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Netherlands Report

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1 | Introduction

Dutch policy to ensure coherence between the political, security, humanitarian, development and economic dimensions of foreign policy goes back to the early 1990s. The 1993 policy paper 'A World in Dispute' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1993) noted that conflicts had become more complex in the post-Cold War era and required an integrated response of the instruments of foreign, defence and development policy, which in turn required these ministries to cooperate more closely. In 1994, this led the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to decide to reorganise and integrate the departments that had previously worked specifically for the minister of foreign affairs or the minister for development cooperation. This process of integration was taken one step further in 1997 when the Homogenous Budget for International Cooperation (HGIS) was created, which brought together the foreign affairs budgets of all relevant ministries into one budget overview in order to formulate a coherent, integrated foreign policy and stimulate inter-ministerial cooperation.

The concept of the integrated approach was further developed in subsequent policy documents in the late 1990s and particularly in the early 21st century. For example, there was a 2003 document on civil-military cooperation and a 2005 document on reconstruction after violent conflicts. The Advisory Council on International Affairs also produced 'Failing States: A Global Responsibility' (AIV 2004), a report which led to the establishment of the Stability Fund. This fund combined ODA and non-ODA budgets to allow for flexible financing in the security sector in fragile countries, and it became an important instrument for bridging the gap between development and security support.

However, an important driver of the practical development and operationalisation of the integrated approach were the significant military deployments in Iraq (2003–2005) and in Afghanistan (2003–present) and, more specifically, the deployment of provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) to Baghlan and Uruzgan provinces. The deployment of PRTs under the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan led to the Dutch ‘3D’ (development, diplomacy and defence) policy as a way to develop and operationalise the poorly defined PRT concept. Although other countries were developing similar policies, 3D became something of a Dutch brand, as the Netherlands pushed the integration of military and civilian personnel further than most others. Politically, the 3D policy was also a useful instrument in that it allowed the different political parties in the Dutch coalition government to stress different aspects of the mission.

Eventually, 13 civilians were deployed with the mission in Uruzgan at any given time under a civilian representative who shared responsibility for joint civilian-military efforts with the military commander. Although the 3D label was eventually dropped, it has had an important legacy. First, it put the integrated approach to the test under difficult circumstances. Different perspectives that could be papered over in the abstract had to be confronted in the field, and pragmatic ways of deconflicting and coordinating with NGOs and IOs had to be worked out. The high political profile and the joint reporting to parliament by the relevant ministers necessitated compromises and common language. Detailed aspects of the integrated approach were discussed in parliament on a regular basis.

Second, it also meant that a significant number of diplomats, military and police personnel, and aid workers had first-hand experience of working with counterparts from other departments and thereby often gained mutual understanding and appreciation. After taking this experience back with them into the relevant ministries and organisations, they were subsequently instrumental in further developing the integrated approach both at a national and international levels.

2 | What policies have been developed to further policy coherence?

The Dutch government generally prefers the term ‘integrated approach’ when referring to the framework for delivering coherent interventions and support to countries in crisis or conflict, while a whole- of-government approach (WGA) is considered a means to this end. As outlined above, the relevant policies can be traced back to at least the early 1990s, but the most relevant current policy document is the ‘Guidelines on the Integrated Approach’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014). The guidelines set the conceptual framework and specify government structures and procedural steps for implementing this approach in addition to providing the framework for a WGA.

The integrated approach is operationalised in the Integrated International Security Strategy (IISS) 2018–2022 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018a), and the ‘Investing in Global Prospects’ note (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018b), which outlines Dutch policy on foreign trade and development cooperation. References to an integrated approach are generally found in most government documents regarding foreign and security policy.

Also worth mentioning is the formal framework (Toetsingskader) for assessing foreign military deployments. Although this framework does not formulate policy as such, it sets the framework for government and parliament regarding decision-making on possible military deployments. The framework dates back to 1995, but since its most recent updates (2009, 2014), it takes into account the political context in which a military deployment takes place as well as the way in which a military intervention would support or facilitate aspects of stabilisation, human security and development. The framework therefore ensures an integrated approach and involves relevant ministries from the earliest stages of planning a military deployment.

The policy documents build on years of experience, and their quality is generally high. The documents have been shared with parliament and, certainly since the Dutch engagement in ISAF, the integrated approach has gained familiarity and broad support in the parliament. This, in turn, translates into broad support for ambitious policies and strategies in multilateral settings. It also means that references to the integrated approach are found in almost all policy papers regarding foreign and security policy.

The 2014 guidelines were drafted as overall principles and working methods and, as such, they are applicable in any conflict-affected country or region. The guidelines provide a step-by-step plan in six phases that tries to capture all aspects of a conflict, from early warning and early action through stabilisation, peacebuilding and reconstruction. It builds on experience with (elements of) the integrated approach in various countries and regions, such as Afghanistan, Burundi, the Horn of Africa, Mali and Syria, but acknowledges that there are no blueprints that will apply everywhere as well as that a country-specific approach will always be required to find the right mix of instruments and interventions to have an impact. In principle, the guidelines are system-wide in that they reference the importance of using all available instruments and entry points, including economy and trade, and of engaging all relevant stakeholders, including international organisations and civil society. However, the practical focus (also in terms of structures and procedures) is of a medium scope, with most attention being devoted to cooperation between diplomacy, development cooperation, military intervention and support for the rule of law.

The IISS and the 'Investing in Global Prospects' note have operationalised the guidelines and applied them to the priorities of the current government. In geographical terms, the IISS prioritises the countries and regions of instability and insecurity around Europe (the so-called 'ring of instability'), particularly to its east and south, as well as those that are close to the Dutch overseas territories in the Caribbean. It sets out a number of goals that include (conflict-)prevention, combatting the root causes of terrorism and migration, and strengthening the international legal order. It also links issues related to security, climate change and sustainable development.

The 'Investing in Global Prospects' note focuses on instability in regions such as West Africa and the Sahel, North Africa, the Middle East and the Horn of Africa as well as on (the root causes of) irregular migration. The note formulates its goals regarding just and peaceful societies in a chapter on stability and poverty reduction. It specifically mentions strengthening the rule of law and legitimate governance, supporting peace processes and preventing radicalisation. The integrated approach is seen within the broader policy framework of foreign trade and development cooperation, and its scope is in that sense system-wide.

In practical terms, the integrated approach is explicitly applied and debated when the government notifies the parliament in a so-called Article 100 letter that it intends to deploy military personnel abroad. This formal notification will have been drafted in accordance with the evaluation framework (Toetsingskader) and usually signed by all relevant ministers (Defence, Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade & Development Cooperation and, when applicable, Justice & Security). Parliament will scrutinise the government's justification to determine whether the military deployment is credibly embedded in a broader integrated approach.

3 | Who are the main actors involved in cooperating in a WGA?

The key actors that cooperate in the context of the integrated approach are: the prime minister and the ministers of foreign affairs, defence, development cooperation & foreign trade, and justice & security. The term 'whole-of-government approach' is therefore a bit of a misnomer, as other ministries may sometimes provide specific expertise or information, but they are rarely substantially involved in formulating and implementing of policy regarding external conflicts and crises.

At the political level, the Council of Ministers has a number of sub-councils. Most relevant in this context are the Council for Defence and International Affairs (RDIA) and the Council for Security and Intelligence (RVI). The RDIA deals with issues regarding foreign and defence policy as well as foreign trade and development cooperation. The RVI deals with developments regarding national and international security, including terrorism and cybersecurity, but also participation in military missions. Senior officials of the military, intelligence services, police and public prosecutor, as well as the national coordinator for security and counterterrorism, may attend sessions, as required.

At the senior official level, the Steering Group Missions and Operations (SMO) is the most senior coordinating body. It meets weekly and includes representatives (generally at the level of director-general or director) of the Prime Minister's Office and the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence (both civilian and military), and Justice & Security. Its focus is on Dutch participation in military and civilian missions within an integrated approach, and it advises the relevant ministers. The role of the SMO is crucial in that it anchors a range of inter- and intra-departmental working groups on relevant issues and provides a forum for discussing developments and resolving issues at the most senior official level.

Although these ministries form the core of the integrated approach, they do not operate in isolation. The implementation of the civilian aspects of an integrated approach is to a large extent done by international organisations and NGOs through funding of their programmes or projects. Through a number of 'knowledge platforms', the Ministry of Foreign Affairs engages academics and NGOs on themes related to foreign and development policy. Particularly within the Security & Rule of Law knowledge platform, there is an exchange of information that is relevant to an integrated approach to specific crises and conflicts.

In the field, the Netherlands has made arrangements to deconflict, coordinate and cooperate with NGOs that are active in the same areas where Dutch military or civilian personnel are deployed. The local embassy or embedded diplomats are generally involved in these

coordination mechanisms with the added aim of ensuring coherence with bilateral programmes and projects in the same areas.

More generally, the Netherlands does not implement an integrated approach in a country or region on a bilateral basis. As mentioned above, as a strong believer in multilateralism, the Netherlands supports and advocates for UN-led coordination efforts, particularly in fragile countries. Where possible, the Netherlands will channel financial support through multi-donor trust funds or support policy priorities that have been drafted by or with the government of the country concerned. Deployment of military and civilian staff will usually take place in the context of missions or operations of, among others, the UN, the EU, NATO and the OSCE or sometimes in ad hoc coalitions of like-minded countries. It follows that the Netherlands is actively engaged in policy discussions in these multilateral frameworks on the integrated approach.

Finally, the Dutch parliament provides oversight and is actively engaged in debates regarding the integrated approach, and will sometimes provide guidance to the government through motions. Different parties generally prioritise different aspects of the integrated approach, and NGOs will often have their own interactions with parliament to call attention to specific concerns that they may have.

4 | How does your country operationalise a WGA?

At an institutional level, the Netherlands has taken a number of steps to ensure policy coherence. In 1994, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was restructured and the departments that worked specifically for the minister of foreign affairs or the minister for development coordination were de-compartmentalised ('ontschotting'), creating regional and thematic departments working for both ministers. In 2012, the portfolio for foreign trade was transferred from the Ministry of Economic Affairs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under a minister for foreign trade and development cooperation. This means that the instruments for foreign policy, development cooperation and foreign trade have been integrated into a single department under two ministers.

On the ministerial level, decision-making on crisis management and deployment in fragile states takes place in the weekly Council of Ministers. Sub-councils, on the other hand, only meet when required, are chaired by the prime minister, and have a composition that depends on the specific sub-council, but can include the ministers of defence, foreign affairs, development cooperation & foreign trade, and security & justice.

On a more operational level, the Steering Group Missions and Operations (SMO) meets weekly and brings together the most senior military and civilian officials of these same ministries. At the working level, there are a number of inter-departmental working groups, such as the Working Group Civilian Missions, the Inter-Agency Working Group Early Warning & Early Action, and working groups for countries or regions with a significant degree of Dutch engagement, such as Afghanistan, Libya and the Sahel. Relevant embassies and representations will join meetings of these working groups by video conference. Besides the formal working groups, which have clear reporting lines, compositions and meeting schedules,

there is a range of more informal groups that may be formed to deal with a specific issue for a limited period of time and will include relevant colleagues from various departments.

Policy is formulated in integrated notes to parliament, which are then presented by the relevant ministers. Annual or multi-year plans, which include input from the relevant departments, are drawn up for specific countries and regions.

In financial terms, the Homogenous Budget of International Cooperation (HGIS) was created in 1997 to combine the foreign affairs budgets of the relevant ministries into a single budget overview. This principle was taken one step further in 2013 with the creation of the International Security Budget (BIV), which covered the costs of contributions to international security in a broad sense. The ministers for foreign affairs, defence, and foreign trade & development cooperation and, when appropriate, the minister of security & justice made joint decisions on the allocation of BIV funds to ensure that the various ministries' interests and perspectives were weighed and that joint context analyses were taken into account while preparing decisions. Although this decision was partly reversed in 2017, when parts of this budget were reallocated to the relevant ministries, a common budget of EUR 190 million was retained for the financing of international deployments.

On a more operational level, since 2004, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has had a specific financial instrument, the Stability Fund, to finance activities at the nexus of security, stability and development cooperation. This fund, with a current budget of EUR 90 million, is made up of both ODA (EUR 55 million) and non-ODA (EUR 45 million) funds, which allows for greater flexibility to finance activities in the security sector. It is jointly managed by the Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid Department and the Security Policy Department.

In terms of personnel management, a number of steps have been taken to facilitate exchange and cooperation. The integration of development cooperation and foreign trade into the structures of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has meant that no separate personnel structures exist, and that staff can move and bring expertise from one area to another. Furthermore, since 2007, the ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs have been exchanging advisers who contribute to relevant planning and decision-making processes.

In 2004, a list of individuals who could serve as volunteer foreign policy advisers (POLADs) to be embedded in military missions and operations was drawn up. These POLADs have been deployed on a range of missions, and have been complemented with development and cultural advisers to help ensure an integrated, holistic perspective in the field. In the context of ISAF, this concept was expanded with the deployment of a civilian representative alongside the military commander of the mission in Uruzgan. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also keeps a roster of external civilian experts (the 'Civilian Missions Pool') who have been pre-selected for secondment to international missions, such as ones of the EU, the UN, NATO and the OSCE. If a candidate is selected by the organisation in question, he or she is then offered a temporary contract with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the duration of the deployment and then seconded to the relevant mission. Experts may be active in the non-governmental or private sector, but they can also be active judges, prosecutors or civil servants from the Ministry of Justice & Security. At present, some 50 experts from this pool are deployed each year, although the ministry aims to increase this number.

The police organisation and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (gendarmerie) manage their own rosters of volunteers for deployment to international missions, particularly for the purpose of capacity- building. The inter-departmental working group Civilian Missions ensures coherence among the relevant departments. There is no overarching Dutch structure for training or exercises. The police and Marechaussee generally organise pre-deployment training for their own staff. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides so-called hostile environment awareness training (HEAT) to diplomats who are to be deployed in high-risk areas, and it will also provide its staff and the volunteers on the roster for civilian missions with access to training and courses provided by others bodies, such as the European Security and Defence College.

The first 'Common Effort' exercise was organised in 2010 by 1 German/Netherlands Corps as a civilian-military exercise based on a realistic scenario and involving diplomats and representatives from the UN and NGOs, among others. These exercises have been held annually since 2014.

5 | Conclusions

It is fair to say that the Netherlands is relatively advanced in the realisation of a WGA if one considers its explicit formulation of policy and its implementation at headquarters level and in the field. Whether this has been a success in practice is harder to establish. The two most prominent examples of the country's integrated approach – Afghanistan and Mali – have hardly been resounding successes in terms of international interventions. However, on a smaller scale, the Dutch approach has been successful in ensuring greater policy coherence between the different ministries and departments as well as in building trust and confidence by having military and civilian personnel engage in real-world cooperation.

There are a few reasons that can be identified for this relative success. On the political level, there has been commitment to an integrated approach since the early 1990s, particularly among successive ministers for development cooperation. Integrating development cooperation into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1994 meant that joint policies had to be developed to demonstrate the added value of this concept. That, in turn, meant that there was already a solid foundation in terms of policy when the ambitious deployment in Afghanistan put the integrated approach to the test. For the coalition government of the time, the so-called 3D approach to the provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) in Baghlan and Uruzgan was useful, as it allowed the coalition parties to stress different aspects of the mission (cf. van der Lijn 2011). The high political profile of the mission meant that there was great pressure from the prime minister on down to make the integrated approach work. Structures were created, compromises were made, and a common language was settled on to make this happen. The frequent debates with parliament meant that the details of the integrated approach were familiar to parliamentarians across the political spectrum, and the importance of this approach became almost axiomatic. Although the Netherlands certainly wasn't alone in developing this kind of approach, the 3D policy became something of a Dutch brand thanks to the innovative and ambitious way in which it was implemented.

On a working level, the role of the Steering Group Missions and Operations (SMO) was crucial. It allowed for day-to-day management at the highest official level as well as for the resolution

of conflicts and friction between the various departments involved. Under the SMO, a range of both inter- and intra-departmental working groups were formed to manage specific aspects of the integrated approach. These working groups – sometimes having a formal mandate and sometimes being more ad hoc in nature – normalised day-to-day contacts with colleagues from other ministries and the cooperation across silos.

In the field, the deployment of significant numbers of diplomats, development experts and police personnel along with a military contingent meant that they had to determine how to apply the integrated approach to practical issues under difficult circumstances. Although this undeniably led to friction and frustration, it also built trust and mutual appreciation. In addition to taking this experience back into their departments and helping to further develop policy, these men and women formed an informal network across ministries and organisations. The value of this practical cooperation is hard to quantify, but it has undoubtedly been important to the internalisation of the integrated approach.

One downside, which can mainly be attributed to the Afghanistan deployment, is that the integrated approach is now strongly associated with military missions. This can potentially be a handicap now that the Netherlands no longer has an ambitious military deployment with an integrated civilian component. Currently, the potential for an integrated approach seems to be most obvious around the nexus of internal and external security – and particularly with the issue of irregular migration. This is mostly a matter of cooperation between different civilian agencies and departments with little military involvement. The existing frameworks for a WGA will therefore need to be adapted in response to these developments.

Looking ahead, the real test of a Dutch whole-of-government approach may be in dealing with the hybrid threats from Russia and the challenges posed by China. These will require a coherent response by a much broader spectrum of ministries and agencies than has been needed in dealing with the external crises and conflicts of the past two decades.

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