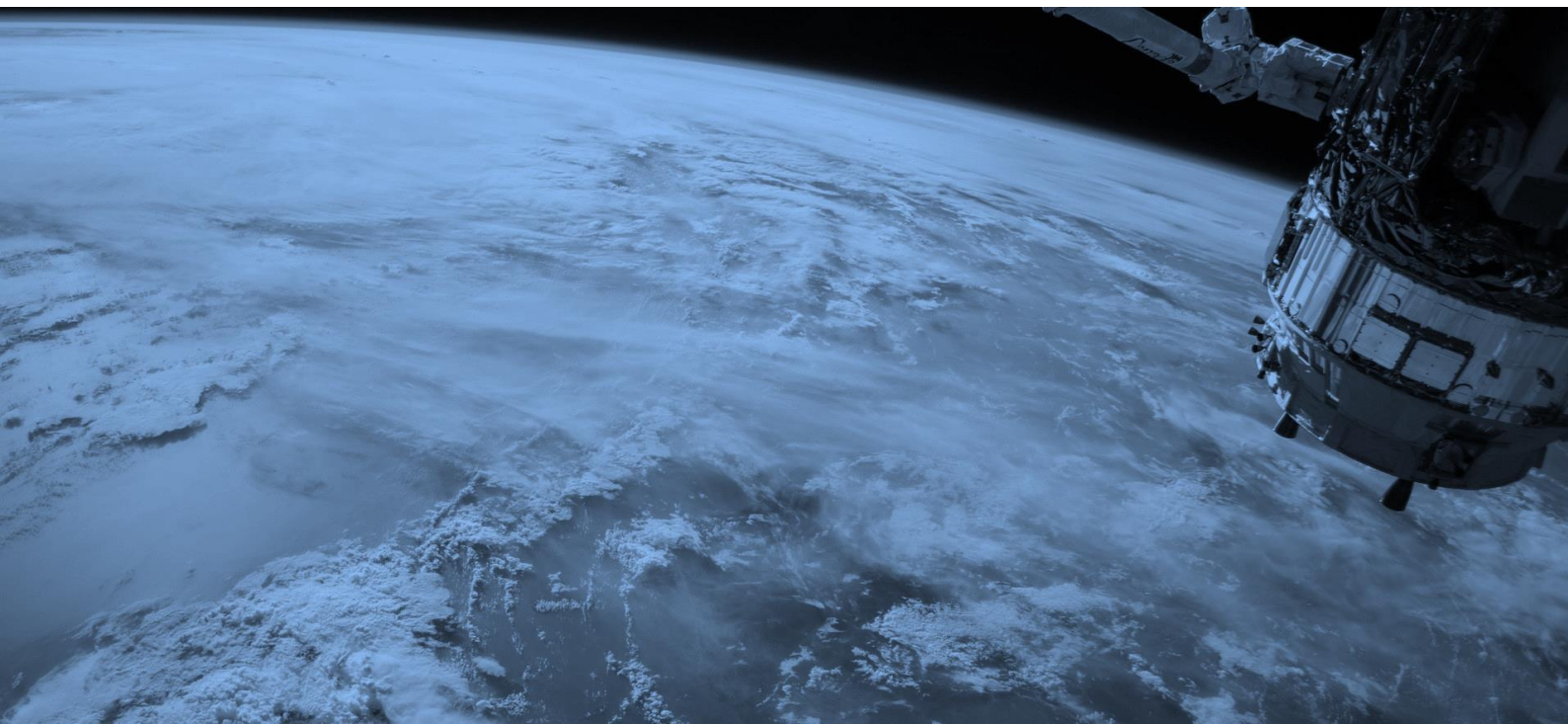
Recent Publications

The Good, The Bad and the Ugly

Global efforts to reform and strengthen security sectors in fragile and conflict-prone states have yielded mixed results. To help policymakers identify the challenges to be considered when engaging with security sectors across different contexts, HCSS developed a security sector assessment framework (SSAF). This framework unveils three distinct characteristics that determine a security sector's potential contribution to stability: ability, motivation and legitimacy.

Security in Space

Space as both an economic and a military domain is becoming increasingly important. Global powers are investing heavily in the development and construction of new (military) space assets, spurring the notion that we are on the eve of a new 'space race'. In a series of snapshots, HCSS analyzes the challenges and opportunities that accompany these developments:

First, in this snapshot, we examine how the developments in and towards space will drive military means. Second, the economic relevance of space is growing, and interstate competition is intensifying. Satellites are key to the Netherlands' military capabilities, and space is also likely to play a role in the global energy transition. This strategic alert explores the threats and opportunities of space from a Dutch perspective.

Hybrid Conflict & Deterrence

A Horizon Scan of Trends and Developments in Hybrid Conflicts set to shape 2020 and beyond

Hybrid threats are one of the main security challenges Western democracies currently struggle with. Hybrid threats are in the news, mostly framed or wrapped in specific "hybrid" phenomena such as disinformation, foreign meddling in elections and cyber hacks. Meanwhile, instruments and technologies that drive these threats develop with ever increasing speed. This horizon scan, written together with TNO, based on literature and media scanning, expert sessions and information exchanges with international peer institutes, captures important current and emerging trends and developments in hybrid conflicts and threats. It highlights the evolution of hybrid campaigns with novel examples and explores how current and new technologies may or will impact the hybrid "battlefield".

Hybride Dreigingen en Hybride Oorlog: Consequenties voor de Koninklijke Landmacht

Today's strategic threats are increasingly hybrid: military means are combined with cyber operations, influencing campaigns and economic sanctions. In this report on Russian hybrid threats and warfare, HCSS highlights that NATO needs to strike a balance between traditional military capabilities and novel measures to counter these hybrid threats. In the Dutch context specifically, the Royal Netherlands Army should play an increasingly important role in the country's internal security policy.

Hybrid Conflict: Neither war, nor peace

What do Chinese naval intrusions into Japan's territorial waters have in common with Russian bots that spread and amplify disinformation? This Global Security Pulse examines trends within hybrid conflicts, understood as "conflicts between states, largely below the legal level of armed conflict, with integrated use of civilian and military means and actors, with the aim of achieving certain strategic objectives." States have ample reason to be concerned about hybrid threats and hybrid conflict. Although at their core hybrid tactics are tactics old as time (military posturing, spreading propaganda and the use of economic measures are well established military strategies), the availability of a diverse and sophisticated set of (technological) tools enhances the impact, reach and congruence of hybrid threats. Paired with the reluctance of states to engage in conventional war due to nuclear, economic and political deterrence, this means that hybrid conflict constitutes an increasingly desirable strategy for states to achieve their political goals.

Robotic and Autonomous Systems (RAS)

In a paper on the military applicability of RAS, we examine the current state of robotic and autonomous systems for military use. They look ahead at future developments, examine practical and ethical challenges, and lay out recommendations for the use of RAS by the Royal Netherlands Armed Forces.

Crucially, the emergence of RAS in the military context renders the interaction between stakeholders more complex as it drastically affects operational performance, organizational embedding, operational concepts, as well as ethical and regulatory frameworks. In another paper, HCSS analyses this increased complexity of multi-stakeholder cooperation in the development, integration and use of military RAS.

Discussing the ethical challenges spanning human agency, human dignity and responsibility in the operation of RAS, this report presents concrete recommendations for actors engaging in the design, development, testing, operation and decommissioning of RAS at the strategic and operational levels.

Webinars & Events

Expert Symposium: NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept

On June 30th, HCSS and the Netherlands Defence Academy hosted a closed, high-level expert symposium on NATO's first Warfighting Capstone Concept (NWCC) in collaboration with the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT). HCSS Director of Research Dr. Tim Sweijs and Prof. Dr. Frans Osinga (Chair in War Studies, Faculty of Military Sciences, Netherlands Defence Academy) moderated the symposium at which the NWCC team presented the core outline of the Capstone Concept, followed by short presentations and discussions among world class experts on the future of war.

Webinar: "The Future of War" by Dr. Frank Hoffman

On 29 October, US Marine Corp Lieutenant-colonel (Ret.) and strategic analyst Dr. Frank G. Hoffman discussed the future of warfare looking at technological trends in robotics, AI and cyber warfare, as well as shifting power dynamics. The webinar was hosted by Frans Osinga of the KVBK, together with HCSS Director of Research Tim Sweijs.

Climate Security, Energy & Resources

HCSS identifies and analyzes developments around the geopolitical, social, and economic dynamics of natural resources like minerals, water, energy, food, and land. We examine the complex relationship between political, economic, social, and environmental drivers of resource scarcity.

Climate and Security Program

The world is slowly but surely accepting the harsh reality of climate change. The science is unified in its judgment: climate change is accelerated by human-caused anthropogenic changes in the atmosphere, leading to rises in temperatures that are unprecedented in our natural historical record. HCSS is launching the Climate and Security Program (CASP) in response to the urgent and growing need for a better understanding of the geopolitical and other security implications of climate change.

The Face of Climate Insecurity: A Surge of Tropical Storms Strike Megacities in Asia and the Pacific

The conjunction of multiple, cascading extreme weather events with precarious demographic and socioeconomic trends produces massive humanitarian disasters in the coastal megacities of the Asia-Pacific. The intensity and frequency with which tropical storms are occurring in highly vulnerable urban hotspots reveal the risk of climate change becoming a driver of instability and insecurity. In this snapshot, we analyze the exposure of megacities in the Asia-Pacific region to extreme weather events and how adapting to rising sea-levels and more frequent and extreme weather events will form a major challenge in the Asia-Pacific region.

Moving Towards Circularity in Western Europe

As climate change accelerates and global trade flows become more volatile, European countries grapple with their resource dependencies. In light of developments such as the EU Green Deal, the Netherlands continues the path towards closing its consumption and production cycles, aiming to achieve a circular economy by 2050. However, raw material flows and production chains do not stop at the Dutch border. A truly circular economy is a global challenge that requires joint efforts at bilateral and supranational levels. This report provides a quick scan of the content, direction, and motivations of current circular economy and material resource policies of the Dutch neighboring regions and countries: the European Union, Flanders (Belgium), France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. The analysis also highlights the different interpretations these countries have of the concepts "circular economy" and "resource efficiency", and identifies areas for cross-border cooperation with the Netherlands.

Critical Raw Materials

For the fulfilment of their geopolitical ambitions, both the Netherlands and the European Union are dependent on a secure supply of critical raw materials and manufactured goods. This is problematic given the fact that other countries, in particular China, control large market shares in these sectors. This year, *The Hague* Centre for Strategic Standards conducted in-depth analyses of the Dutch dependence on Critical Raw Materials controlled by China and how Chinese standard setting initiatives may threaten Dutch and European Security.

International Military Council on Climate and Security (IMCCS)

The International Military Council on Climate and Security (IMCCS) is a group of senior military leaders, security experts, and security institutions across the globe dedicated to anticipating, analyzing, and addressing the security risks of a changing climate. The group was founded and is administered by the Center for Climate and Security (CCS), an institute of the Council on Strategic Risks (CSR), in partnership with the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs (IRIS), *The Hague* Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS) and the Planetary Security Initiative of the Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Clingendael). HCSS Special Strategic Advisor Tom Middendorp is the chair of the International Military Council on Climate and Security and HCSS Deputy Director Michel Rademaker is a senior member of the Executive Committee.

World Climate and Security Report 2020

In 2020 climate change took center stage at the Munich Security Conference (MSC), a leading international forum for military, security, and foreign policy leaders. The World Climate and Security Report 2020 by the Expert Group of the IMCCS finds indeed that security and military experts are increasingly concerned by the security implications of climate change, with many perceiving the risks to global security to be significant or higher in the next two decades. The report recommends "climate-proofing" international security – including infrastructure, institutions and policies, as well as major emissions reductions to avoid significant-to-catastrophic security threats.

Climate and Security in the Indo-Asia Pacific

The IMCCS also released the report "Climate and Security in the Indo-Asia Pacific", urging leaders to make climate change a security priority in the Indo-Asia Pacific. This unprecedented report clearly outlines how climate change is already affecting the security situation in the Indo-Asia Pacific region and what the future security risks are.

Water, Peace & Security (WPS) partnership

The WPS partnership, founded in 2018, develops tools that help identify water-related security risks, and promotes evidence-based responses. Crucially, the partnership released the Global Early Warning Tool that uses machine learning to predict where violent conflicts are likely to occur across Africa, the Middle East, and South and Southeast Asia with a 86% success rate. In its Global Early Warning Tool quarterly update, WPS flagged potential hotspots in Kenya, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Iraq, Iran-Afghanistan border regions, and Bangladesh.

The WPS partnership is a collaboration between the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a consortium of six partners: IHE Delft (lead partner), World Resources Institute (WRI), Deltares, HCSS, Wetlands International and International Alert. The consortium collaborates with a growing number of institutions, including Oregon State University, Pacific Institute, New America, and Clingendael-Netherlands Institute of Foreign Relations.

Water, Peace & Security (WPS) wins Outstanding Environmental Peace Prize

The WPS partnership has been awarded the 2020 Luxembourg Peace Prize for Outstanding Environmental Peace. This prestigious price, handed out by the Schengen Peace Foundation and the World Peace Forum, rewards peacemakers and activists for their contributions to sustainable development, environmental governance, natural resource management and environmental conflict management.

WPS Working Paper: Interprovincial Water Challenges in Iraq

In a working paper, we analyze the interprovincial dimension of water challenges in Iraq. The paper suggests building blocks to effectively mitigate water-related conflict in the country.

Impact Covid-19 on global security and role for WPS

Poverty, growing natural resource scarcity, and the Covid-19 pandemic add multiple layers of instability to already fragile states. The WPS partnership, with its focus on conflict early warning, prevention, and mitigation, analyses the linkages between water, food, and energy risks. It provides a number of tools that help assess the effects of coronavirus and other drivers of insecurity, and helps design effective response mechanisms. WPS tools can track relevant natural resource, economic, and disaster-related data, and thereby help prioritize the flow of official development assistance (ODA) for maximum impact.

RESEARCH PROGRAM

The Cyber Policy and Resilience Program

Cyberspace has become a key domain for domestic and international policymaking, with cybersecurity being one of the most versatile and pressing challenges. The Cyber Policy and Resilience Program bridges the rapidly evolving field of cybersecurity with traditional statecraft, drawing on a strong academic foundation merged with professional experience.

Recent Publications

From Blurred Lines to Red Lines: How Countermeasures and Norms Shape Hybrid Conflict

This paper series highlights the utility of norms and countermeasures in shaping and deterring hostile actors in a hybrid environment. It applies the norm lifecycle theory, which analyzes norm development from emergence to cascade and internalization, to five case studies of hybrid conflict to better understand the real-life strategies, tools of influence, dilemmas, and trade-offs that empower state-led norm processes. The reports not only consider how norms develop, but also what role they play within the counter-hybrid posture of a state, and how they, in conjunction with countermeasures, shape adversarial hybrid behavior.

Mixed Signals: A Flawed Approach to Cyber Deterrence

This article sequentially addresses the first, second and third order effects of the new US persistent-engagement doctrine in cyberspace. The conduct and deployment of the United States Cyber Command's (CYBERCOM) vision of "persistent engagement" represents a radical and largely unwelcome departure from previous notions of conflict in cyberspace. It builds on a number of questionable assumptions about the international history and perception of cyber conflict, the role and strategic direction of information warfare, and the general dynamics of deterrence. Ultimately, it justifies a much more aggressive CYBERCOM mission that ignores the potential for unwanted effects that could prove to be highly destabilizing in an already volatile international security environment.

A Balance of Power in Cyberspace

This paper appropriates a realist model in international relations—the balance of power theory (BOP)—and adjusts it with neoliberal concepts of power to help better understand the challenge of stability between states in and on cyberspace. It specifically enables the "cybered" international relations of governments to be analyzed against the backdrop of the complex ecosystem of stakeholders. This does not presuppose that states are or should be the most important or influential actors in cyberspace. Instead, this chapter focuses on state interests. It identifies two conditions of the BOP theory and applies them to cyberspace in three different scenarios previously suggested by states, and offers one suggestion on the way forward.

Conflict in Cyberspace: Parsing the threats and the state of international order in cyberspace

This paper examines conflict in cyberspace through analysis of the intentions, capabilities, and activities of state actors in this domain, as well as an analysis of the norms and rules relevant to cyberspace. Its principal conclusion is that conflict in cyberspace has exponentially intensified in recent years, earning a top spot among states' most critical security concerns.

Initiatives

The Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace (GCSC)

The GCSC is an HCSS initiative that develops proposals for norms and policies to enhance international security and stability and guide responsible state and non-state behavior in cyberspace. After the launch of its final report "Advancing Cyberstability" in November 2019, HCSS and the GCSC members continued to promote its proposals at international organizations, capitals of government, industry, and civil society. To this end, the GCSC norms have already achieved success: the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace: a high-level declaration of President Macron with over 1000 supporters from state, industry and civil society actors, endorsing six of the eight GCSC norms, including the flagship norm to protect the public core of the Internet. This norm has also been embedded into EU policy and law through the Cybersecurity Act, which extends the mandate of ENISA to include the protection of the public core of the Internet. Furthermore, the UN Open-Ended Working Group pre-draft report includes two GCSC norms on the protection of the public core of the internet and electoral infrastructure. The GCSC and its work has also been highlighted by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the United Nations Secretary General, father of the Internet Vint Cerf, the latest EU Cybersecurity Strategy, the Internet Governance Forum, and by academia. This is just a small sample of its success and references – to find out more, visit www.cyberstability.org.

Community of Interest for the Public Core of the Internet

HCSS, as the GCSC Secretariat, has initiated a Community of Interest on protecting the public core of the Internet under the auspices of the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace. This concerted multistakeholder initiative will gather committed supporters for the general principle of protecting the public core in a regular working group (video 1 and video 2).

Consortium supporting the EU Cybersecurity Certification Framework

HCSS is a partner in a consortium selected by ENISA to offer support for the European Union Cybersecurity Certification Framework that is set out in the EU Cybersecurity Act. The consortium provides both an understanding in how to best segment markets with the technical expertise to guide best practice in how to best to harmonize standards to various markets.

Cyber Dashboards and Metrics

Although digital in nature, cyber has proven difficult to quantify. Our approach merges quantitative and qualitative methods to deliver bespoke analysis drawing on the most advanced data science data visualizations techniques. The HCSS in-house Datalab supports the Cyber Program in developing a Cyber Norms Observatory. This is a network of over 900 norms, principles, CBMs, and technical standards from all stakeholders, clustered according to their similarity using text-mining and data visualization tools, to visualize policy clusters and identify possible synergies and gaps across regimes.

Cybersecurity Summerschools

HCSS is an active partner of consortiums organizing summerschools specifically dedicated to cybersecurity, including the International Cybersecurity Summerschool and Indian-Dutch Cybersecurity Summerschool. It allows students and young professionals to gain deeper knowledge and understanding of cybersecurity concepts, as they will learn about the latest developments and the cutting-edge cyber security technologies that exist today.

Webinars & Events

Protecting the Public Core of the Internet, from formulation to implementation

This session explored ways in which to advance a concerted multi-stakeholder approach that embeds the protection of the public core of the Internet. It underlined the need to further define the concept, building on the definition of the Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace (GCSC), and explore the preferred end-goal of this norm and avenues for calling out norm violations, as well as what contributions civil society can make towards defining, monitoring, and protecting the public core of the Internet.

Cyberstability Stocktaking of Norms and Institutional Dialogues

During this session on 2 November, members of the Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace (GCSC) reflected on the main outcomes of the UN Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG), the implementation of the UNSG High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation and Working Groups 4 and 5, and the ongoing work of the UN GGE, the Paris Call, and similar initiatives working on norms of responsible behavior.

FOCUS AREA

COVID-19 Pandemic

It is undeniable that the coronavirus pandemic has shaped the year 2020. Not only did the pandemic dominate the headlines, it also had a profound impact on our daily lives. Additionally, it had and still has major effects on the global balance of power. In anticipation of the various questions and issues the pandemic would raise, HCSS established an advisory board consisting of Rob de Wijk, Paul Sinning, Han ten Broeke, Pieter Bindt and Tom Middendorp. Furthermore, HCSS initiated various Dutch and English research projects to assess the strategic consequences of the pandemic.

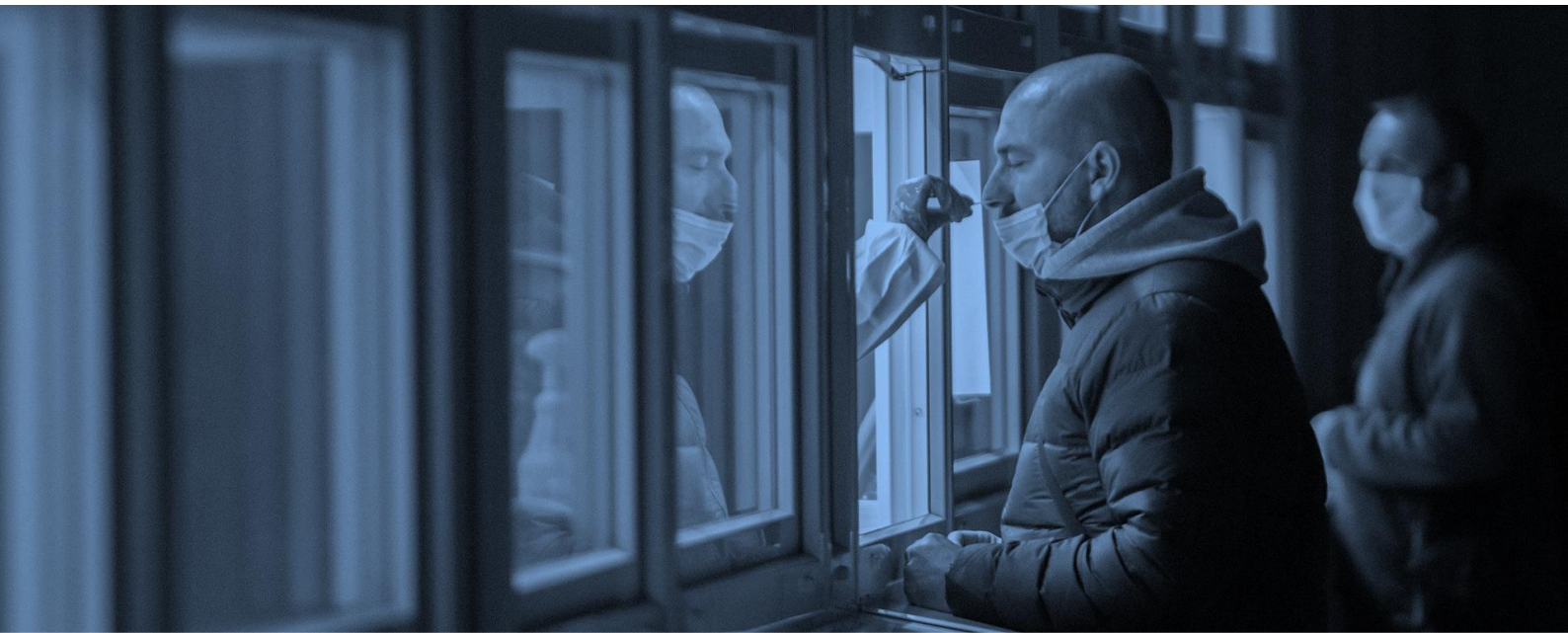## De Geopolitieke Gevolgen van de Coronacrisis

In a memorandum, Rob de Wijk discusses the geopolitical effects of Covid-19, the consequences for security and how the Netherlands can respond to this. De Wijk highlights that crises are currently coinciding: the Covid-19 outbreak, an unprecedented recession and a geopolitical paradigm change, while Brexit and climate change also call for attention. This perfect storm, in combination with rising populism, is putting national political systems – and with that, international organizations such as the EU and NATO – to the test. In light of this, the Netherlands is faced with a choice: strengthen multilateralism and work on deepening European cooperation, with all the painful political choices that entails, or allow the EU to revert to a free trade zone or to implode.

Pandemic Mitigation in the Digital Age: Digital Epidemiological Measures to Combat the Coronavirus Pandemic

To mitigate the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, governments have utilized digital epidemiological tools including user-based and provider-based data collection, as well as location data. These (at times highly effective) measures could impact individual privacy rights and therefore threaten to accentuate existing cognitive dissonance within public perceptions of trust in the use of surveillance tools by companies and governments alike in liberal democracies. This report recommends specific digital contact tracing and quarantine measures (CTQ) that are in accordance with existing EU legislation, and offers a way forward to consider a principle towards "data for the common good".

De veiligheidsimplicaties van de pandemie: de Impact van Covid-19 op Europese veiligheid

In this paper we look at the – mostly indirect – European security implications of a pandemic today, in the past and in the future. Perhaps most urgently, we underline the challenges for democracy, good governance and the protection of human rights, as well as the increased political instability worldwide. To face these challenges, the Netherlands should be committed to strengthening European strategic autonomy but also invest in the transatlantic relationship and other extra-European partnerships.

COVID-19 and World Peace: An overture to a new era or business as usual?

In response to the coronavirus outbreak, UN Secretary-General António Guterres called for a "global ceasefire" among nations to focus on fighting the virus, a request reflecting hopes that this crisis would bring about better global cooperation and a break from business as usual. This snapshot examines how countries have risen to that call, assessing whether or not international tensions have indeed relaxed in response.

The COVID-19 Pandemic: two waves of technological responses in the European Union

Seeing the growth of COVID-19 cases, governments were quick to implement a variety of measures. Among them, technological solutions in the form of anonymized phone location tracking and contract tracing apps. This paper discusses the use of technology as a response to the pandemic in EU Member States while considering the years-long European effort to increase privacy protection.

Chaillot Paper | How COVID changed the future: Geopolitical implications for Europe

In a Chaillot Paper for the European Union Institute for Security Studies, Florence Gaub and HCSS Strategic Analyst Lotje Boswinkel assess the geopolitical trends the Covid-19 pandemic is perceived as having accelerated, as well as the scope for innovation and far-reaching change induced by the crisis. The paper explores the interplay of trends and uncertainties in three distinct scenarios. It concludes that to proactively shape the future, EU decision-makers have strategic choices to make – with the role that Europe wants to play in a world shaped by Sino-American antagonism being the most important.

Divided We Stand? Towards Post-Corona Leadership

The global challenges caused by the Covid-19 crisis call for a combined effort of nations worldwide; however, the pandemic unfolds against the backdrop of a world that is increasingly characterized by great power competition. This new paper by HCSS and DISCvision highlights possible future interplays between nations in the aftermath of the corona crisis.

Other Publications & Webinars

Besides the abovementioned publications, HCSS released several other publications concerning the pandemic and its consequences. In cooperation with our partners, HCSS organized various webinars and podcasts on this topic.

FOCUS AREA

Initiative on the Future of Transatlantic Relations

Geopolitical shifts have changed transatlantic relations undeniably. To ensure that both Europe and the US continue to enjoy the benefits of their shared values and interests, HCSS launched the *Initiative on the Future of Transatlantic Relations* (IFTAR), which seeks to facilitate discussions on a smarter and more equitable partnership fit for today's and future challenges. The Initiative was launched in 2020 and has not yet produced output as such, yet the HCSS team has been addressing this issue for a long time. Below some key examples.

Recent Publications

All-In or All-Out: Why Insularity Pushes and Pulls American Grand Strategy

Looking at US engagement in Cold War Europe, Senior Strategic Analyst Paul van Hooft demonstrates that the uniquely insular nature of the United States creates a dynamic that both pulls its engagement strategies toward escalation and pushes its retrenchment efforts toward so-called "isolationism". When applied to the current dynamics in the Western Pacific, recent calls for US retrenchment are thus unlikely to succeed, van Hooft argues, yet a clash with China looms if Washington continues its strategy of deep engagement that relies on military superiority. In Asia today, this leaves the US with a start choice between dangerous escalation and retreat.

The Evolving Position of the Netherlands in the World

Navigating the changing global environment requires first and foremost a keen understanding of changes in Dutch foreign relations. The Dutch Foreign Relations Index (DFRI) captures the relationship between the Netherlands and other countries over time through a quantitative measurement of a limited set of important dimensions in international relations. This can subsequently help in identifying potential partners as well as adversaries in the pursuit of Dutch foreign policy objectives.

"Maintaining NATO's Technological Edge" in Whitehall RUSI Whitehall Papers "Future NATO: Adapting to New Realities"

The nature of armed conflict is changing rapidly, with major implications for international stability. In this chapter, Tim Sweijs and Frank Osinga outline key developments in cyber, artificial intelligence, unmanned systems and space in the next five to ten years, and assess their consequences for international security and stability. The authors warn that NATO risks losing its military technological edge vis-à-vis near-peer competitors if it does not increase its investments and efforts in these areas.

Webinar on Sino-American Maritime Competition

Marking the publication of the special issue on the New Era of Maritime Competition in Security Studies, the Initiative on the Future of Transatlantic Relations hosted a webinar on the Sino-American Maritime Competition and the consequences for European security on 16 November. Leading experts discussed a variety of highly relevant topics, including blockades as an opportunity to avoid escalation of the Sino-American maritime competition, the role of naval power in American grand strategy, the shifting offense-defense balance in the Western Pacific, patterns in maritime dispute settlements, the respective natures of maritime powers and land powers, and the opportunities and limits for US retrenchment.
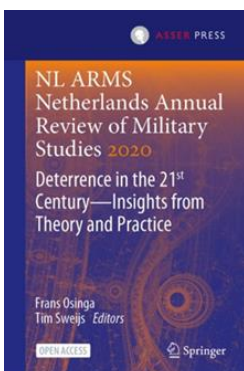
Publications by HCSS authors

Rob de Wijk: De slag om Europa – Hoe China en Rusland ons continent uit elkaar spelen

Europe has become a battleground for the world's major powers, who have used trade wars, fake news and espionage to divide the continent. Why are China, Russia and the US vying for influence over Europe? Why is a strong Europe seen as threatening? And what do Xi, Putin and Trump have against the European Union? In his latest book, Rob de Wijk analyzes today's major challenges for European leaders, who not only face renewed great power competition, but also a political, health and financial crisis, while simultaneously having to deal with climate change and Brexit. Will Europe be able to weather the storm?

Paul Verhagen: Het Amerikaanse Presidentschap

In their book on the US presidency, Frans and Paul Verhagen provide detailed insight into the most powerful office in the world. Looking at both current and historical events, the authors explain the American governmental system and examine the capabilities and limitations of the president's office.
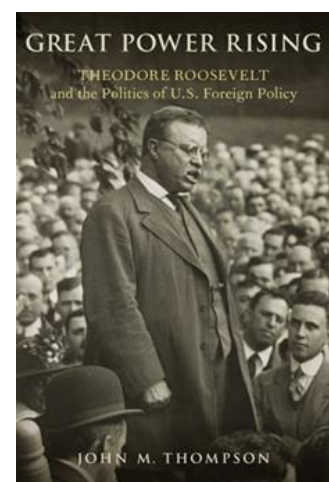
Tim Sweijs: Deterrence in the 21st Century—Insights from Theory and Practice

In this open access volume, bringing together world-leading experts from three continents, Frans Osinga and Tim Sweijs set out to explore whether a fifth wave of deterrence theory is emerging. Looking at today's turbulent strategic environment, the volume's authors explore what effective deterrence looks like in the 21st century.

Jack Thompson: Great Power Rising: Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of U.S. Foreign Policy

HCSS Senior Strategic Analyst Jack Thompson examines the relationship between domestic politics and Theodore Roosevelt's foreign policy. He argues that, in spite of the complicated nature of the US system, Roosevelt mostly succeeded in implementing his agenda. In the process, Thompson contends, he played a crucial role in the nation's rise to world power. Four factors were particularly important: Roosevelt's compelling vision for national greatness, political skill, faith in the people and the US system, and emphasis on presidential leadership.

Jack Thompson was awarded this year's Theodore Roosevelt Association Book Prize for his book *Great Power Rising: Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of U.S. Foreign Policy (Oxford University Press, 2019).*

Top Publications

1: De Geopolitieke Gevolgen van de Coronacrisis

In this memorandum, Rob de Wijk discusses the geopolitical effects of Covid-19, the consequences for security and how the Netherlands can respond to these challenges.

2: Gaat de Coronacrisis de wereld veranderen?

In a timely Strategic Alert, Rob de Wijk anticipates the potential impact of the pandemic on globalization and the current world order.

3: The deteriorating outlook for Dutch small natural gas fields

Jilles van den Beukel and Lucia van Geuns write that the production from small natural gas fields has been rapidly declining thanks to a deterioration of the investment climate.

4: Pandemic Mitigation in the Digital Age: Digital Epidemiological Measures to Combat the Coronavirus Pandemic

This report recommends specific digital contact tracing and quarantine measures (CTQ) that are in accordance with existing EU legislation, and offers a way forward to consider a principle towards "data for the common good" to help combat the coronavirus pandemic.

5: Hybride Dreigingen en Hybride Oorlog: Consequenties voor de Koninklijke Landmacht

In a report on Russian hybrid threats and warfare, Rob de Wijk, Tim Sweijs and Frank Bekkers argue that the Royal Netherlands Army will have to play an increasingly important role in the Dutch internal security policy.

6: NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept: Key Insights from the Global Expert Symposium

On June 30th, HCSS and the Netherlands Defence Academy (NLDA), hosted a Global Expert Symposium on NATO's Warfighting Capstone Concept (NWCC). The Symposium's key findings are summarized in a report.

7: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: A Framework to Assess Security Sectors' Potential Contribution to Stability

To help policymakers identify the challenges to be considered when engaging with security sectors across different contexts, Dorith Kool and Tim Sweijs developed a security sector assessment framework (SSAF).

8: A Horizon Scan of Trends and Developments in Hybrid Conflicts set to shape 2020 and beyond

This horizon scan captures important current and emerging trends and developments in hybrid conflicts and threats. It highlights the evolution of hybrid campaigns with novel examples and explores how current and new technologies may or will impact the hybrid "battlefield".

9: Strategic Alert: Space

This strategic alert analyses the threats and opportunities of space for the Netherlands' national security.

10: The Military Applicability of Robotic and Autonomous Systems

In this paper, HCSS analysts Bianca Torossian, Frank Bekkers and Tim Sweijs examine the current state of robotic and autonomous systems (RAS) and their implementation in the military context.

Outreach & Media

The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies uses multiple communication tools to gain attention for our products and activities. In addition to a newsletter and press releases, we use a variety of social media communication methods.

Through our channels on LinkedIn (more than 16,000 followers), Twitter (more than 7,500 followers) and Facebook (more than 3,000 followers), a proactive social media policy is pursued with the aim of reaching the widest possible audience, both nationally and internationally.

Our reach and engagement grew significantly in 2020, with a particularly notable growth of our followers on our LinkedIn network. The number of downloads of PDF reports from our website more than doubled.

Growth on social media, compared to 2019 (statistics from 14 December 2020)

HCSS in the Media

In 2020, analysts of *The Hague* Centre for Strategic Studies have regularly been asked to comment on current global security issues and world events for key national media outlets including radio, television, and written press.

Director of Political Affairs Han ten Broeke is a regular guest on WNL television, and writes a guest column for the Militaire Courant.

Strategic Analyst Patrick Bolder was interviewed by Nieuwsuur, Zembla, RTL Nieuws, Dit Is De Dag; as well as newspapers de Telegraaf and het Financieele Dagblad. He made various appearances on BNR Nieuwsradio.
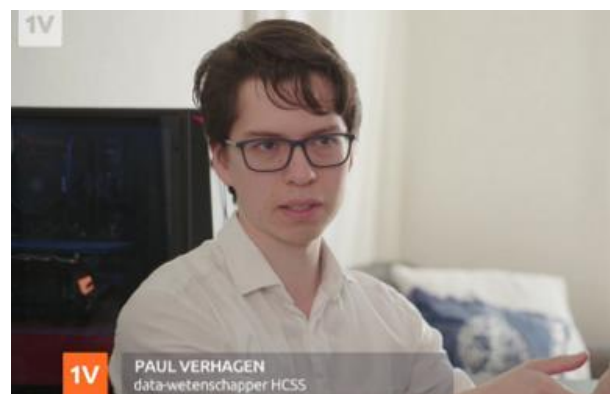
Founder Rob de Wijk writes a weekly column in newspaper Trouw, co-hosts a popular podcast for BNR Nieuwsradio called *Boekestijn and De Wijk*, and frequently contributes to EnergiePodium. In 2020, De Wijk regularly addressed the Dutch Parliament, permanent parliamentary committees, and the business community. In addition, he spoke at a variety of (online) international conferences.

Strategic Analyst Dorith Kool joined the Remote Warfare Programme team of the Oxford Research Group for their latest WarPod podcast, to discuss security sector reform. She was invited to speak at The West Wing Think Tank about fragile states and conflict and how the international community can respond to the increasing insecurity in Mozambique. During NATO Night 2020, Dorith Kool moderated a discussion on Afghanistan with General Rob Bertholee.

Frank Bekkers, Director of the HCSS Security Program, was interviewed in marine magazine Alle Hens and on NPO Radio 1.

HCSS Deputy Director Michel Rademaker was published in De Volkskrant and trade magazine ESB. He also appeared as a guest or moderator in various podcasts and webinars.

Data Scientist Paul Verhagen appeared on Belgian television programs TerZake and Z-Talk, and was interviewed by the Danish newspaper Politiken, Elsevier Weekblad, EenVandaag, BNR Nieuwsradio, NU.nl and Dit Is De Dag. He frequently commented on the US presidential elections in various media.

HCSS Energy Specialist Lucia van Geuns was asked for her expertise on radio (BNR Nieuwsradio, NPO Radio 1), television (RTL Nieuws, NOS, RTL Z, WNL) and in the written press (Volkskrant, NRC, Telegraaf, Trouw, het Financieele Dagblad).

Director of Research Tim Sweijs was interviewed for BNR Nieuwsradio, NOS Stories and in newspapers AD, Trouw and NRC. On YouTube, he discussed the importance of the new Defense Vision 2035.

Trade journals in the field of Defense are no stranger to HCSS either; our reports and papers have been published in Carré, the magazine of the Dutch Officers' Association and the periodical of the Dutch Space Association.

HCSS experts appeared more than 480 times in the news in 2020.

De Strateeg: a New Podcast on BNR Nieuwsradio

The new HCSS podcast series De Strateeg has been produced since March 2020 in collaboration with BNR Nieuwsradio. In this bi-weekly podcast, presenter Paul van Liempt discusses the latest developments in the field of geopolitics and international security with HCSS experts and other guests. Topics range from the security implications of the corona crisis to robotics and autonomous systems, and from cyber security to conflict in the South China Sea.

DE STRATEEG

DE IMPACT VAN TRENDS OP MENS, BEDRIJF, GEOPOLITIEK EN OVERHEDEN

IN SAMENWERKING MET

The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies

BNR

About HCSS

The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS) was established in 2007 as an independent think tank with a small team of senior experts. It is now an established research institute in Europe with over 25 researchers that cover global governance and geopolitics; international security and defense; climate, energy and resources; and cyber security. Our mission is to transform global challenges of today into solutions for tomorrow.

HCSS works with clients from both the public and private sectors. We conduct research commissioned by both national and international organizations but also carry out research projects with the financial support of grant giving foundations. In addition to being trusted advisor to various governments, HCSS provides analysis to international organizations including the European Commission and NATO.

HCSS conducts its activities independently and in collaboration with its global network of affiliated experts. HCSS products are diverse: full-fledged reports, issue briefs, quick topic reports, serious games. Our products often consist of strategic surveys, trend and scenario analyses, risk assessments, geopolitical and regional security analyses, operational evaluations, and policy briefs. We create models and monitors for public and private organizations to improve their situational awareness and provide them with a better understanding of their strategic environment. We also compile, collate and generate new datasets, design tailor-made analytical frameworks and build fully interactive web interfaces. Our in-house competencies include predictive modeling using both structural and dynamic data, web scraping, text mining, advanced internet search techniques and data visualization. HCSS experts are regularly asked to offer commentaries in global media outlets.

HCSS is also a platform for the exchange of ideas and development of new concepts and strategic insights. It regularly hosts symposia and roundtables where experts and stakeholders from government, research, society and industry convene to discuss pressing issues along different areas of interest. Recent examples of larger initiatives include the Global Commission for the Stability of Cyber Space, Robots and Autonomous Systems: Ethical, Legal and Strategic Issues, the Strategic Monitor, and RuBase.

Global Go To Think Tank Index

For the fifth consecutive year, HCSS features in the Global Go To Think Tank Index (GGTTI) released and published by *the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP)* of the University of Pennsylvania. HCSS is included in 5 different categories of the 2019 index, and ranks within the top 50 of Europe in each of these categories.

- **Top Defense and National Security** – ranked #80 worldwide and in the top 30 of Europe
- **Top Energy and Resource Policy Think Tanks** – ranked #51 worldwide, in the top 15 of Europe and featuring as the sole Dutch think tank in this category.
- Top Foreign Policy and International Affairs Think Tanks – ranked #124 worldwide and within the top 50 of Europe.
- **Best Independent Think Tanks** – ranked #69 worldwide and in the top 25 of Europe.
- Top Think tanks with annual operating budgets of less than $5 Million USD – ranked #42 worldwide and in the top 15 of Europe.