Ministry of Foreign Affairs

IOB Evaluation Report

Changing needs – need for change: integrating responses to extremist threats

An evaluation of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' counterterrorism policy and operations

Summary report, September 2021

Preface

The 20 years since 9/11 have seen a huge increase in efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism. Despite the equally wide variety of responses – ranging from full-scale state-building efforts to smaller-scale community responses – security and kinetic responses have been dominant, i.e. action aimed at combating, arresting and detaining members of violent extremist and terrorist groups. But two decades of fighting terrorism have shown that security responses alone are insufficient to address terrorism and violent extremism. Prevention and attempts to remove the breeding ground for terrorism require a different set of activities. Not only that: security responses may lead to human rights violations, the shrinking of civic space, and the targeting of political opposition. During the past two decades, the counter-terrorism (CT) toolbox has been extended, first with 'countering violent extremism' (CVE) and subsequently with 'preventing violent extremism' (PVE). The need to bridge the gap between security and development is another important consideration: this has proved difficult to achieve in practice, as the two domains operate from different perspectives and work with different systems. 'Hard' responses continue to dominate the security agendas of governments worldwide. In other words, developing a strategy that effectively integrates prevention and attempts to address the root causes, with action to combat terrorism and violent extremism is like trying to untie a Gordian knot.

The aim of this evaluation report is to support future policy development, so that the Netherlands is more responsive to the changing threats of terrorism and violent extremism in a dynamic global context. It draws conclusions and makes recommendations for strategy development and concrete activities.

This evaluation was carried out in the formal context of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA) budget for Article 2 on Security and Stability, and provides input for the next report on this Article, scheduled for 2023. It draws on a large number of interviews with stakeholders, a literature review, a Delphi study and three subsidiary studies. The Ministry's Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) itself undertook a study of the Ministry's network of Regional Security Coordinators (RSCs), and commissioned two studies from external consultants: a study on Dutch involvement in the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) and a systematic literature review of the effectiveness of PVE and CVE interventions (henceforth referred to as 'P/CVE').

This summary report was written by an evaluation team at the Ministry's Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) consisting of Paul Westerhof, Rens Willems and Arjan Schuthof. Arjan Schuthof was appointed as the Acting Director of IOB in May 2021 and left the evaluation team. A special word of thanks goes to Bibi van Ginkel of the Glocal Connection, who conducted the study on the Dutch involvement in the GCTF, and Emily Winterbotham, Jessica White, Martine Zeuthen and Andrew Glazzard of the Royal United Services Institute, who performed the systematic literature review.

We also wish to thank the members of the external reference group for their commitment and constructive advice: Liesbeth van der Heide (Leiden University), Fulco van Deventer (Human Security Collective), Joost van Elk (Ministry of Justice and Security, previously the NCTV), Peter Knoope (independent CT expert) and Koos Dijkstra and Dominique Kok of the Counterterrorism and National Security Division of the Security Policy Department (DVB/TN) at the MFA. In addition, we would like to express our gratitude to everyone who responded to our requests for interviews for their invaluable contributions. The internal IOB advisory group who provided regular feedback consisted of Martine de Groot, Sabine de Jager, Paul de Nooijer, Sam Streefkerk and Wendy Asbeek Brusse.

Final responsibility for this report rests solely with IOB.

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Contents

List of abbreviations

AQIM	Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb
COMET	Working party on the application of specific measures to combat terrorism
COTER	EU Council Working Group on Terrorism
CSO	Civil-society organisation
CT	Counterterrorism
CTC	Counter-Terrorism Committee
CTED	Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate
CTITF	Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force
CVE	Countering violent extremism
DAF	Sub-Saharan Africa Department
DAM	North Africa and the Middle East Department
DAO	Asia and Oceania Department
DAT-PoW	Defence against Terrorism Programme of Work
DEU	Europe Department
DMM	Department of Multilateral Institutions and Human Rights
DSH	Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid
DSO	Social Development Department
DTN	Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands
DVB	Security Policy Department
DVB/TN	Counterterrorism and National Security Division
ECTC	European Counter-Terrorism Centre
EEAS	European Union External Action Service
EU	European Union
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FTE	Full-time equivalent
FTF	Foreign terrorist fighter
GCERF	Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund
GCTF	Global Counterterrorism Forum
GCTS	Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy
HoM	Head of Mission
IOB	Policy and Operations Evaluation Department
IRA	Irish Republican Army
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISWAP	Islamic State's West African Province
KST	Parliamentary paper
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (of the Netherlands)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCTb	National Counter-Terrorism Coordinator
NCTV	National Coordinator for Security and Counter-Terrorism
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NOS	Nederlandse Omroep Stichting
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights)
P/CVE	Preventing and countering violent extremism
PVE	Preventing violent extremism
RAN	Radicalisation Awareness Network
RSC	Regional Security Coordinator
RST	Regional Security Team
RUSI	Royal United Services Institute
SPIB	Special Projects and Innovation Branch
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TRIP	Travel Information Portal
TWP	Working Party on Terrorism

UN	United Nations
UNCCT	United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNOCT	United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
VE	Violent extremism

Synthesis and recommendations

This synthesis sets out five key recommendations for improving policy development and implementation in relation to CT and P/CVE. Each recommendation is followed by a brief summary of the underlying findings of this evaluation report.

During the past few decades, the world has witnessed an upsurge in violent extremist and terrorist groups in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Their motives vary – from controlling territory and gaining political influence to acquiring economic assets and spreading fundamentalist religious beliefs. In some cases, they are inspired by a combination of motives. In the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and also during the following two decades, the responses to violent extremist and terrorist groups have ranged from full-scale state-building efforts to smaller-scale community responses. Security and kinetic responses have been dominant, however.

Despite these efforts, though, terrorist activities have continued, with attacks in Madrid in 2004, in London in 2005, in Paris in 2015 and in Brussels in 2016. The majority of terrorist attacks have taken place in countries outside Europe, however; in countries such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Nigeria. They have been perpetrated by groups or networks such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Boko Haram, the Taliban and Al-Qa'ida and its affiliates. After ISIS proclaimed a caliphate and established control over territory in Syria and Iraq, there was a huge influx of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) from all over the world, including from the Netherlands.

Although there has been a sharp decrease in the number of terrorist fatalities since 2014, the level of terrorist activity worldwide is still significantly higher than in the period shortly after 9/11. And although the level of terrorist activity is falling in the Middle East, new terrorist threats are now emerging, in the Sahel, for example.

Against this background, this evaluation report takes stock of Dutch foreign policies and interventions in relation to counterterrorism (CT) and preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). The evaluation report seeks to answer the following question:

> *What results has the Ministry of Foreign Affairs achieved thanks to its activities in CT and P/CVE, and how can policy development and implementation be improved?*

The unit responsible for CT and P/CVE policy and interventions at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is the Counterterrorism and National Security Division of the Security Policy Department (DVB/TN). The threats of violent extremism and terrorism posed to the Netherlands and Dutch interests cover three different policy arenas: the Netherlands, the European Union (EU) and worldwide. The MFA has a limited role to play in relation to threats in and emanating from the Netherlands and the EU. Although the MFA imposes sanctions on individuals and provides information for national threat analyses, primary responsibility for policy development and implementation in the Netherlands and the EU lies with the Ministry of Justice and Security, the National Coordinator for Security and Counter-terrorism (NCTV), the police, the investigation agencies and the security services.

The MFA does have a leading role to play in relation to threats and developments emanating from outside the EU such as may affect the security of the Netherlands and its interests abroad. In 2015, acting in response to the rise of ISIS and terrorist attacks in Europe, the Dutch government set aside extra funds for strengthening its efforts to counter radicalisation and terrorism. Some of these funds were allocated to the MFA. The MFA identified four 'result areas' (i.e. connecting, looking ahead, strengthening, and achieving) in its framework strategy for 2017-2020 for dealing with radicalisation and terrorism. These result areas translate into three general objectives:

1. to strive for a strong diplomatic position, in both multilateral and bilateral relations, in order to influence policies, to be well-informed, and to respond in good time to new trends;
2. to promote the Dutch approach to CT and P/CVE; and
3. to support projects for addressing and tackling terrorism and violent extremism.

In assessing what the MFA has achieved in relation to these objectives, this evaluation report looks specifically at three aspects of the MFA's policy. The aim in doing so is to highlight activities undertaken at different levels as well as the linkages between them:

1. at a multilateral level: Dutch involvement in the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF);
2. at regional and national levels: the system of Regional Security Coordinators (RSCs); and
3. the implementation of projects at national and local levels.

Together, these three areas represent a substantial share of the DVB/TN's work in recent years. The evaluation report focuses on the period between 2015 and 2021, taking the beginning of the Dutch co-chairmanship of the GCTF and the creation of a network of Regional Security Coordinators (RSCs) as its starting point.

Drawing on an assessment of these three elements, this evaluation report finds that, in relation to the general objectives listed above:

- **There is no clearly articulated overall strategy to guide the activities of DVB/TN.** DVB/TN has shown to be able to respond adequately to certain opportunities, such as the co-chairmanship of the GCTF and threats such as those posed by FTFs. However, no goals have been clearly and explicitly articulated in relation to the ultimate objective of preventing and countering the terrorist threat to the Netherlands and its interests abroad. While results have been achieved in relation to the underlying objectives discussed in the following paragraphs, the absence of an overall strategy hampers any coherence among the individual components. For example, although the Netherlands' active involvement in the GCTF and the promotion of the Dutch approach have placed the Netherlands firmly on the map, no strategy has been formulated for using this position to promote the security of the Netherlands. And while a wide variety of projects have been supported to pilot different approaches, hardly any investments have been made in evaluating their effectiveness.
- **The MFA has secured a stronger diplomatic position in the field of CT and P/CVE.** The Dutch co-chairmanship of the GCTF helped the Netherlands to attain a stronger and more strategic position in the global policy arena. It created easier access to key stakeholders, thereby improving the MFA's information position and helping the Netherlands to influence international policies. During its co-chairmanship, the Netherlands was recognised as a reliable partner with considerable expertise. The RSC network also contributed to this. RSCs are knowledgeable, well-connected, and provide expertise and support to embassies and the government in The Hague. The RSC network has proven to be a strategic model that has enabled the Netherlands to build up a relatively high profile in CT and P/CVE with relatively few resources. However, the prominence attained by the Netherlands from co-chairing the GCTF is liable to erosion. Furthermore, it is not always clear what the goal or impact is of a stronger diplomatic position in relation to CT and P/CVE, other than promoting the Dutch approach to CT in an international setting.
- **The MFA has had some success in promoting the Dutch approach to CT and P/CVE.** DVB/TN describes the Dutch approach as 'creating a balance between counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism in an inclusive manner, taking civil society, human rights and root causes into account'.[1] It draws largely on the experiences gained in addressing radicalisation and terrorism in the Netherlands and on the EU's 'neighbourhood approach'. The MFA and the NCTV promoted the Dutch approach in the GCTF by actively encouraging input from other Dutch ministries and organisations and facilitating their participation in meetings and events. DVB/TN also supported projects using the Dutch approach in local contexts. However, it is not clear how effective this approach has been and how easily the Dutch experience can be transposed to other contexts, such as the Sahel, Maghreb or Mashreq. Overall, no clear definition of 'the Dutch approach' has been given, and its interpretations range from multidisciplinary consultations, with intensive cooperation and coordination between national and local levels, including both security-focused and non-security-focused actors, to the inclusion of human rights and civil society in CT activities.
- **Projects have had a limited impact on the prevention and countering of violent extremism, and need to be connected with longer-term development.** Certain projects have improved the MFA's information position, as was one of their stated objectives. At the same time, their contribution to and impact on overall Dutch security has been negligible; funded projects are relatively small-scale and at best produce positive outcome results at an individual level. Moreover, a literature review commissioned by IOB[2] shows that there is hardly any evidence for the effectiveness of projects in the field of CT and P/CVE. Small-scale projects can function as pilots for new approaches, but pilots need to be accompanied by strong M&E and possibilities for upscaling when proven effective.

1 DVB/TN. Regional CT network factbox. Internal document.
2 Available from the IOB website: *https://www.iob-evaluatie.nl/publicaties/deelstudies/2021/02/01/literatuurstudies-%E2%80%93-contraterrorisme-en-voorkomen-and-tegengaan-van-gewelddadig-extremisme*.

The past decade has seen a shift in context, creating an urgent need for a renewal of policy responses:

- **The context has changed: terrorist groups have taken on an increasingly 'networked' and 'glocal' character; they are strongly embedded in and reliant on local contexts, but can be tied to global criminal networks and act as sources of inspiration for each other and for lone wolves.** At the time when the Netherlands stepped up its efforts in CT and P/CVE, became co-chair of the GCTF and formed its RSC network in 2015, ISIS controlled big swathes of Syria and Iraq and was attracting large numbers of FTFs. Since the fall of the ISIS Caliphate, terrorist groups have been operating to an increasing degree as locally embedded actors in areas that are impossible to oversee and control by conventional governmental and military means. They often have to navigate a complex political landscape dominated by local conflicts and national interests. At the same time, the boundaries between violent extremist groups, organised criminal groups and local political factions and/or state elites have become more and more blurred. Controlling natural resources, economic assets, drugs and arms smuggling, and human trafficking, taxing transport and trade, and serving as a proxy for (covert) state agendas all form part of a lucrative business model that underpins the wider interests of extremist groups.
- **A policy shift is required: policy responses to terrorism and violent extremism need to adequately bridge CT with prevention strategies, including PVE as well as longer-term development.**
  In performing this evaluation, IOB established that it was dealing with a policy field that found itself at a crossroads. Globally, CT professionals realise that the most common responses to terrorism – hard security interventions – are not capable of solving the underlying problem, and indeed can even make matters worse by feeding mistrust of the government and perceptions of exclusion among certain groups. More and more attempts are being made to bridge the gap between short-term security programmes addressing the symptoms of violent extremism and longer-term prevention strategies targeting wider, socio-economic factors. Yet many policy-makers and practitioners struggle to adequately bridge this gap, and fail to put into practice a truly multidisciplinary approach that links the silos of security, development, criminal psychology and other areas. The MFA needs to take account of two complicating factors in this respect:

  - **This policy shift needs to bridge the different 'worlds' of security and development:** security-based approaches needed to respond quickly to threats, whereas development-based approaches use different paradigms to address root causes: they work with different belief systems, views, funding criteria, time lines and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices.
  - **There is no global support for such a policy shift:** security responses to terrorism continue to be the dominant response adopted by most governments around the world. However, they may have adverse impacts on human rights, civic space and political opposition. A Dutch foreign strategy on CT and P/CVE should consider the position that the Netherlands wishes to take in this debate.

In order to meet the challenges presented above, IOB makes the following **recommendations** for future policy:

1. Formulate a clear strategy and milestones for CT and P/CVE and their linkages with wider security and development issues.

Policy priorities for CT and P/CVE – and a strategy with milestones based on them – should draw on a rigorous assessment of security contexts, stakeholders' interests and the information needs of the MFA, and link CT and P/CVE with related security and development issues. The activities of DVB/TN focus on analysis, policy development, information-sharing and the facilitation of diplomatic processes. DVB/TN has only an indirect influence on potential terrorist threats. It is therefore essential to formulate a clear strategy that helps to mobilise other policy departments in the MFA and partners in the Dutch security chain in pursuit of the MFA's objectives. In concrete terms, IOB proposes the following:

- Formulate a clear strategy that explicitly explains how the objectives of individual activities – such as the contributions to the GCTF, the RSC network and the funding of projects – mutually reinforce each other and contribute to the overarching goal of promoting Dutch security and countering extremism.
- Define the key policy priorities and objectives for the next few years and describe what activities have been planned in pursuit of these objectives. Set specific priorities and milestones for multilateral forums, regional and bilateral efforts, and projects. The strategy should build on the increasingly networked and 'glocal' nature of terrorist organisations, and their ties with trans-border criminal networks.
- A Dutch foreign strategy on CT and P/CVE also requires the MFA to adopt a clear standpoint on the linkages between countering terrorism and violent extremism on the one hand and human rights and inclusive political and development processes on the other. This requires answers to questions like: how do you balance CT and support for the security services with holding states accountable for repressing citizens and the exclusion of marginalised groups? How do you balance the prevention of radicalisation and the financing of terrorist activities with the protection of civic space? What position does the Netherlands wish to adopt in this debate?
- Critically assess which platform is most suitable for the MFA's objectives on CT and P/CVE in a multilateral context. While the GCTF remains an important forum, its status vis-à-vis other existing and emerging organisations is on the decline.
- Determine the geographic focus of CT and P/CVE activities based on a rigorous assessment of security contexts, stakeholders' interests and information needs (see recommendation 5). Also, be more agile by setting clear criteria for flexibility and the inclusion of new target countries whenever this is required by security concerns.
- Translate key policy priorities into *smart* objectives for specific geographic focal areas of Dutch policies on CT. Involve other departments in coordinating intervention priorities (see recommendation 4), and involve other departments and partners in the Dutch security chain in coordinating political, developmental and security reporting (see recommendation 3).
- Combine local work on risk management, conflict mitigation, peace-building and service provision where needed with a transnational, regional approach involving key international and local actors across nations; and form national and international coalitions to jointly support bottom-up change processes and the effective, inclusive outreach of local government institutions.
- Line responsibility for the RSCs should be transferred to DVB/TN, so that it can play a more important role in the strategic coordination of the RSC network. The RSCs are vital assets: their added value should be fine-tuned with regional and national security trends in their areas of operation, and with their linkages with the Netherlands. This requires a more hands-on management of the RSC network in terms of setting targets for products and results, and sharing best practices and lessons learned.

These recommendations draw on the following findings:

Violent extremism is a global phenomenon that is not restricted by state boundaries or limited to states where governance fails. Given the 'glocal' characteristics of violent extremism and terrorism, tackling it requires global cooperation among affected states as well as a readiness to address local drivers. Moreover, foreign interventions in fragile settings can have a negative side-effect of bolstering support for violent extremist groups. The international community should be aware of its ambivalent position: while many governments in the South have the mandate and legislative power to provide security and services for their citizens, a combination of corruption, abuse of power and lack of respect for human rights makes them suspect in the eyes of their own populations. Helping these governments to boost their capacity to deal with violent extremism may therefore simultaneously fuel support for violent extremist groups, as has been witnessed in countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq. At the same time, local grievances that are exploited by extremist groups, such as a lack of security, marginalisation, unemployment or access to natural resources, should be taken into account and addressed.

The overall strategy for how the MFA helps to prevent radicalisation and terrorism is largely implicit. When additional funds were made available in 2015 to counter radicalisation and terrorism, a deliberate choice was made to focus on implementation rather than on strategy development. Although policy officers work strategically on certain objectives, no clear explanation has been given of how these objectives tie in with the overarching goal of promoting Dutch security and countering extremism. This adversely affects coherence between these objectives.

At the same time, DVB/TN does draw up plans to improve and build on its activities. For example, plans have been made for maintaining the MFA's involvement and position in the GCTF after the end of the Dutch term of office as co-chair and, for the past two years, each RSC has written his or her own multiannual results framework. But the way in which all the DVB/TN's activities mutually reinforce each other and contribute to an overarching strategy has not been made explicit. The development of an overall strategy and theory of change could also facilitate coordination with and cooperation on activities with other policy departments and partners in the Dutch security chain.

The MFA's involvement in the GCTF has given it a stronger diplomatic position in the field of CT and P/CVE. This has facilitated access to key stakeholders, thus boosting the MFA's information position and helping it to influence international policies.

- As the co-chair of the GCTF between 2015 and 2019 together with Morocco, the Netherlands enjoyed some degree of success in achieving the objectives stated in the Co-Chair Strategic Plan of Action. Although this plan set out an ambitious number of deliverables, it often proved difficult to garner the requisite support among GCTF member states.
- Policy documents drafted by the GCTF have contributed to policy development at the United Nations (UN) and the EU. However, they have not had a powerful impact on national policies and CT in practice. Most GCTF members seem to be more inclined to share their own policies and lessons than to adopt those shared by others. For this reason, it is not clear what the objective is of having a stronger diplomatic position in the field of CT and P/CVE, other than promoting the Dutch approach in an international setting.

The coordinated, strategic management of the RSC network is hindered by HRM considerations as line responsibility for HRM lies with the Head of Mission (HoM) in the country in which each RSC is stationed. DVB/TN is responsible for job descriptions, the posting of RSCs and overall policy guidance. It also coordinates with the HoM on job applications and the selection of RSCs. Ultimately, however, the line manager is formally responsible for the selection of RSCs as well as their performance assessment. Obviously, an RSC also performs certain duties formulated by his or her line manager. Although this helps to embed the RSC as a member of embassy staff, it does not encourage regional involvement. Moreover, the situation results in a wide variance in the ways in which RSCs operate and limits DVB/TN's span of control.

2. Invest in analytical capacity in order to feed policy development.

DVB/TN's analytical role is crucial for the development of policies and strategies, both for the MFA and for partners in the Dutch security chain. The RSC network plays a vital role in the Dutch information position on CT and P/CVE. During the past two years, DVB/TN has shifted the focus of the RSC network from the implementation of pilot activities to political reporting. This analytical role could be further strengthened to include a contribution to independent analysis, threat assessments and need-driven policy development. In concrete terms, IOB proposes the following:

- Analyse trends in extremism in focal areas, use threat assessments for programming strategies, and identify drivers of conflict. Extend CT and P/CVE to encompass the broader field of security and development, in order to assess root causes and unearth choke points. Use this holistic approach to identify opportunities for interventions.
- DVB/TN should engage with other policy departments at the MFA, partners in the Dutch security chain and the RSCs to set information priorities for each geographic region. Assess what kind of information is needed, from which regions this information can best be retrieved, and better instruct RSCs about the topics on which, when and to whom they should report.
- Organise cooperation with other liaison officers[3] at embassies on a more systematic basis, with support from ministry departments in The Hague.
- RSCs should keep an eye on policy developments and priorities in The Hague and report in good time on potentially relevant developments in their own regions.

These recommendations draw on the following findings:

The wide-ranging nature of the RSCs' job descriptions, coupled with the large number of countries covered by some RSCs, hampers a shift towards political reporting and analysis.[4] The start of the network was regarded as a pilot phase and the RSCs were given a great deal of freedom to set their own priorities. Despite recent efforts to streamline and harmonise the network, there is a great deal of variance in the way in which the RSCs operate in practice. Overall, the RSCs have four main objectives:

1. to establish and maintain a network of national CT authorities, local stakeholders and counterparts from other diplomatic missions;
2. to analyse country-specific and regional security threats and trends, and inform the MFA both comprehensively and in good time;
3. to promote the Dutch approach to CT and P/CVE internationally;
4. to identify and monitor projects in CT and P/CVE in their countries of operation.

As a result of this wide-ranging job description, several RSCs have found it hard to focus more sharply on political reporting and analysis, and have felt a lack of guidance from The Hague.

[3] The staff of some Dutch embassies or foreign missions include liaison officers from other Dutch ministries or government agencies.

[4] This key finding is not new. This was also one of the key findings of a 2018 internal MFA report on regional policy roles at foreign missions. The study showed that, with one exception, the job descriptions for all regional roles were far too wide-ranging and that no Terms of Reference had been prepared in advance. See: M. Gonggrijp and Kleinjan, M. *Regionale beleidsfuncties op posten: Van open deur naar deur op een kier.* 2018: p. 5.

Projects can be used more effectively for the purpose of political reporting and analysis. A number of projects have yielded specific information or have helped the Netherlands to build up a network position giving it access to wider CT-relevant information in a particular country. At the same time, the project portfolio and the RSCs' contacts are a valuable source of information that could be put to greater use than is currently the case. Given that the RSCs wish to use projects to bolster their information position, they are increasingly likely to support projects that help to establish connections with government offices. While this may certainly support their position vis-à-vis government agencies, relevant security information may also be gathered from other parties, including civil-society organisations and universities.

There is scope for improving the systematic articulation of information needs by and from clients in The Hague, as well as cooperation in the field with partners in the Dutch security chain. The ambition of the RSC network is to provide information to MFA staff, as well to other partners in the Dutch security chain, including the NCTV, the Royal Dutch Military Constabulary, the Ministry of Defence and the security services. While there is some exchange of information with officials from other ministries, no systematic attempt has been made to identify the information needs of potential clients and to formulate specific questions for RSCs in the field. Cooperation between RSCs and liaison officers at embassies often depends on an RSC or an ambassador taking the initiative. The Hague (i.e. the MFA and other ministries) does not provide any guidance about cooperation with or the division of responsibilities with government staff who are stationed in embassies and are working on security-related issues. Where there is coordination in the field between RSCs and liaison officers from other ministries, this focuses mainly on establishing a clear division of responsibilities rather than on cooperation between different subject specialists and the exchange of information and analyses.

3. Invest in learning by creating effective feedback loops between security analyses, policy development and programme implementation.

The analysis of security trends in CT and P/CVE fosters informed policy development and implementation. The RSC network and the RSCs' counterparts at DVB/TN in The Hague play a key role in providing analytical capacity for CT and related security issues. At the same time, the nature of the work performed by the RSCs by definition limits their geographic scope, which is why DVB/TN has to prioritise how limited resources are to be used. Moreover, the mobilisation of support for P/CVE programming is hampered by a lack of evidence for the effectiveness of most P/CVE interventions. DVB/TN should therefore invest in creating effective feedback loops between security analyses, policy development and programme implementation. In concrete terms, IOB proposes the following:

- The analysis of threats and trends should support policy development and the prioritisation of geographic areas and topics to be covered by Dutch CT and P/CVE interventions. A broadly informed analysis can support the formulation of clear policies and programme priorities and give them a clear geographic focus. It should also guide the focus of RSCs, while at the same time giving them clear criteria for flexible responses to emerging security threats to the Netherlands and its interest abroad.
- DVB/TN should make more of an effort to evaluate the effectiveness of CT and P/CVE projects and share lessons both within and beyond the MFA. Project evaluations should go beyond determining whether the projects in question have succeeded in performing their intended activities, and critically assess the underlying assumptions and demonstrated effects. Projects can do both good and harm, and it is essential to better understand the effects of interventions in this sensitive field. This requires incorporating M&E in project design from the start. The lessons learned about the conditions needed for effectiveness can help in the design of future projects, as well as in mobilising support and resources for future implementation.

These recommendations draw on the following findings:

The selection of the RSC country portfolio and duty stations is not always the result of a strategic choice based on a threat analysis and information needs. The strategic use of resources and staff is unnecessarily hampered by bureaucratic obstacles. Preferred duty stations for RSCs have been opposed by embassies and other policy departments due to concerns over logistical support and the division of responsibility with other staff with a regional or security focus.

RSCs have supported pilot projects, particularly those promoting the Dutch approach to PVE. While some pilot projects have received follow-up action, overall learning and sustainability has been limited. Implementers are positive about the fact that DVB has funded small-scale pilot projects, whereas donors often require larger programmes involving complicated tender procedures. They are also enthusiastic about the fact that DVB/TN and the RSCs pilot innovative approaches. However, M&E is often poor, making it hard to ascertain whether or not a pilot project has worked and what lessons can be learned for future programming. Moreover, donors in the field of P/CVE often prefer to support new projects rather than provide follow-up support for existing activities. As a result, both learning and the sustainability of projects and results in the field of P/CVE are very limited.

There is little evidence for the effectiveness available of projects that aim to prevent or address violent extremism and terrorism. There is very little investment in M&E, and most project evaluations do not go beyond determining whether the projects in question have succeeded in performing their intended activities. This problem is not unique to projects funded by the MFA. It is disconcerting to acknowledge that, in general, little emphasis is placed on learning from past interventions and projects in the realm of CT and P/CVE. A literature review commissioned[5] looked at the effectiveness of projects, with a special emphasis on:

1. youth engagement to prevent radicalisation;
2. reintegration to rehabilitate (former) members of violent extremist groups; and
3. capacity-building of national government institutions and law enforcement agencies.

The overall conclusion was that the evidence base on effectiveness is very limited. An argument that IOB often encountered is that the field of CT and P/CVE is relatively young; this argument is now growing less and less convincing two decades after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Furthermore, learning and measuring effectiveness are aspects that should be systematically incorporated in the design of all projects from the very start.

[5] Available from the IOB website: *https://www.iob-evaluatie.nl/publicaties/deelstudies/2021/02/01/literatuurstudies-%E2%80%93-contraterrorisme-en-voorkomen-and-tegengaan-van-gewelddadig-extremisme*.

4. Invest in the coordination of policy development and implementation on CT and P/CVE with other policy departments and embassies.

DVB/TN's core business is analysis, policy development, and the facilitation of diplomatic processes. In implementing CT and P/CVE programmes, DVB/TN relies largely on other policy departments and embassies. To pursue its strategy and objectives for CT and P/CVE, it is therefore essential for DVB/TN to invest in coordination and cooperation with these departments and embassies. Aligning their activities and projects with the MFA's CT and P/CVE strategy requires active involvement and longer-term investments. Security is not a silo issue. The nexus with other related fields is key to achieving impact. While hard security responses to perpetrators of violence may be a necessity in countering violent extremism and terrorism, they cannot succeed without a soft approach that addresses marginalisation and other factors that fuel support for violent extremist groups. Short-term security programmes targeting the symptoms of violent extremism should be better aligned with longer-term prevention strategies targeting wider social, economic and psychological factors. In concrete terms, IOB proposes the following:

- Make the MFA's strategy on CT and P/CVE more explicit and support its operationalisation throughout the MFA's policies and operations. To this end, the MFA should adopt an integrated approach and consider forming interdepartmental project teams; this would also enhance flexibility and agility in understanding and addressing new developments in an ever-changing security landscape.
- Bridging security with development means bridging two worlds with different belief systems, views, funding criteria, time lines and M&E practices. The MFA should examine practical ways of improving mutual understanding between security and development experts, both within and beyond the MFA.
- Continue promoting a PVE perspective in wider development programming. The PVE toolkit developed in conjunction with the MFA's Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH) is promising. At the same time, DSH is currently downscaling its PVE activities. Given the essential role played by development support in prevention strategies, it is crucial for development departments to remain engaged. Moreover, the tension between the need to counter violent extremist groups and the restriction of civic space that follows as a possible negative corollary requires close engagement with both the Social Development Department (DSO) and the Department of Multilateral Institutions and Human Rights (DMM).
- Base the selection of projects on the specific priorities set for each region, and monitor project effectiveness with reference to the objectives set for them. Projects may serve multiple objectives: 1) to improve the information position of the MFA or other ministries, where relevant; 2) to pilot innovative approaches to P/CVE; and 3) to address violent extremism and its causes.

These recommendations draw on the following findings:

There is no systematic connection between the MFA's short-term security programming targeting the symptoms of violent extremism and its longer-term prevention strategies for addressing wider socio-economic issues. This requires bridging silos and for there to be closer cooperation and coordination between policy departments at the MFA. While there is some interaction between departments, in particular between DVB/TN and DSH, and a PVE toolkit has been developed to this end, countering terrorism continues to be viewed mainly through a security lens. Operationalising the connection between security and development programming at the MFA needs different policy departments to be involved in a meaningful manner in analysing and developing policies on the underlying causes of radicalisation and violent extremism.

Projects for preventing or addressing violent extremism have a limited impact. Projects funded by the MFA are relatively small-scale and at best make a positive contribution on an individual scale. For this reason, any positive results have only a negligible direct or indirect impact on Dutch security. Apart from requiring investments in evaluating effectiveness, the prevention of violent extremism goes beyond short-term security interventions and requires longer-term development support to address the key drivers of radicalisation and violent extremism.

The PVE toolkit can help to connect short-term security programming targeting the symptoms of violent extremism with longer-term prevention strategies addressing wider socio-economic issues. Although the toolkit has helped to improve the PVE sensitivity and conflict sensitivity of development projects taking place in a context of violent extremism, this success has been limited to a small number of individual projects.

5. Focus CT and P/CVE efforts on southern and eastern security arenas in the ring around Europe, targeting operational choke points with a link to Dutch security.

The context of CT has changed since the launch of the RSC network. As a result, DVB/TN needs to reconsider its geographic and thematic priorities. Rather than aiming at a widely dispersed theatre of operations with hardly any critical mass, IOB proposes that interventions should be focused geographically and that human resources should be concentrated. In addition, IOB recommends better aligning RSC intervention areas with the Netherlands itself. IOB defined two geographic areas that may be considered as hotbeds of terrorism and violent extremism and which have a potential relationship with the security of the Netherlands and Dutch interests: the southern and eastern security arenas. In order to achieve greater impact, the RSC network could focus its efforts on vital policy and operational choke points in these arenas and pursue connections with wider security issues as and when necessary.

In concrete terms, IOB proposes the following:

- Focus on a southern security arena, i.e. including the Sahel and Maghreb and with linkages to West African coastal states and the Horn of Africa; and an eastern security arena, i.e. including the Balkan, Mashreq and South Asia (countries such as Afghanistan).
- A stakeholder analysis (of the presence of key organisations) and a security assessment (of key routes and actors) should be used to identify duty stations at vital policy and operational choke points. Information priorities should be based on a needs assessment involving MFA departments and partners in the Dutch security chain. An in-depth approach should be adopted, necessarily limiting the number of countries in any RSC's portfolio. Closer cooperation and coordination between the RSCs should be fostered in order to reveal connections between different countries and regions.
- Organise the RSC network in accordance with these two security arenas. Establish and coordinate Regional Security Teams (RSTs) to oversee and operate in the above-mentioned southern and eastern security arenas. These RSTs should be composed of the RSCs as well as other embassy staff, including development experts, other regional coordinators (for example, for stability, rule of law and migration) and liaison officers from other ministries. They should work on an interdisciplinary basis, adopting a holistic perspective on security issues that helps them understand key threats and opportunities and define concrete cross-border or in-country interventions.
- Set up a system of 'local spokes' to help the RSTs work more effectively, and to localise and sensitise PVE efforts.
- Regional policy departments could improve the coordination of security dossiers and cross-regional issues between the Maghreb and the Sahel (viz. the North Africa and the Middle East Department (DAM) and the Sub-Saharan Africa Department (DAF), and between Eastern Europe, the Mashreq and South Asia (viz. the Europe Department (DEU), the DAM and the Asia and Oceania Department (DAO)).

- Closer cooperation among RSTs at embassies would follow if locally based liaison officers working for partners in the Dutch security chain were given clear instructions to assist RSTs from their headquarters in the Netherlands.
- In the meantime, the current model for the RSC network should be adjusted in accordance with recommendations 1 to 4. This would mean limiting the number of countries in the portfolio of an individual RSC in order to allow RSCs to form the necessary trust networks, set region-specific and country-specific priorities, and create better interlinkages with fields that are essential in order to understand and address security issues. The role of the RSCs should be extended from dealing with CT and PVE to that of overall security coordinators. The thematic portfolio of RSCs should not focus exclusively on CT and P/CVE, but should also encompass wider security and development concerns. Country and regional assessments of security threats and trends and their links with the Netherlands should inform RSC postings and their span of control.

These recommendations draw on the following findings:

IOB defined two vital geographic areas where there have been developments pertaining to violent extremism and terrorism as having potential linkages to the security of the Netherlands and Dutch interests: a southern and an eastern security arena. Developments in these arenas have a direct impact on stability and security in and around Europe. The MFA's Integrated International Security Strategy emphasises that the clout and sphere of influence of violent extremist groups in regions around Europe, and the resultant terrorist threat and irregular flows of migration towards Europe in general and the Netherlands in particular, will continue to require considerable attention in the coming years.[6]

- ***The southern security arena:***

  - The terrorist threat in West Africa has increased considerably over the past few years, destabilising vast territories. Jihadist groups have spread from the north to central and southern Mali, displacing residents and causing more violence. Extremists are wreaking havoc in Niger and have killed hundreds of civilians in Burkina Faso. Boko Haram and Islamic State's West African Province (ISWAP) operate from safe havens in the Lake Chad basin. Jihadist militant groups are also threatening coastal states such as Benin, Ghana and Ivory Coast. Overall, the security situation in the Sahel is rapidly deteriorating. Terrorist and violent extremist groups are using transnational organised crime to finance and logistically support their activities, for example by trafficking goods (such as drugs, weapons, motorcycles and cattle) selling natural resources (gold and diamonds), and engaging in human trafficking and migrant smuggling.
  - There are clear security-related linkages between the Sahel and the Maghreb. Violent extremist groups from the Maghreb can easily cross borders into the Sahel, destabilising the region and causing migrants and refugees from the Sahel to try and make their way towards more stable regions such as Europe. Violent extremist groups often benefit from criminal networks that facilitate migration and smuggling to Europe. A meaningful response to the growing extremist threat in the Sahel should focus on the southern security arena and make an explicit connection between the Sahel and the Maghreb.

- ***The eastern security arena:***

  - Terrorist and extremist linkages between countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and the Balkans pose a threat to stability in and around Europe.
  - Although the Balkans have not witnessed major terrorist incidents or attacks in recent years, Islamic and ethno-nationalist radicalisation remains a transnational security risk. The MFA should also monitor foreign influence in Balkan countries from countries in the Middle East, for example, especially since the Balkan borders the EU.

[6] Letter to the Dutch House of Representatives containing an interim report on the Integrated Foreign and Security Strategy, *https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2020/04/17/kamerbrief-tussenrapportage-geintegreerde-buitenland--en-veiligheidsstrategie*.

- The threat of terrorism and violent extremism in the Mashreq (particularly from countries such as Syria, Iraq and Lebanon) and Iran is obvious. As part of the 'ring of instability' around Europe, the Mashreq is an important area of focus for the MFA. Although South Asian countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan do not directly border Europe, they pose undisputed terrorist and violent extremist threats to Europe. Terrorist organisations such as Al-Qa'ida have targeted Europe from South Asia and the Middle East.

The RSCs are spread too thinly, particularly those posted in South East Asia and Africa. An in-depth knowledge of in-country trends in radicalisation, access to trust networks and familiarity with realities on the ground are all essential prerequisites if RSCs are to make a difference in CT and P/CVE. Without these, analyses remain superficial, projects cannot be monitored closely enough and effective local networks are hard to set up and maintain.

The system of 'local spokes' in the Western Balkans enables the RSC to cover more ground and work more effectively. These local staff act as an RSC's eyes and ears whenever the RSC is not in the country, and can take on part of his or her workload.

Structure of this report

This report is structured as follows. The synthesis presents key findings and recommendations for future policy. Chapter 1 describes the background of the evaluation, and its aims, methodology and limitations. Chapter 2 examines the context and trends in the field of countering terrorism. Chapter 3 outlines Dutch foreign policy in the field of countering terrorism, with a focus on DVB/TN. Chapter 4 assesses the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), and in particular the role played by the Netherlands as the co-chair of the Forum. Chapter 5 analyses the operation of the MFA's network of Regional Security Coordinators. Finally, chapter 6 looks at project implementation as a tool used by the MFA in pursuit of its policy objectives on CT and P/CVE.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and aims

The Dutch government undertakes and supports countering terrorism activities, both nationally and internationally. The international component of Dutch CT efforts draws on both the Dutch National Counterterrorism Strategy 2016-2020 and the 2018-2022 Integrated International Security Strategy, in which the Dutch government outlined three strategic pillars: *prevention, defence and reinforcement*.

The Counterterrorism and National Security Division of the Security Policy Department (DVB/TN) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is responsible for policy on and interventions in relation to CT and preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). The division handles a broad range of CT-related issues, including but not limited to:

- addressing the safety concerns posed by returning FTFs;
- international cooperation on CT, both bilaterally and in international forums such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU);
- analysing country-specific and regional threats and trends; and
- supporting CT and P/CVE projects abroad.

This evaluation report examines the relevance and, where possible, the effectiveness of the MFA's CT and P/CVE policies and interventions. The MFA undertakes activities in international forums and in targeted regions and countries at both national and community levels. For example, it employs Regional Security Coordinators (RSCs) who are active in different regions around the globe, and it funds projects implemented in conjunction with national governments or NGOs at community level. The objectives of all these activities are tied to Dutch national security. This summary report therefore also examines the coherence of policies and activities implemented at these different levels. In doing so, the report contains learnings for stakeholders and makes recommendations for future policy development and implementation.

1.2 Delineation

This evaluation report seeks to answer the following question:

> *What results has the MFA achieved thanks to its activities in the policy area of CT and P/CVE, and how can policy development and implementation be improved?*

Though the evaluation focuses on the activities of DVB/TN, it also looks at coherence and cooperation with other policy departments, including with the departments for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH), North Africa and the Middle East (DAM), Sub-Saharan Africa (DAF), Asia and Oceania (DAO) and Europe (DEU), as well as with the National Coordinator for Security and Counter-terrorism (NCTV).

DVB/TN operates at three levels:

- at a national level in the Netherlands: by performing activities directly related to national security, including the imposition of sanctions on individuals, and coordination with the security services;
- at a regional level: by coordinating CT and P/CVE activities in targeted regions;
- at an international level: by coordinating Dutch participation in international institutions and forums.

We have not looked at domestic policies, primarily because the NCTV is responsible for national CT policy and because the MFA's main CT and P/CVE responsibilities lie outside the Netherlands. This evaluation report deals mainly with DVB/TN's international and regional activities and how general policy development in The Hague connects these levels. The evaluation focuses on the following subjects:

1. The ministry's involvement in the GCTF.
2. The system of Regional Security Coordinators (RSCs).
3. Prerequisites for the effectiveness of P/CVE projects.

Together these three areas represent a substantial share of DVB/TN's work in recent years, both in terms of finances and FTE invested. The evaluation report focuses on the period from 2015 to 2021, beginning with the Dutch co-chairmanship of the GCTF and the creation of a network of RSCs.

1.3 Methodology

This summary report draws on five separate research activities:[7]

1. A ***policy reconstruction*** performed to generate information on the MFA's policy priorities, strategies and activities in relation to CT and P/CVE. This reconstruction was performed by IOB, and was based on interviews with ministry staff and a review of policy documents.

2. A ***Delphi study***[8] in which an international panel of experts identified key trends in the field of CT and P/CVE and potential niche areas for policies and intervention. IOB performed this study using the Delphi method, i.e. a research methodology developed by the RAND Corporation as the most reliable way of obtaining the consensus of a group of experts on a particular topic.

3. A ***study of the Dutch role in the GCTF***[9] carried out by a consultancy firm (The Glocal Connection). The findings are based on desk research into public policy documents and internal memos, a questionnaire (with 69 respondents) and interviews (including follow-up interviews) with Dutch and foreign policy-makers, representatives of international organisations and NGOs, and independent experts, among others.

4. A ***study of the RSC network***[10] conducted by IOB. Its findings are based on an analysis of public policy documents, project documents, communications made available to IOB and over 110 semi-structured interviews with ministry staff in The Hague and embassies worldwide, and staff from other Dutch ministries and organisations and partners in the field. IOB also took part in several (online) RSC network events. All the conclusions and findings presented in this evaluation report result from these analyses and have been triangulated through desk review and interviews with the above-mentioned stakeholders, including MFA staff and staff from partners in the field.

5. A ***systematic review of the effectiveness of CT and P/CVE Activities***.[11] This study was commissioned to the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), and focuses on three specific types of activity: 1) youth engagement, 2) capacity-building of national government institutions and law enforcement agencies, and 3) reintegration. The definition of these three categories was based on an assessment of the activities receiving the majority of MFA funding. For each of the three categories, a separate systematic review collected and synthesised evidence on effectiveness and the conditions for effectiveness. A quick scan of evaluative and academic literature showed that there was not likely to be sufficient material available. Accompanying the systematic reviews, the study included an assessment of the literature on a related field of activities. For youth engagement in the context of P/CVE, an additional assessment was made of youth engagement in the context of gang violence; for reintegration in a CT context, additional literature was used on the reintegration of ex-combatants; and for national government capacity-building, the review also looked at wider Security Sector Reform (SSR). For these related categories, the review was confined to an analysis of existing systematic literature reviews. The reports clearly differentiates between the evidence gathered from the systematic reviews of CT activities and the assessment of related activities.[12]

7 For the full terms of reference of this evaluation, see: https://english.iob-evaluatie.nl/in-progress/publications/terms-of-reference/2020/02/20/evaluation-counterterrorism-policy. The reports listed below contain more detail on the methodologies used; the following paragraphs describe only the most salient methodological aspects.

8 IOB. *Delphi panel for exploring trends and policy actions regarding counter-terrorism and preventing/countering violent extremism*, February 2020. Available at https://english.iob-evaluatie.nl/in-progress/publications/sub-studies/2020/02/27/ct-delphi-panel.

9 Ginkel van, B. *Evaluation of the '5P-ambitions' of the co-chairmanship of the Netherlands of the Global Counterterrorism Forum: questions regarding coherence, relevance, and effectiveness*, 2021.

10 IOB. *Eyes and Ears on the Ground. Evaluation of the Regional Security Coordinator Network*. 2021.

11 Glazzard, A. *National Government and Law Enforcement Capacity Building*, 2021; White, J. *Interventions Targeting Youth Engagement*. 2021; Zeuthen, M. Reintegration: *Disengaging Violent Extremists*. 2021; and Glazzard, Zeuthen & White. *Executive Summary and Recommendations*. 2021.

12 See the full report for a detailed description of the methodology and the criteria for inclusion/exclusion and search terms.

This evaluation report brings together the results of the above-mentioned building blocks. In order to triangulate and verify key findings, IOB conducted additional interviews and discussions with stakeholders from both within and outside the MFA. These included representatives of DAF, DAM, DAO, DEU, DSH, as well as NCTV, Ministry of Defence, intelligence agencies, ngo's, the EU, UNDP and think tanks. IOB also consulted the external reference group and the internal peer reviewers, with a view to assessing the relevance and feasibility of the proposed recommendations.

1.4 Limitations

As a result of the travel restrictions imposed to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, IOB had to cancel planned project visits and live interviews that were foreseen with key stakeholders in the field. IOB could not therefore verify the effectiveness of the projects funded by DVB/TN and had to rely on project reports and interviews with policy officers and staff from implementing organisations. Since most projects were small-scale, hardly any thorough, independent evaluations were available. Because there were only a small number of projects in relation to which IOB could find sufficient evidence to make claims about their effectiveness, this report leans heavily on general findings about the conditions for effectiveness from the RUSI's systematic review.

Despite the travel restrictions, IOB was able to could conduct a large number of interviews with key stakeholders, mostly using videoconferencing and by telephone. The openness of interviewees was beyond our expectations: we had the impression that people were speaking freely. On the other hand, videoconferencing did limit the number of representatives of other diplomatic missions and implementing organisations that we could interview. The majority of the interviews were conducted with MFA staff. Nonetheless, we verified claims about the Dutch position with external stakeholders, who were generally as open and critical during video calls as most MFA staff.

The study of the GCTF performed by the consultant was also confined to videoconferencing and telephone interviews. Although a representative number of GCTF member states were asked to contribute to the evaluation, only a small number responded. Since most of these were Western states, the outcomes of the study thus represent a Western-centric view of the operation of the GCTF. Moreover, most respondents did not distinguish between the Netherlands and Morocco when commenting on the accomplishments of the co-chairs of the GCTF. It is therefore not possible to attribute certain successes or flaws specifically to either of the co-chairs.

A final limitation relates to the nature of the subject of this evaluation. For reasons of confidentiality, not all activities, partners and areas of operation can be mentioned.

2. Context: counter-terrorism in the post-9/11 era

It has been nearly 20 years since the terrorist attacks in the USA of 11 September 2001. Although terrorism is an age-old phenomenon that has taken on many different shapes and identities, 9/11 is considered a milestone in the field of countering terrorism. Since then, the world has seen an increase in international interest in CT.

This chapter first looks at the main trends and events in terrorism from 2001 until today (section 2.1). Section 2.2 examines the glocal orientation of terrorism, as terrorist groups are often embedded in local dynamics and have ties with regional or global terrorist networks. Section 2.3 presents the main terrorism trends in the Netherlands. Finally, section 2.4 describes international policy developments in response to terrorism and violent extremism.

This chapter presents the following main findings:

- Violent extremism is a global phenomenon that is not limited to state boundaries or failed states. Terrorist groups have an increasingly 'networked' and 'glocal' character; they are strongly embedded in and reliant on a local context, but can be tied to global criminal networks and act as sources of inspiration for each other and for lone wolves.
- From 2011 until 2014, both the level of global terrorism and terrorist fatalities rose as a result of the Syrian civil war, the rise of ISIS, and the re-emergence of Boko Haram in Nigeria. There has been a substantial decline in the number of people killed since 2014.
- Nonetheless, the level of terrorist activity worldwide is still significantly higher than in the period shortly after 9/11. And although the level of terrorist activity is falling in the Middle East, new terrorist threats are now emerging (in the Sahel, for example).
- According to Dutch threat assessments, the threat of jihadism, in particular from ISIS and Al-Qa'ida (and its affiliates), has been the most important trend in the field of terrorism since 9/11.
- Globally, CT professionals realise that hard security interventions – still the most common response to terrorism – are not capable of solving the problem, and indeed can even make matters worse. Though more and more attempts are being made to bridge the gap between short-term security programmes and longer-term prevention strategies, many policy-makers and practitioners still struggle to do so.

Box 1 *Definitions of terrorism*[13]

There is no agreement on a universal legal definition of the term 'terrorism'. According to A.P. Schmid, the Director of the Terrorism Research Initiative, hundreds of definitions of terrorism are in use.[14] The UN states in its Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (GCTS) that *'acts, methods and practices of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations are activities aimed at the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy, threatening territorial integrity, security of States and destabilising legitimately constituted Governments'*. The UN nevertheless acknowledges the absence of a universal legal definition since the strategy also *'reaffirms further Member States' determination to make every effort to reach an agreement on and conclude a comprehensive convention on international terrorism, including by resolving the outstanding issues related to the legal definition and scope of the acts covered by the convention, so that it can serve as an effective instrument to counter terrorism'*.[15]

Since there is no universal agreement on a legal definition of terrorism, this synthesis follows the definition used by the Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counter-terrorism (NCTV): *'Threatening, preparing, or carrying out serious violence against people, or acts aimed at causing societally disruptive property damage from ideological motives, with the aim of bringing about social change, inciting serious fear among the population, or influencing political decision-making.'*[16] However, this chapter on terrorist trends also draws on the Global Terrorist Index, which defines terrorism as *'the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation'*.[17] Although this has no significant effect on the analysis contained in this chapter, it should nevertheless be borne in mind that this definition differs slightly from the Dutch definition.

13 See section 2.4 for definitions of CT and P/CVE.
14 Schmid, A.P. The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research, 2011: 39.
15 UNGA. A/RES/60/288. 20 September 2006.
16 NCTV. Nationale Contraterrorismestrategie 2016-2020. July 2016: p. 6.
17 Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Terrorism Index 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism. Sydney. November 2020: p.6. Available at https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf (last retrieved on 19 May 2021).

2.1 Trends in terrorism

Terrorist attacks and terrorist fatalities increased steadily between 2002 and 2007, broadly in line with the increase in violent conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq. This trend of rising attacks and fatalities peaked in 2007, the same year as the US troop surge,[18] after which the number of terrorist attacks steadily declined. From 2011 until 2014, both the level of global terrorism and terrorist fatalities rose again as a result of the Syrian civil war, the rise of ISIS, and the re-emergence of Boko Haram in Nigeria. There was a steep rise in terrorist fatalities in 2013 and 2014 in particular. Most of these fatalities were the result of terrorist attacks perpetrated by ISIS, Boko Haram, the Taliban, Al-Qa'ida and its affiliates.[19] The trend from 2014 until the present day has been a substantial decrease in the number of people killed. Two possible explanations for this are the collapse of ISIS and the diminished impact of the Syrian civil war.[20] Another possible factor has been the tendency of terrorist groups, especially in Europe and North America, to adopt a different modus operandi. Instead of massive bombing attacks, attacks on 'soft targets' with knives, cars or lorries have become more popular. Most of these attacks are carried out in public places that have a symbolic meaning or draw large crowds and represent a Western or non-Islamic way of life.[21]

Despite the clear declining trend in terrorist attacks and fatalities, there are no grounds for rejoicing. Firstly, even though the number of terrorist attacks and victims is decreasing, the level of terrorist activity worldwide is still significantly higher than in the period shortly after 9/11.[22] Secondly, although the level of terrorist activity is falling in the Middle East, new terrorist threats are emerging. The most prominent of these is the spread of extremist (ISIS-affiliated) groups in sub-Saharan Africa (see Box 2 on page 30). Moreover, the emergence of far-right extremism, especially in Europe and North America, is another threat that needs to be reckoned with.[23] Thirdly, on 1 May 2021, the USA and NATO began to formally withdraw troops from Afghanistan as a result of the peace negotiations with the Taliban. Although the withdrawal formally runs until the symbolic date of 11 September 2021, most NATO troops have now already been withdrawn. While US President Biden has stated that the original goals of invading Afghanistan, i.e. the eviction of Al-Qa'ida from Afghanistan and the killing of Osama Bin Laden, have been achieved, the chances are that Afghanistan will become a breeding ground for terrorist groups once again after the troops have been withdrawn. Although the Americans have taken the Taliban off the list of designated terrorist organisations in order to keep the lines of communication open and eventually start peace negotiations,[24] the Taliban has been one of the world's deadliest groups since 9/11. Indeed, it continued to carry out violent attacks in Afghanistan during the peace talks with the USA.[25]

18 In 2007, President Bush decided to temporarily increase the number of US troops in Iraq by more than 20,000. This is known as 'the surge'. See Encyclopedia Britannica. Iraq War. Available at https://www.britannica.com/event/Iraq-War/The-surge#ref1042364 (last retrieved on 19 May 2021).

19 18,111 people were killed in 2013 and 32,685 in 2014 (around 80% more than 2013); see Institute for Economics and Peace. *Global Terrorism Index 2014. Measuring the impact of terrorism*. Sydney, November 2014. Available at http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Global-Terrorism-Index-Report-2014.pdf (last retrieved on 19 May 2021) and Institute for Economics and Peace. *Global Terrorism Index 2015. Measuring the impact of terrorism.* Sydney, November 2015. Available at http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2015.pdf (last retrieved on 19 May 2021).

20 Institute for Economics & Peace. *Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism*. Sydney, November 2019. Available at https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/GTI-2019web.pdf (last retrieved on 19 May 2021).

21 Van Ginkel, 2021.

22 See figures 2.1 and 2.3 in the Global Terrorism Index 2019: pp. 35-36.

23 Institute for Economics & Peace, 2020; NCTV. *Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland* 54. April 2021. Available at https://www.nctv.nl/onderwerpen/dtn/documenten/publicaties/2021/04/14/dreigingsbeeld-terrorisme-nederland-54 (last retrieved on 19 May 2021); and National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. *Global Terrorism Overview: Terrorism in 2019*. July 2020. Available at https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_GTD_GlobalTerrorismOverview2019_July2020.pdf (last retrieved on 21 May 2021).

24 US Department of State. Foreign Terrorist Organizations. Bureau of Counter-terrorism. Available at https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/ (last retrieved on 16 June 2021); and Farivar, M. *Why Isn't Afghan Taliban on US List of Foreign Terrorist Groups?* VOA News, 20 February 2017. Available at https://www.voanews.com/a/afghan-taliban-us-list-foreign-terror-groups/3732453.html (last retrieved on 16 June 2021).

25 BBC News. *US and NATO start to formally withdraw troops from Afghanistan*. 1 May 2021. Available at https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-56955702 (last retrieved on 21 May 2021); NCTV, April 2021; Bossema, W. *Zal Bidens terugtrekking uit Afghanistan goed uitpakken of op een ramp uitdraaien?* De Volkskrant, 22 April 2021; Institute for Economics & Peace, 2020; and National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, July 2020.

Box 2 *The terrorist threat in Africa*[26]

The terrorist threat in Africa has become severe in recent years. In 2017, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) published a report entitled *Journey to Extremism in Africa*, which was written in the wake of a two-year intervention aimed at 'generating an improved understanding of the incentives and drivers of violent extremism'.[27] The UNDP found that economic factors such as poverty and unemployment and a sense of grievance towards, and limited confidence in, government are important drivers of recruitment in Africa.[28] However, longer-term prevention programmes designed to tackle these drivers can be hindered by hard security interventions, which remain the dominant response to terrorism and extremism. Indeed, short-term hard security interventions can actually make matters even worse. This gap between short-term security programming and longer-term prevention strategies and programmes still needs to be bridged. This is illustrated by a number of important developments in Africa, which are set out below.

In 2012, jihadi groups appeared in northern Mali and quickly spread throughout the country, making their way to central Mali, as well as the border with Niger and Burkina Faso. The growth of jihadi militant groups in Burkina Faso also threatens the coastal states of Benin, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Togo and increases the risk that the Sahel violence will become a broader regional phenomenon.[29] A related phenomenon is the link with transnational organised crime the aim of which is to finance and logistically support terrorist activities. This may take the form of the trafficking of drugs, weapons, motorcycles, cattle or natural resources, or human trafficking and migrant smuggling. These illicit activities are vital to the formation, expansion and survival of these extremist groups.[30]

Since 2009, Boko Haram has been responsible for a number of terrorist attacks and thousands of deaths throughout the Lake Chad basin, especially in Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon. In 2015, Boko Haram leader Shekau swore allegiance to ISIS.[31] However, internal rifts caused Boko Haram to split in 2016 into multiple factions, the largest of which is the ISIS-aligned Islamic State's West African Province (ISWAP). Both groups continued to attack civilians and military or government targets in the Lake Chad basin, and also attacked each other. According to media sources, Boko Haram leader Shekau killed himself after a battle between Boko Haram and ISWAP.[32]

Meanwhile Al-Shabaab continues to maintain a safe haven in Somalia, from which it moves freely and launches attacks on Kenya. It also continues to commit terrorist attacks in Somalia.[33]

Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) remains a threat to Africa as well. In recent years, AQIM has invested in state-building functions in Libya, as it seeks to obtain territorial dominion from which it could pose a major security challenge to Europe.[34]

26 Foucher, V. *The Islamic State Franchises in Africa: Lessons from Lake Chad*. International Crisis Group. 29 October 2020. Available at https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/islamic-state-franchises-africa-lessons-lake-chad (last retrieved on 25 May 2021); International Crisis Group. The Risk of Jihadist Contagion in West Africa. 20 December 2019. Available at https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/c%C3%B4te-divoire/b149-lafrique-de-louest-face-au-risque-de-contagion-jihadiste (last retrieved on 25 May 2021); Institute for Economics & Peace, November 2019. US Department of State. Country Reports on Terrorism 2019. 2020: pp. 7-8; Assanvo et al. *Violent extremism, organised crime and local conflicts in Liptako-Gourma*. Institute for Security Studies. December 2019; and Laqueur, W. and C. Wall. *The Future of Terrorism. ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and the Alt-Right*. July 2018: p. 146.

27 UN Development Programme (UNDP). *Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment*. 2017. Available at UNDP-JourneyToExtremism-report-2017-english.pdf (last retrieved on 16 July 2021).

28 Ibid, p.5.

29 International Crisis Group, 2019.

30 Assanvo et al., 2019.

31 Foucher, 2020.

32 Ploeg, van der, J. *De meedogenloze leider van Boko Haram Abubakar Shekau werd al vaker doodverklaard, is het nu echt zo?* De Volkskrant, 22 May 2021; and BBC News. *Abubakar Shekau: Nigeria's Boko Haram leader is dead, say rival militants*. 7 June 2021. Available at https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57378493 (last retrieved on 15 June 2021).

33 US Department of State. Country Reports on Terrorism 2019. 2020: pp. 7-8.

34 Laqueur and Wall, 2018: 146.

Terrorist activities have also increased in central and east Africa since 2019. In eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the ISIS-linked Allied Democratic Forces have attacked Congolese civilians and armed forces, as well as UN peacekeepers. In Mozambique, an ISIS affiliate has carried out numerous attacks in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, killing hundreds of people and displacing thousands.[35]

2.2 Glocalisation of terrorism

Based on the number of attacks and fatalities, as stated in the previous section, the main terrorist threat would appear to come from jihadist terrorist groups or organisations based in specific countries or confined to a specific region. However, this conclusion is too simplistic. Despite the fact that most terrorist groups and attacks have an Islamic character and affect regions with large Muslim populations – Africa, the Middle East and Asia, as well as Europe, North America, Russia and Australia – terrorism in each of these regions is motivated by contextual reasons. The motives of terrorist groups vary widely. They may wish, for example, to control territory, gain more political influence, acquire economic assets, or spread fundamentalist religious beliefs, or they may act from a combination of motives.[36]

In order to extend their influence and survive as organisations, terrorist groups have a glocal orientation. Many groups or organisations have regional and/or global ties and operate on broad agendas. Organisations such as Al-Qa'ida and ISIS attract FTFs from countries in the region and even from different continents, who fight alongside local terrorists or are trained to commit terrorist attacks in their home countries.[37] At the same time, these organisations try to expand their influence geographically by spreading affiliates and establishing provinces (*wilayats*) outside the Middle East. For example, Al-Qa'ida has several affiliates in Africa (e.g. AQIM and al-Shabaab, see Box 2 on page 30), Asia (e.g. Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula), the Indian subcontinent (Al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent) and even in Europe (e.g. Bosnian Mujahedeen affiliated to Al-Qa'ida operated in Yugoslavia during the Bosnian War in 1992-1995). The same goes for ISIS, which has affiliates in Africa (e.g. ISIS in Libya and the Boko Haram offshoot ISWAP) and Asia (e.g. the Khorasan Chapter of ISIS in Central Asia and Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines).[38] The transnational or global character of these organisations springs from their practice of sending trainers, arms and money to these affiliates or provinces. For example, ISWAP in Africa received trainers from the Middle East, instruction videos on how to produce ammunition, and money in the form of occasional transfers to companies or individuals in Nigeria or deliveries by Nigerian couriers who would visit the United Arab Emirates or Saudi Arabia to collect cash on behalf of ISWAP.[39]

In order to survive, terrorist groups integrate global networks with local action, hence the term 'glocal orientation'. Local embedding is crucial for these groups' survival, income and support base. They navigate their way through a complex political landscape, dominated by local conflicts and local interests, manipulating and exploiting local grievances to gain power. They generally operate in poor, developing countries that, more often than not, are governed by autocratic, corrupt regimes that have little legitimacy in marginalised suburbs and rural areas. Terrorist groups profit from the supposed weakness or absence of the state and occupy voids in ungoverned spaces by bringing order, providing income for their supporters and championing local demands.[40] However, they also operate in territories governed by the state, and sometimes even receive state support.[41]

35 US Department of State, 2020: 7.
36 Laqueur and Wall, 2018: 121.
37 Laqueur and Wall, 2018: 243.
38 Institute for Economics & Peace, 2020; Petrick, D. *'Universal Enemy': A Reappraisal of Jihadism through the Lens of Bosnia.* 13August 2020. Available at https://balkaninsight.com/2020/08/13/universal-enemy-a-reappraisal-of-jihadism-through-the-lens-of-bosnia/ (last retrieved on 16 June 2021); Swicord, J. *Seeds of Jihad Planted in the Balkans.* 17 November 2015. Available at https://www.voanews.com/a/seeds-of-jihad-planted-in-balkans/3062376.html (last retrieved on 16 June 2021); and Counter Extremism Project. *Bosnia & Herzegovina: Extremism & Counter-Extremism.* Available at https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/country_pdf/BA-07022020.pdf (last retrieved on 16 June 2021).
39 Foucher, 2020.
40 Kilcullen, D. *The Accidental Guerrilla. Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One.* 2017: p. 263.
41 Newman, E. *Weak States, State Failure, and Terrorism*, Terrorism and Political Violence. Vol. 19, No. 4, 1 January 2007: pp. 463-488.

In these local contexts, the boundaries between violent extremist groups, transnational organised crime and local conflicts often overlap and are therefore blurred. In the African Liptako-Gourma region, for example (see Box 2 on page 30), violent extremist groups have positioned themselves pragmatically and opportunistically in relation to illicit activities and local conflicts. Their goal is to maintain their operational capabilities and influence. Participating in trafficking or maintaining links with traffickers allows violent extremist or terrorist groups to procure a means of living (in the form of consumables such as food or medicine), obtain financial resources (by trading stolen livestock or drugs, or engaging in poaching and the artisanal mining of gold) and operational resources (such as arms, ammunition, motorbikes, fuel and means of communications such as phones). The violent extremist groups act as the beneficiaries or regulators of illegal activities and are not usually the holders of trafficked products. Their involvement is mostly indirect. For this reason, an understanding of their relationship with traffickers and their accomplices is vital in order to understand how these connections are forged and maintained.[42] As far as local conflicts are concerned, it is important to note that violent extremist or terrorist groups do not only exploit and exacerbate local conflicts. The positioning of these groups varies depending on the context and their strategic objectives for a particular region.[43]

2.2.1 State terrorism

Bearing in mind the glocal orientation of terrorist groups, a sole focus on terrorist groups would be short-sighted and would not lead to a full understanding of the trends in terrorism since 9/11.
State terrorism is another important element to take into account. At the same time, most states and international organisations reject the idea of state terrorism. Both in the academic world and in international law, there is no consensus as to whether a state can be labelled a terrorist. Most researchers in the field of terrorism regard terrorism as a phenomenon that is primarily associated with non-state actors. Concrete examples of state terrorism are hard to give, since opinions on this subject differ widely.[44]

The term 'state terrorism' can be defined in different ways. It can be used for terrorist acts perpetrated by one state against another state or against another state's nationals. A prerequisite here is that such an act is either committed by the state or commissioned or adopted by it. The term can also be used to describe human rights violations, war crimes or crimes against humanity committed by a state against its own citizens.[45] Other examples include state-supported terrorism, in which a state uses terrorist groups as proxy forces. The US and Pakistan, for example, supported Mujahedeen in Afghanistan who committed attacks on the Soviet Red Army in the 1980s. Other examples are Saudi Arabian support for Islamist, anti-Assad groups in Syria, Iranian support for Hezbollah, and the Gaddafi regime in Libya, which supported and harboured terrorist groups such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the Provisional IRA, the Rote Armee Fraktion and the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna.[46] But it is important to note that there is no agreement on the distinction between state-sponsored terrorism and proxy warfare between states, or between state terrorism and hybrid warfare. Some commentators also argue that acts of cyber terrorism could also be defined as state terrorism. For example, a Russian group of hackers called Cozy Bear – who are believed to be controlled by Russian intelligence agencies – has penetrated computer systems in the US, including that of the Democratic Party.[47] Whether this latter hack was aimed at gaining information, disrupting or influencing the US elections or sowing doubt and discord, remains unclear.[48]

42 Assanvo et al., 2019: 9.
43 Ibid, p. 2.
44 Bakker, E. & J. de Roy van Zuijdewijn. *Terrorisme*, Elementaire Deeltjes 20. 2016: p. 39.
45 Aust, A. *Handbook of International Law*. 2010: p. 265.
46 Bakker & de Roy van Zuijdewijn, 2016: 39-40.
47 Schoonen, W. *De AIVD zag Cozy Bear in Washington binnendringen*. Trouw, 26 January 2018.
48 Thielman, S. & S. *Ackerman, Cozy Bear and Fancy Bear: did Russians hack Democratic party and if so, why?* The Guardian, 29 July 2016. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/jul/29/cozy-bear-fancy-bear-russia-hack-dnc (last retrieved on 26 July 2021).

2.3 Trends in terrorism in the Netherlands

Following 9/11 and the terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004, a terrorist attack also took place in the Netherlands on 2 November 2004, when a Dutch film director, producer and columnist called Theo van Gogh was murdered. The perpetrator had religious extremist motives for his action, which is why the murder is regarded as a terrorist attack. Shortly afterwards, a network of radicalised young men who were connected to the attacker (known as the 'Hofstad group') was exposed and several of them were arrested by the Dutch police. Two months before the attack on Van Gogh, the Dutch government had created the office of a National Counterterrorism Coordinator (NCTb), which became operational in 2005. The NCTb merged with the department of National Security and GovCert (cyber security) in 2011 to form the NCTV, which is responsible for countering terrorism, cyber security, national security and crisis management.

The NCTV is responsible for Dutch policy and analysis in the field of countering terrorism and operates under the aegis of the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Interior.[49] The NCTV reports to the Dutch parliament every three months, by presenting the latest version of the 'Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands' (DTN), which contains a general assessment of radicalisation, extremism and terrorist threats to the Netherlands and Dutch interests abroad. The assessment is a trend report outlining the main threat developments and indicating the level of threat, i.e. the risk of a terrorist attack in or against the Netherlands.[50] The DTNs are based on information from ministries and government agencies responsible for countering terrorism and radicalisation, as well as from publicly accessible sources.

To a certain extent, the threat level in the Netherlands follows the international trend as described in section 2.1. From 2005 until March 2007, the threat level in the Netherlands was 'substantial'. This was partly due to the attacks in Europe (i.e. in London in 2005), but more importantly because of the Dutch military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, which meant that the Netherlands was regarded as a legitimate target for jihadi terrorists.[51] In line with the declining international trend in terrorist attacks, the Netherlands scaled down the threat level in 2007 from 'substantial' to 'limited'. This was also due to a reduction in the actual level of threat in the Netherlands.[52] From 2007 until 2013, the threat level in the Netherlands fluctuated between 'limited' and 'substantial'. In line with the international trend of a steep rise in terrorist attacks, the Dutch threat level was increased to 'substantial' in 2013. Even though the number of terrorist attacks and fatalities decreased after 2014, the threat level remained 'substantial' until December 2019, when it was lowered to 'significant'.[53] The threat level is currently still 'significant'.[54]

A striking aspect of the DTNs is that one of the most prominent threats to the Netherlands and worldwide, from 2012/2013 until now, has been the rise of ISIS, the establishment of the Caliphate and the large numbers of FTFs who travelled to Iraq and Syria to fight. The DTNs have also acknowledged the threat posed by home-grown followers or lone-wolf actors[55] acting in the name of ISIS, and currently the threat posed by returning FTFs after the military defeat of the Caliphate.

49 NCTb, *Kamerbrief Eerste rapportage terrorismebestrijding, 5327519/05/NCTb*. 24 January 2005. Available at https://www.nctv.nl/onderwerpen/dtn/documenten/kamerstukken/2005/01/24/kamerbrief-eerste-rapportage (last retrieved on 21 May 2021).

50 The NCTb (since succeeded by the NCTV) formulated five threat levels: Level 1: Minimal; Level 2: Limited; Level 3: Significant; Level 4: Substantial; and Level 5: Critical. NCTV. Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands. See https://english.nctv.nl/topics/terrorist-threat-assessment-netherlands (last retrieved on 21 May 2021).

51 NCTb, 24 January 2005; NCTb. *Samenvatting Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland 2*. Parliamentary paper KST 29754-31. 29 September 2005; NCTb. *Derde voortgangsrapportage terrorismebestrijding*. 5388583/05/NCTb. 5 December 2005; NCTb. *Samenvatting Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland 4*. Parliamentary paper KST 29754-66. 2 March 2006; NCTb. *Vierde voortgangsrapportage terrorismebestrijding en samenvatting Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland 5*. 5421663/06/NCTb. 7 June 2006; Parliamentary paper KST 29754-87. *Samenvatting Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland 6*. 13 October 2006; and NCTb. *Vijfde voortgangsrapportage terrorismebestrijding en samenvatting Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland 7*. 5458747/06/NCTb. 20 December 2006.

52 NCTb. *Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland 8*. 5479288/07/NCTb. 25 April 2007.

53 See https://english.nctv.nl/topics/terrorist-threat-assessment-netherlands (last retrieved on 21 May 2021).

54 NCTV, April 2021.

55 Home-grown terrorists and lone-wolf actors are primarily domestic threats and the MFA is therefore not responsible for countering them.

Although ISIS, returning FTFs and home-grown or lone-wolf actors inspired by ISIS have played an important role in the Dutch threat assessments, the DTNs have also identified other threats to the Netherlands. These include the threat of Al-Qa'ida and jihadi activities worldwide, for example in both Afghanistan and Africa. To a lesser extent, threats such as emerging right-wing extremism and polarisation in Dutch society have also been featured in the assessments over the years.[56] According to the Dutch threat assessments, the threat of jihadism,[57] in particular from ISIS and Al-Qa'ida (and its affiliates), has been the main trend in the field of terrorism since 9/11. This threat has been mentioned in every DTN since 2005[58] and its significance is also reaffirmed in the Dutch National Counter-Terrorism Strategy 2016-2020 and the Integrated International Security Strategy presented by the MFA in 2018.[59]

Box 3 *The Delphi panel*[60]

Sections 2.1 and 2.2 suggest that there now seems to be an understanding of the main trends in terrorism globally and in the Netherlands in particular. However, a Delphi panel set up by IOB showed that not all experts in the field of terrorism and CT agreed on these. When asked about the main international trends and issues in CT and P/CVE during the past five years, there was no clear agreement on these among our 29 experts. Nevertheless, over half of the experts ranked 'ISIS', 'foreign terrorist fighters' and 'home-grown terrorism' as the most pressing issues of the past five years. This is basically in line with the conclusions of sections 2.1 and 2.2.

2.4 International policy developments

The 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the rise in terrorist attacks worldwide, triggered a big increase in international countering terrorism efforts and policies. The latter include military responses, repressive and punitive measures and preventive approaches. Most responses to terrorism fall into the following categories: counter-terrorism (CT), countering violent extremism (CVE) and preventing violent extremism (PVE). CT refers to policies and operations that target terrorism after it occurs or when it is ongoing and views the threat of terrorism through a security lens. CT policies target perpetrators and try to hinder the modus operandi of terrorist groups. CVE focuses on conditions that are conducive to terrorism and respect for human rights. It includes policies and activities targeting the ideology behind the violence, recruitment tactics and financial resources used by terrorists. Finally, PVE focuses on policies and projects targeting societal vulnerabilities in order to create resilience against radicalisation.[61]

56 Right-wing extremism and polarisation are primarily domestic threats and the MFA is therefore not responsible for countering them.

57 The NCTV defines jihadism as '*a movement within political Islam which, on the basis of a specific interpretation of, among other things, the thinking of Sayyid Qutb through an armed struggle (jihad), strives for a global dominion of Islam and thus for the reformation or maintaining of the Islamic state (caliphate)*'. See https://www.nctv.nl/onderwerpen/dtn/definities-gebruikt-in-het-dtn.

58 For all terrorist threat assessments for the Netherlands, see https://www.nctv.nl/onderwerpen/dtn/documenten.

59 Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *Integrated International Security Strategy 2018-2022*. 27 March 2018: p. 19. Available at https://www.government.nl/documents/reports/2018/05/14/integrated-international-security-strategy-2018-2022 last retrieved on 25 May 2021); and NCTV, July 2016: 26-28.

60 IOB. *Delphi panel*. February 2020.

61 Van Ginkel, 2021; and Ginkel van, B. *Violent extremism and development: Witnessing a fundamental pivot*. Clingendael Alert. November 2017.

For many years, states' policies addressing terrorist threats and violent extremism were dominated by the security sector and were therefore predominately CT-oriented. There was no cooperation between the security sector and the 'softer' development sector. Root causes were neglected and the developmental sector feared, and indeed still fears, the 'securitisation' of development aid. In 2006, however, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (GCTS).[62] This introduced a 'softer' CVE approach, with a stronger focus on 'conditions conducive to terrorism' and respect for human rights. Although this strategy promoted a whole-of-government approach and engagement strategies with civil society, the security sector remained the main driver. Moreover, it still neglected the root causes of radicalisation, such as socio-economic factors.

In 2015, the UN Secretary-General presented the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) (A/70/674).[63] This represented a turnaround in the approach to countering terrorism. The PVE plan of action pointed out that the security-based approach to countering violent extremism and terrorism had not put a stop to the threat posed by violent extremist groups. In fact, quite the opposite had been the result: a new generation of terrorist groups had emerged. The PVE plan of action stressed 'a need to take a more comprehensive approach which encompasses not only ongoing, essential security-based CT measures, but also systematic preventive measures which directly address the drivers of violent extremism that have given rise to the emergence of these new and more virulent groups.'[64]

Unlike CT and CVE, PVE does not neglect root causes. There are a wide variety of PVE policies, including empowering vulnerable groups through education and skills training, strengthening economic development and entrepreneurship, improving political (youth and gender) engagement, strengthening respect for human rights and improving access to justice.[65] On 1 July 2016, the UNGA adopted by consensus a resolution on the Fifth Review of the GCTS, reinforcing the global consensus on the fight against terrorism and violent extremism and recognising the importance of PVE. The resolution also recommended that UN member states should consider the implementation of relevant PVE recommendations in the Plan of Action, depending on the national context.[66]

62 UNGA. A/RES/60/288. 20 September 2006.
63 UNGA. A/70/674. 24 December 2015.
64 Ibid.
65 Van Ginkel, 2021; and van Ginkel, 2017.
66 UNOCT. Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. Available at *https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/plan-of-action-to-prevent-violent-extremism* (last retrieved on 17 June 2016); and UNGA. A/RES/70/291. 19 July 2016.

3. Dutch foreign policy on counterterrorism

In the jumble of trends in terrorism described in the previous chapter, this evaluation report focuses on the countering terrorism policies and operations of the Dutch MFA. This chapter describes the policy of the Dutch MFA and specifically of the Counterterrorism and National Security Division (DVB/TN), which is the MFA department that is responsible for policy in this area.

Section 3.1 outlines the MFA's CT policy, with a focus on DVB/TN. Specifically, this section discusses the operationalisation of policy goals by means of inputs (e.g. the CT network), interventions (contributions to multilateral forums) and, to some extent, outputs. It also looks at coordination within the MFA and with other ministries. Section 3.2 examines one specific element of the foreign CT policy, namely FTFs, in more depth.

These are the main findings presented in this chapter:

- DVB/TN coordinates Dutch foreign policy on CT, CVE and PVE. This is based primarily on the 2013 International Security Policy and its successor, the Integrated International Security Strategy for 2018-2022.
- When additional funds were made available in 2015 to counter radicalisation and terrorism, DVB/TN set up an international counterterrorism network consisting of Regional Security Coordinators, GCTF liaison officers and staff seconded to international organisations working on CT.
- DVB/TN actively engages in various international forums, including the GCTF, the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), the UN, the EU and the Global Coalition against Daesh.
- DVB/TN coordinates policy on CT and P/CVE with other departments at the MFA, with Dutch embassies and with partners in the Dutch security chain.
- The issue of FTFs has been a priority for DVB/TN in recent years. The focus was initially on preventing FTFs from travelling abroad. After the military defeat of ISIS, the focus shifted to the prosecution and trailing of FTFs, and discussions about rehabilitation and repatriation.

3.1 Foreign counter-terrorism policy and the Counterterrorism and National Security Division (DVB/TN)

The NCTV is responsible for formulating Dutch CT policy and for performing analyses of CT. The basic thrust of Dutch policy is set out in the National Counterterrorism Strategy 2016-2020, which 'connects all government partners in a joint approach to extremism and terrorism in the Netherlands'.[67] The MFA is one of these government actors. Although most terrorist and extremist trends in the Netherlands, such as home-grown terrorism, lone-wolf actors, right-wing extremism and polarisation (see section 2.3 on page 33) are primarily domestic threats, they do play a role in Dutch counter-terrorism policy. According to the Dutch CT strategy, 'external = internal' as there are 'strong linkages between the international, national and local dimensions of extremism and terrorism'.[68] The MFA does have an important role to play outside the borders of the Netherlands and beyond the borders of the EU in particular.

There is a dedicated unit at the MFA called the Counterterrorism and National Security Division (DVB/TN). It is part of the Security Policy Department (DVB) and is responsible for coordinating Dutch foreign policy on CT, CVE and PVE. This policy is based primarily on the 2013 International Security Policy and its successor, the Integrated International Security Strategy 2018-2022.[69] With regard to terrorism, the 2013 International Security Policy focuses on both CT and a prevention policy for removing the breeding ground for terrorism.[70] The same policy was included in the Integrated International Security Strategy. The latter Strategy set out 13 objectives, two of which are of particular relevance to DVB/TN. The first is to remove the breeding ground for terrorism and the second is to counter terrorism.

The first objective acknowledges that the root causes of and the breeding ground for terrorism are often locally determined. Repressive authorities and the systematic marginalisation of vulnerable communities, poverty, unemployment and a lack of prospects are regarded as root causes (or 'push factors') for radicalisation, which could induce people to join terrorist groups. A common ideological frame of

67 NCTV, July 2016: 3.
68 Ibid.
69 Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *International Security Strategy*. Parliamentary paper KST 33694-1. 9 July 2013. Available at https://www.government.nl/documents/policy-notes/2013/06/21/international-security-strategy (last retrieved on 27 May 2021); and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 27 March 2018.
70 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 July 2013: 2, 14.

reference and a sense of identity and solidarity are regarded as 'pull factors'. Tackling root causes is also an important aspect of a Dutch policy memorandum entitled 'Investing in Global Prospects' on foreign trade and development cooperation.[71]

The second objective recognises that many forms of terrorism, such as global jihadist terrorism, are of a cross-border nature. A constant effort is needed to maintain resilience in the Netherlands, since terrorism poses a continuous threat to the country.[72] DVB/TN has not produced a separate, more specific strategy or policy memorandum explaining how it intends to achieve these objectives. Instead, DVB/TN has decided that the way in which staff are deployed and its focus on specific international forums should be based on developments and threats on the ground.

3.1.1 CT network

In view of the expected long-term nature of the current threat assessment, the Dutch government decided in 2015 to substantially strengthen the security chain in a number of areas. A total of EUR 42.6 million was allocated to the MFA (in particular to DVB/TN) for the period from 2016 to 2020 (see Table 1 below) to strengthen its capacity in the fight against international terrorism and the prevention of radicalisation. These funds – known in Dutch as 'capacity-strengthening funds' – have a staff component and a programme component.[73]

Table 1 *Budget for strengthening MFA capacity for CT*

€m	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
MFA	9.4	10	10.6	7.6	5	**42.6**

Of the EUR 42.6 million, EUR 29 million was used for projects in the field and support for the GCTF co-chairmanship. The remaining EUR 13.6 million was used to strengthen staff capacity for CT. DVB/TN used the funding to set up an international CT network consisting of:

- six Regional Security Coordinators (RSCs) (see chapter 5) who were attached to six embassies covering six regions (see Table 3);
- Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) liaison officers to support the Dutch co-chairmanship of the forum (see chapter 4 and Annex 1).[74]

Staff were also seconded to strategic posts with organisations such as the EU delegation in Islamabad and the StratComCell of the Global Coalition against Daesh in London. There are currently still bilateral CT liaison officers present in Ankara, Rabat, Washington and New York (UN) and MFA staff seconded to the European Union External Action Service (EEAS).

Table 2 *Additional staff*

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
€m	2.6	3.4	3.4	2.4	1.8	**13.6***
Total additional staff (in FTEs)	13	17	17	12	9	

* *The amounts stated in this table are not additional but form part of the EUR 42.6m referred to in the table above.*

71 Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *Investing in Global Prospects. For the world, For the Netherlands*. 18 May 2018. Available at https://www.government.nl/documents/policy-notes/2018/05/18/investing-in-global-prospects (last retrieved on 21 June 2021).

72 Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 27 March 2018: pp. 27 and 33-34.

73 Ministerie van Algemene Zaken en Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. *Kamerbrief Versterking veiligheidsketen*. Parliamentary paper KST 29 754-302, 27 February 2015; and DVB/TN-2021.13. Internal memo. These capacity-strengthening funds were made permanent during the third Rutte government in 2018. They consist of EUR 10m in programme funds and EUR 17m in funding for staff.

74 These liaison officers were posted to Ankara, Rabat, Washington and New York.

The strengthened CT network, in the form of additional staff capacity, was built up from 2016 onwards (see Table 2).[75] The table shows the total number of FTEs added to the MFA to strengthen capacity for CT and P/CVE (in the form of RSCs and GCTF liaison officers, for example). The peak in extra FTEs in 2017 and 2018 is due to the Dutch co-chairmanship of the GCTF, which lasted until 2019.[76] Apart from the extra staff committed to the MFA during the GCTF co-chairmanship, 1.5 FTEs were also made available to DVB/TN to work on the GCTF co-chairmanship.

Table 3 *The RSCs and their country portfolios* [a]

Post	Region [b]	Focus countries	'Flexible' countries
Bangkok [c]	South East Asia	Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore	Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan and the Maldives
Amman	Mashreq	Iraq (including Kurdish territories), Jordan and Lebanon	
Nairobi	Horn of Africa	Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda	
Addis Ababa [d]	Sahel	Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria	Benin, Ethiopia, Cameroon Mauritania, and Sudan [e]
Tunis	Maghreb	Algeria, Libya and Tunisia	
Sarajevo	Western Balkans [f]	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia	

a Fact box on regional CT network and multiannual results framework for CT and P/CVE for all regions (internal documents).
b When the RSC network was formed in 2015, an RSC was posted in Doha to cover the Gulf region. This RSC post was scrapped in 2019.
c Relocated from Jakarta in 2018.
d Scheduled to move to Ouagadougou in 2021.
e According to the multiannual results framework for CT and P/CVE for the Sahel (2019-2021), the RSC should be able to respond on a flexible basis to incidents in these countries that might attract political interest in the Netherlands.
f This region was added to the RSC network in 2018.

In 2016, one year after the CT network was formed, DVB/TN developed a framework for its operation.[77] Whereas the first year of the network's existence was described as a phase of pioneering and learning by doing, the idea was that the network should focus on the following four areas in the following years:

- **Connecting** developments and efforts in the country and region with demand in the Netherlands. Cooperation with other ministries and security chain partners is vital in this respect.
- **Looking ahead:** Dutch agencies or bodies are fully informed in good time about topical issues with a direct or indirect impact on Dutch security. The focus is on the network's analytical tasks, so that reports can be linked to (future) information needs emanating from the security chain and international forums. The more active detection of trends in threats (i.e. early warning) is an example of this.
- **Strengthening:** The authorities in non-EU countries as well as the international CT forums are familiar with the Dutch integrated approach and the unique Dutch areas of expertise thanks to active promotion by the network. Using Dutch expertise to step up the fight against terrorism in other high-risk countries also helps to mitigate the threat to the Netherlands.
- **Achieving:** Projects are initiated and implemented that support policy measures in the Netherlands and implement international (GCTF) good practices, thereby contributing directly or indirectly to Dutch security.

75 DVB/TN 164/2015. Internal memo.
76 Ibid.
77 *Preventie aan de Bron, Goedkoper & Duurzamer – Het BZ CT-netwerk. Raamwerk BZ-aanpak radicalisering en terrorisme.* 2016/17. Internal DVB/TN document.

Results were formulated for each of these four areas. For example with regard to 'connecting', the CT network had to provide regular reports on developments in their countries of operation and the linkages with Dutch security. With regard to 'looking ahead', the network had to monitor new hotbeds of violent extremism and how other countries were dealing with returnees. In terms of 'strengthening', the network needed to identify opportunities to promote the Dutch integrated approach and develop and contribute to communication about Dutch projects and their results. Finally, where 'achieving' is concerned, the network, and specifically the RSCs, had to identify projects addressing the root causes of terrorism, for example. These projects were funded from the capacity-strengthening funds or from other funds, such as the Stability Fund (see also chapter 6 on project implementation).[78]

According to DVB/TN, the diplomatic CT network was supposed to contribute to the international fight against terrorism and remove the breeding ground for terrorism, i.e. achieve the two objectives of the MFA's Integrated International Security Strategy. Interestingly, although the Framework was written to provide more focus, several of the results are still formulated in relatively vague terms.

Apart from the framework produced for the entire CT network in 2016, DVB/TN tried to guide the RSC network by developing results frameworks for all the RSCs in accordance with a common format. These multiannual results frameworks were written for the 2019-2021 period. DVB/TN is currently working on frameworks for 2022-2024. Yet despite the wish to achieve a sharper focus, as with the framework for the entire CT network, the results frameworks for the RSCs are formulated in fairly general terms, especially with regard to the expected outcomes and impact (see chapter 5). For example, the objective has shifted to political reporting, even though the results frameworks are intended to help counter and prevent violent extremism and to tackle factors contributing to recruitment by violent extremist groups.

3.1.2 Multilateral forums

DVB/TN actively engaged in a number of international forums[79] in order to achieve the objectives of first the International Security Strategy and later the Integrated International Security Strategy (i.e. removing the breeding ground for terrorism and countering terrorism). DVB/TN actively sought to use these forums to influence international CT policies and promote Dutch CT policies. Those international forums in which DVB/TN played a role are set out below; further details are given in Annex 1.

The Netherlands became a co-chair of the GCTF in 2015. As a result, DVB/TN directed a substantial portion of its resources, in terms of both finance (e.g. contributing to the GCTF Administrative Unit) and staff (e.g. GCTF liaison officers), towards the GCTF. The Netherlands also co-chaired the GCTF's Foreign Terrorist Fighters Working Group (see Box 5 on page 45) from 2014 to 2017. It remained a co-chair until 2019, when Canada took over. Although the Netherlands is no longer a co-chair, DVB/TN has decided to remain an active player in the forum (see also section 4.1.3 on page 50), for example, by working together with Morocco and the UN in October 2020 on a programme entitled 'Ensuring the Effective Implementation of Countering the Financing of Terrorism while Safeguarding Civic Space', which is intended ultimately to lead to the production of a 'GCTF Good Practices Memorandum' describing best practices and lessons learned.[80]

78 Ibid.

79 See Annex 1. Key international actors in the field for more information on these forums.

80 UNCCT. *Development of a Good Practice Memorandum on Ensuring the Implementation of Countering the Financing of Terrorism Measures while Safeguarding Civic Space*. March 2021. Available at *https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/events/good-practice-memorandum-countering-financing-of-terrorism-safeguarding-civic-space* (last retrieved on 23 June 2021); and GCTF. *Activities. Countering the Financing of Terrorism Measures While Safeguarding Civic Space.* March 2021. Available at *https://www.thegctf.org/What-we-do/Initiative-Activities/ArtMID/815/ArticleID/150/Countering-the-Financing-of-Terrorism-Measures-While-Safeguarding-Civic-Space* (last retrieved on 23 June 2021).

Acting through the agency of DVB/TN and DSH, the Dutch MFA has also played an active role in the GCTF-inspired institution Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). The GCERF is a multi-stakeholder global fund that aims to strengthen community resilience by supporting local initiatives to curtail drivers of violent extremism. The GCERF works with local partners and supports the strategic objectives of national governments for preventing violent extremism.[81] The GCERF is active in ten countries.[82] The Netherlands is one of the GCERF's donor countries and as a result has a seat at the table of the governing board.[83]

The Netherlands has traditionally played an active role in the UN, especially during the Dutch membership of the Security Council (UNSC) in 2018. For example, as a UNSC member, the Netherlands was part of the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), which is tasked with monitoring the implementation of resolution 1373 on criminalising the financing of terrorist activities.[84] A number of Sanction Monitoring Teams operate under the aegis of the UNSC, monitoring sanction resolutions imposed by the UNSC. In 2018, the Netherlands was a member of the ISIS (Daesh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee.[85]

During its membership of the UNSC, the Netherlands shared a tracking system called the Travel Information Portal (TRIP), which compares passenger data supplied by airlines with lists of terrorist or criminal suspects. The aim of the portal is to track the movements of suspected terrorists or criminals. The Netherlands also made EUR 2.5 million available for helping countries use the TRIP.[86] Finally, the Netherlands actively used its membership of the UNSC to strengthen the Dutch international position on issues such as the implementation of Resolution 2396 on FTFs, prevention and the linkages with development cooperation; and accountability in the context of the prosecution of ISIS fighters.[87]

Since the end of the Dutch membership of the UNSC, DVB/TN has tried to maintain the Dutch CT profile in the above-mentioned forums, for example, by organising a UNGA ministerial side-event on international trials of FTFs, and also by encouraging its successors in the UNSC, Belgium and Germany, to adopt the priorities set by the Dutch.[88] It is not clear, however, whether these countries have actually adopted the Dutch priorities in practice.

The Netherlands is also a member of the Global Coalition against Daesh (see Annex 1). The Global Coalition has set up various working groups, including one on FTFs co-chaired by DVB/TN (see Box 5 on page 45).[89]

81 For further information, see: *https://www.gcerf.org/about-us/*.
82 Albania, Bangladesh, Kenya, Kosovo, Mali, Nigeria, the Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka and Tunisia.
83 The Netherlands shares this seat with other donors such as Germany, Norway and the US.
84 UNSC. S/RES/1373. 28 September 2001.
85 UNSC. S/RES/1267. 15 October 1999; UNSC. S/RES/1989. 2011; UNSC. S/RES/2253. 2015.
86 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. *Kamerbrief tussenrapportage Geïntegreerde Buitenland- en Veiligheidsstrategie*. April 2020. p. 8. Available in Dutch at *https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2020/04/17/kamerbrief-tussenrapportage-geintegreerde-buitenland--en-veiligheidsstrategie* (last retrieved on 22 June 2021); Government of the Netherlands. '*Reisgegevens passagiers luchtvaart*'. Available at *https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/luchtvaart/reisgegevens-luchtvaart* (last retrieved on 22 June 2021); NOS. *Nederlandse technologie voor bestrijding terrorisme*. September 2018. Available at *https://nos.nl/artikel/2252202-nederlandse-technologie-voor-bestrijding-terrorisme.html* (last retrieved on 22 June 2021); and NOS. '*Je kan er donder op zeggen dat TRIP-opsporingssysteem misbruikt gaat worden*'. September 2018. Available at *https://nos.nl/artikel/2252242-je-kan-er-donder-op-zeggen-dat-trip-opsporingssysteem-misbruikt-gaat-worden.html* (last retrieved on 22 June 2021).
87 NCTV. *Rapportage Integrale aanpak terrorisme december 2017 – april 2019*. April 2019: p. 14. Available in Dutch at *https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2019/04/18/tk-bijlage-rapportage-integrale-aanpak-terrorisme* (last retrieved on 22 June 2021).
88 DVB Annual Plans for 2019 and 2020 (internal documents).
89 For further information, see *https://theglobalcoalition.org/en/mission/* (last retrieved on 26 May 2021).

The Dutch position at the EU – expressed by the NCTV or DVB/TN – is that each country should adopt an integrated approach to countering terrorism and extremism. The Netherlands is keen to stress the importance of early detection and intervention. According to a NCTV report on an integrated approach to terrorism, the Netherlands recommended improving the existing coordination structure so as to boost the effectiveness of EU efforts and help member states to shape a preventive approach to terrorism.[90] The Justice and Home Affairs Council of the EU[91] adopted these recommendations in June 2018.

Box 4 *The Dutch approach*

DVB/TN promotes home-grown Dutch policies on CT in international forums. These are sometimes referred to collectively as the 'Dutch approach'. DVB/TN describes the Dutch approach in an internal document as being *'a balance between counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism in an inclusive manner, taking account of civil society, human rights and root causes'*.[92] However, the document does not contain an explicit definition of the Dutch approach, and its interpretations range from a multidisciplinary stakeholder approach to the inclusion of civil society and human rights. This policy of balancing CT measures – that view the threat of terrorism through a security lens (see section 2.4) – with a softer, preventive approach focusing on human rights is not in fact a uniquely Dutch approach to terrorism. It is also favoured by other European countries, for example in Scandinavia.

However, there are certain characteristics that are specific to the Dutch approach, as well as examples illustrating it. This is the case with an integrated approach to CT in which central government works with local-authority actors. A 'Safety House' is a Dutch example of this: actors from the criminal justice chain, the healthcare sector, local authorities and central government are connected and work together to tackle complex problems such as radicalisation. Community policing is another example of the Dutch approach.

DVB/TN propagates this approach in cooperation with the NCTV, and facilitates the participation in international forums of practitioners with backgrounds in community policing, detention and rehabilitation, forensic investigation and local governance.

DVB/TN acknowledges that the Dutch approach cannot be blueprinted by every country seeking to counter terrorism and prevent extremism, due to the differences in contexts. Nevertheless, it does believe that certain elements of the approach could be exported to and used by other countries.

3.1.3 Cooperation

DVB/TN coordinates Dutch foreign policy on CT, P/CVE in cooperation with other MFA departments. One of these is DSH, with whom DVB/TN works together on projects funded from the Stability Fund. The two departments also work together on the GCERF and the PVE toolkit (see chapter 6), as DSH focuses more on PVE than does DVB/TN. DVB/TN also coordinates and, where possible, cooperates with regional departments such as the North Africa and the Middle East Department (DAM), the Sub-Saharan Africa Department (DAF), the Asia and Oceania Department (DAO) and the Europe Department (DEU), for example on the RSC network. Finally, DVB/TN coordinates with the Social Development Department (DSO) as well as with DSH on the GCTF programme for 'Countering the Financing of Terrorism while Safeguarding Civic Space'. Cooperation with DVB/TN is necessary given that civic space and human rights fall within the remits of DSO and DSH, and given that civil-society organisations funded by these departments are affected by measures for combating the financing of terrorist organisations.

90 NCTV, April 2019, 14.
91 The EU's Justice and Home Affairs Council is part of the Council of the European Union and is composed of the member states' justice or interior ministers.
92 DVB/TN. Regional CT Network Factbox. Internal DVB/TN document.

As internal and external security are interrelated, the Dutch CT strategy propagates an integrated approach involving all actors (including local authorities, healthcare institutions, government agencies and ministries) that are part of the CT chain and at all levels, i.e. local, national and international.[93] For this reason, DVB/TN liaises with other ministries and agencies in the Netherlands dealing with countering terrorism, such as the NCTV, the Ministry of Justice and Security, and the police force.

DVB/TN works closely with other government agencies, in both national and international forums, and with the NCTV in particular. At a national level, for example, DVB/TN and the NCTV meet, together with other CT partners, during meetings of the Joint Committee Countering Terrorism. The Terrorist Threat Assessments for the Netherlands (DTNs) are important products of these meetings (see section 2.3 on page 33). DVB/TN contributes to DTNs in the form of periodic assessments made by CT-relevant embassies.[94]

At an international level, DVB/TN and the NCTV work closely together on the GCTF. DVB/TN is the lead partner in this respect, with the NCTV joining certain meetings and working groups. The NCTV often provides expertise for expert group meetings and initiatives. Depending on the nature of GCTF meetings, other Dutch CT partners such as the National Police, sometimes join DVB/TN at GCTF meetings. DVB/TN is also a member of the EU Council Working Group on Terrorism (COTER), which deals with the international aspects of the fight against terrorism, while the NCTV is a member of the Working Party on Terrorism (TWP), which focuses on practical cooperation and coordination on CT among European Institutions, as well as with Europol, the EU CT coordinator and COTER (see Annex 1). Since the TWP coordinates with COTER, DVB/TN and the NCTV need to align their input in these forums.

DVB/TN also works with other partners in the CT chain, in some cases together with the NCTV. For example, DVB/TN cooperates with the Ministry of Finance on the above-mentioned GCTF programme for 'Ensuring the Effective Implementation of Countering the Financing of Terrorism while Safeguarding Civic Space'. DVB/TN also coordinates with other partners on sanctions[95] and as a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).[96]

Overall, DVB/TN would appear to invest in an integrated approach to the international dimension of CT, i.e. DVB/TN seeks to cooperate and coordinate with all its CT partners. However, DVB/TN concluded in 2020 that domestic politics tend to dominate politically sensitive issues such as that of returning FTFs. As a result, there is a risk of the international CT dimension becoming less of a priority and of international threats, such as the continuous threat of extremist attacks (e.g. by ISIS), being pushed to the bottom of the political agenda. For this reason, DVB/TN tries to secure the continued visibility of the international dimension of issues that are politically sensitive on the domestic front.[97] Although the Dutch CT strategy recognises that 'external= internal' and acknowledges the 'close linkages between the international, national and local dimensions of extremism and terrorism' DVB/TN apparently has to remind other CT partners and Dutch politicians of the importance of these links.

93 NCTV. *Nationale Contraterrorisme strategie 2016-2020*. July 2016: p. 13.
94 The RSCs also contribute to the DTNs.
95 The MFA meets with representatives of the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Justice and Security at the joint meeting on sanctions, known as the 'asset freezing meeting'. The meeting is chaired by the DVB/TN on behalf of the MFA.
96 The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog. The FATF has 39 members and aims to 'set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system'. See *https://www.fatf-gafi.org/about/whatwedo/*.
97 DVB Annual Plan for 2020, internal document.

3.2 Foreign terrorist fighters

Dealing with FTFs travelling to areas of conflict, especially in Iraq and Syria, and their return after the military defeat of ISIS, has become a priority for national CT actors in the Netherlands in recent years. The importance of dealing with FTFs was confirmed by the Delphi panel (see Box 3 on page 34), which saw FTFs as one of the most pressing issues of the past five years. The FTF problem also illustrates how conflicts abroad affects internal security. For this reason, DVB/TN has focused its efforts on the issue of FTFs and on their return to their countries of origin. DVB/TN has raised the issue both at national and regional levels, as well as in many international forums.

At a national level, DVB/TN has had to deal with FTFs as well as 'returnees' as a result of listings in the ISIS (Daesh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee of the UN or in the EU working party on the application of specific measures to combat terrorism (COMET, see Annex 1). Returning FTFs have been high on the political agenda in the Netherlands, and the issue has prompted a large number of parliamentary questions, many of which the DVB/TN has had to answer.

At a regional level, DVB/TN asked the RSC network to gather relevant information on FTFs or FTF policies in countries in their region of operation. Some RSCs have been more effective than others in gathering this information. This has been mainly a result of the sensitivity of the issue, plus the fact that the FTFs pose less of a threat to the Netherlands in some regions (e.g. the Sahel), making the problem seemingly less relevant. Apart from gathering information, the RSCs have tried to help curb the threat posed by FTFs by undertaking projects (see Box 6 on page 63).

DVB/TN has focused its efforts in international forums such as the UN on the prosecution and trial of FTFs. In the GCTF, the Netherlands has stressed the importance of strengthening international cooperation and sharing best practices in dealing with the families of FTFs and returning fighters.[98] The Dutch co-chairmanship of the FTF Working Group from 2014 to 2017 is another example of Dutch FTF-related activity in the GCTF.

Box 5 *The GCTF FTF Working Group*

In September 2013, acting under the auspices of the GCTF, the Netherlands and Morocco launched an initiative to address the problem of FTFs. This resulted in the formation of an FTF working group, which the Netherlands co-chaired from 2014 to 2017. The starting point for this working group was the 'Hague-Marrakech Memorandum on Good Practices for a More Effective Response to the FTF Phenomenon', which was adopted in September 2014 and which set out good practices on FTFs, subdivided into the following topics:

1. radicalisation to violent extremism;
2. recruitment and facilitation;
3. travel and fighting;
4. return and reintegration.

The working group shared lessons learned, good practices and challenges in responding to this threat in all its manifestations. Apart from co-chairing the working group, the Netherlands also shared its own experiences and best practices ('the Dutch approach') in responding to this threat.

DVB/TN has also been active involved in this topic in the Global Coalition against Daesh (see Annex 1). Together with Turkey and Kuwait, the Netherlands co-leads the Foreign Terrorist Fighters Working Group of this Coalition. While this forum was initially one in which, as in the GCTF, experiences and best practices were shared with regard to returnees and their rehabilitation, it has become increasingly political in nature, due to the fact that Western European countries do not actively repatriate their FTFs while other states such as the USA advocate repatriation.

98 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, April 2020: 8.

Late in 2015, the Dutch MFA, together with its co-chairs of the GCTF FTF working group and the FTF working group of the Global Coalition, initiated a joint meeting on FTFs with these forums in The Hague. Other international actors such as the UN, Europol (the European Police Office) and Interpol took part in this meeting. The meeting produced a number of agreements, such as on the formation of a Knowledge Hub on FTFs at the International Centre for Counter-terrorism in The Hague, the closer alignment of the Europol and Interpol databases, cooperation with the private sector (i.e. travel agencies, banks and airlines), and the adoption of a common approach to the reintegration of returnees. The meeting also produced an outcome document entitled 'The Hague Implementation Plan on Foreign Terrorism Fighters'. The document identified four action points:

1. accelerate and intensify the exchange of information on FTFs;
2. detect and intervene against FTF travel routes, use of documents and recruitment;
3. disrupt the financing of FTFs; and
4. support measures to facilitate the reintegration and de-radicalisation of FTFs.[99]

3.2.1 Prosecution and trial in the region

Following the military defeat of ISIS, there has been a great deal of debate in recent years on what to do with FTFs imprisoned in Syria and Iraq. At the UN, the Netherlands has advocated setting up an international tribunal to bring the FTFs to justice. However, the UNSC is not in favour of this solution.[100] The current position of most Dutch parliamentary parties is that FTFs should be brought to justice in the region where they committed their crimes.[101] There are two arguments for this: first, they committed their crimes there and, second, the evidence for their crimes can be found locally. In addition, the Dutch government has taken the stance that it will not actively repatriate Dutch FTFs, asserting that Dutch FTFs or their families may be repatriated only if they are able to report to a Dutch embassy.[102] However, this position was recently weakened by a Dutch court, which set a deadline for repatriating five women who were formerly members of ISIS. If the Dutch government does not actively try to repatriate these women, the cases against them will have to be dropped and they will no longer be liable for prosecution as members of a terrorist organisation.[103]

DVB/TN presents the Dutch position on the prosecution and trial of FTFs in the region in international forums such as the UNGA (for which it organised a ministerial side-event) and during debates at the UNSC and in the Global Coalition against Daesh.[104] The Netherlands (represented by the DVB/TN) also tries to negotiate with Iraq to ensure that FTFs can be tried in Iraq. This it does in conjunction with other like-minded countries, who are known as the CORE-7.[105] However, this process has been hampered by obstacles such as the Iraqi stance on the death penalty and fair trial.[106] Moreover, there is less and less support for the Dutch stance on prosecuting FTFs in the region, as only Western European countries refuse to repatriate their citizens. Other countries, such as the US, feel that states, being responsible for their citizens, should bring them to justice in their own countries. As a result, Western European countries are coming under increasing pressure in international forums such as the Global Coalition.

99 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Bestrijding internationaal terrorisme. Letter to the Dutch House of Respresentatives KST 27925-584, 9 February 2016. Available (in Dutch) at *https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-27925-584.html* (last retrieved on 25 June 2021); and Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. *The Hague Implementation Plan on Foreign Terrorist Fighters Outcome Document of the Foreign Terrorist Fighters meeting on 11 January 2016.* 11 February 2016. Available at *https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/blg-679672* (last retrieved on 25 June 2021).

100 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. *Berechting foreign terrorist fighters door Syrische Koerden.* Parliamentary Letter. 31 March 2020. Available (in Dutch) at *https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2020/03/31/kamerbrief-berechting-foreign-terrorist-fighters-door-syrische-koerden* (last retrieved on 22 July 2021).

101 This majority was confirmed by a recent vote in Dutch parliament. See: Motie van het lid Kuzu over blijvend inzetten op alle mogelijkheden van berechting in de regio. Parliamentary motion tabled by MP Kuzu on prosecution in the region. KST 29754-604, 1 July 2021. Available (in Dutch) at *https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail?id=2021Z12446&did=2021D26761* (last retrieved on 22 July 2021).

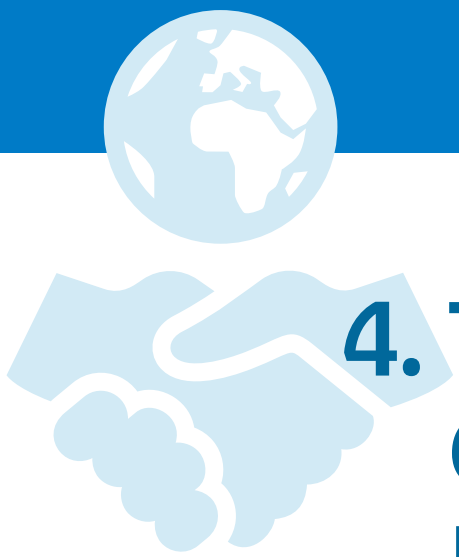
102 Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid en Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. *Parliamentary paper KST 29754-492.* 21 February 2019. Available at *https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-29754-492* (last retrieved on 22 July 2021).

103 Feenstra, S. *Rechter stelt kabinet deadline voor het ophalen van vijf IS-vrouwen.* NOS. 6 July 2021. Available (in Dutch) at *https://nos.nl/artikel/2388181-rechter-stelt-kabinet-deadline-voor-het-ophalen-van-vijf-is-vrouwen* (last retrieved on 22 July 2021).

104 DVB Annual Plan for 2021, internal document.

105 The CORE-7 consists of Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Sweden, i.e. countries that are also in favour of prosecution and trial in the region. The DVB/TN is the main representative of the Netherlands in the CORE-7, although it does liaise with the NCTV on the matter.

106 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, April 2020: 8.



4. The Global Counter-Terrorism Forum[107]

Together with Morocco, the Netherlands co-chaired the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF) from 2015 to 2019. The Netherlands also co-chaired the GCTF Foreign Terrorist Fighters Working Group between 2014, when the working group was established, and September 2017. As a result, DVB/TN directed a substantial portion of its resources, in terms of both finance (e.g. contributions to the GCTF Administrative Unit) and staff, towards the GCTF. Using the additional funds allocated to DVB in 2015 to counter radicalisation and terrorism, additional staff were appointed as 'GCTF liaison officers' in support of the Dutch co-chairmanship.

This chapter first looks at the MFA's objectives and how the MFA organised itself (section 4.1). Section 4.2 presents the objectives set by the co-chairs and the results achieved. Section 4.3 then elaborates on the evolving position of the GCTF in the global arena.

[107] This chapter draws on Van Ginkel, 2021.

These are the main findings presented in this chapter:

- Thanks to its role in the GCTF, the MFA has built up a stronger diplomatic position for itself in the field of CT and P/CVE.
- DVB/TN remained actively involved in the GCTF after the end of the Dutch term of office.
- As the co-chair of the GCTF together with Morocco from 2015 to 2019, the Netherlands was partially successful in achieving the objectives stated in the Co-Chair Strategic Plan of Action.
- Policy documents drafted by the GCTF contributed to policy development at the UN and the EU. However, they did not have a marked impact on national policies and CT in practice.
- While the significance of the GCTF would appear to be on the decline, it remains a platform that fosters multilateral debate on politically sensitive topics.

4.1 The Dutch involvement in the GCTF: objectives and vision

It was during the GCTF Coordinating Meeting of September 2014 that the US asked the Netherlands to co-chair the GCTF. According to various Dutch policy officers, it was an offer they could not refuse. Even though the MFA gave several reasons[108] for accepting this invitation, no explicit objectives or targets were formulated. Two objectives frequently mentioned by MFA officials in the context of the GCTF, as well as in relation to wider efforts in the global CT policy arena, were:

1. to acquire a stronger strategic position, with access to key stakeholders; and
2. to promote and share experiences with the Dutch approach to CT.

The following section first looks at how the MFA organised itself before analysing the MFA's pursuit of these two objectives.

4.1.1 How the MFA organised itself

When the Dutch government decided to prepare a joint bid together with Morocco to succeed the US and Turkey as the co-chairs of the GCTF, it was decided that this would be a joint effort by the MFA and the NCTV. The MFA also appointed a Special Envoy on CT, who would take on the formal role of co-chair. There was initially some friction between the MFA and the NCTV over the division of tasks and responsibilities. For instance, both wanted to chair international meetings. It was eventually agreed that the MFA would act as the co-chair position and the NCTV would chair the delegation, on account of the large workload represented by the co-chair position.

Working relations between the MFA and the NCTV improved over time. There were frequent strategic meetings between the Directors General, as well as working-level coordination meetings to discuss day-to-day operational issues. These meetings were frequent but irregular. Although an NCTV liaison officer was seconded to the MFA, he was not a member of the permanent MFA GCTF team. The MFA took on most coordination tasks and diplomatic roles, while the NCTV acted as a subject-matter expert with a relevant network of practitioners.

A consultation mechanism was also set up, with a steering group consisting of a broad range of stakeholders, including the General Security and Intelligence Agency, the Military Intelligence Agency, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Finance, and the GCTF Administrative Unit. The idea was for this steering group to meet four times a year, including to prepare the Coordinating Committee meetings in March and September.

[108] The arguments for accepting the position of co-chair included: the GCTF focal areas overlapped with themes in the National Counter-Terrorism Strategy for 2011-2015; it provided an opportunity for the Netherlands to acquire a prominent position in the international CT debate; and it would underline Dutch international efforts to curb the threat posed by FTFs.

The steering group discussed upcoming events, contributions, delegations, preparations with Morocco, as well as emerging security trends and policy practices. This also helped to showcase the Dutch approach on the international stage (see Box 4 on page 43 and section 4.1.2 below).

For the period of the co-chairmanship, the MFA also appointed four GCTF liaison officers in New York, Washington DC, Rabat (Morocco) and Ankara (Turkey). The aim in doing so was to bolster outreach capacity and improve bilateral relations with key partners on GCTF issues. The MFA also formed a network of RSCs.[109] The RSCs generally played an important role in sharing information about the activities of the GCTF with their regional and local counterparts and stakeholders. In particular, the RSCs in Africa had an opportunity to align their work with the agendas of the GCTF Regional Working Groups. This opportunity was put to best use in the East African region, where the GCTF Working Group had set up a mechanism of local coordination groups.[110] The RSCs were also involved in regional need assessments and, thanks to the Dutch co-chairmanship, had easy access to relevant governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

4.1.2 Promoting the Dutch approach

The Netherlands actively advocated the 'Dutch approach' to CT and P/CVE at the GCTF. This approach is described by DVB/TN as 'a balance between counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism in an inclusive manner, taking account of civil society, human rights and root causes' (see Box 4 on page 43).[111] The Netherlands promoted this approach in GCTF meetings, facilitating the participation of practitioners with backgrounds in community policing, detention and rehabilitation, forensic investigation, and local governance. The inclusion of a broader group of stakeholders in the GCTF steering group helped to showcase the Dutch approach.

As a result, more and more international stakeholders now recognise the Netherlands as a proponent of an integrated local approach to CT, with a human rights perspective. In line with this, the MFA has also supported programming and policy development in countries with front-line experience with terrorism and violent extremism.[112] Yet while a few other European countries support a similar approach, the dominant reaction to terrorism by the majority of governments worldwide continues to be a 'hard' security response.

Even though the Netherlands is recognised for its multidisciplinary, integrated approach, the MFA as a whole has been less successful in operationalising this approach in its own security and development programming. Whereas policies to counter violent extremism and terrorism in the Netherlands explicitly include, among others, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the MFA's CT programmes targeting violent extremism do not have a systematic linkage with longer-term prevention strategies targeting wider socio-economic factors. Connecting short-term responses with longer-term political and socio-economic prevention strategies requires silos to be bridged and cooperation and coordination among different policy departments at the MFA to be improved. True, DVB/TN has coordinated with other relevant departments, such as the regional sections (mainly DAF) and DSH, informing them about the GCTF's agenda and activities. However, this coordination has generally been of an *ad-hoc* nature. A positive exception has been the development of a PVE toolkit by DVB and DSH (see also section 6.4 on page 66). However, its implementation has remained limited to a small number of embassy projects. Operationalising a multidisciplinary, integrated approach at the MFA requires different policy departments to contribute to the analysis and development of policies on underlying causes of radicalisation and violent extremism in a meaningful manner.

[109] See section 4.1.2. and chapter 5 for an analysis of this network.

[110] The East African Region Working Group allocated a local coordinator to each partner country in the Horn of Africa. France was appointed to Djibouti, Australia to Ethiopia, the US to Kenya, Turkey to Somalia and Yemen, Germany to Tanzania, and the Netherlands to Uganda and Sudan. Not all local coordination groups were equally effective. The Dutch coordination of activities for Uganda and Sudan worked well and focused on an exchange between the Ugandan and Sudanese governments with countries interested in supporting capacity-building projects.

[111] DVB/TN. Regional CT Network Factbox. Internal DVB/TN document. See also Box 4 on page 43 of this report.

[112] See also section 5.3 and section 6.2 of this report.

4.1.3 Acquiring a stronger position in the global policy arena

The MFA hoped that accepting the post of co-chair would enable it to acquire a stronger, more strategic position in the global policy arena. This would create easier access to key stakeholders, improve the MFA's information position and help the Dutch government to influence international policies. Overall, the Dutch co-chairmanship of the GCTF has helped to boost the Dutch profile in the global arena. During its term of office, the Netherlands was recognised as a reliable partner with considerable expertise. Dutch diplomats, and the RSCs and GCTF liaison officers in particular, were regarded as the 'go-to people' in this respect.

Policy officers at both the MFA and the NCTV have underlined that participation in the GCTF has fostered a clearer understanding of the threat perceptions and policy priorities of different countries, and has facilitated access to and cooperation with national security agencies and CT coordinators in other countries. It has also helped to strengthen bilateral relations on CT issues with like-minded donor countries such as the US.

However, the prominence acquired by the Netherlands is subject to erosion. In order to counter this tendency, DVB/TN has remained actively involved in the GCTF after the end of the Dutch term of office. Together with Morocco and the UN, the Netherlands launched an initiative for 'countering terrorism financing while safeguarding civic space' in 2020.[113] DVB/TN is also involved in talks with the current co-chairs, Morocco and Canada, on a strategic vision for the GCTF for the next 10 years. Outside the GCTF, DVB/TN organised a virtual seminar at the end of 2020, together with like-minded countries and organisations, on the future of CT policies.[114] Nonetheless, the MFA would benefit from a clear vision statement setting out its main policy objectives in the international CT arena and listing those forums which it regards as most relevant to these objectives.

4.2 The Dutch co-chairmanship of the GCTF

The Netherlands took on the role of co-chair together with Morocco. Both countries set up dedicated GCTF teams at their MFAs in order to ensure a smooth and efficient working relationship.[115] At the start of their co-chairmanship, the Netherlands and Morocco drafted a Strategic Plan of Action with five priorities, each with its own deliverables: *Results, Resources, Relations, Reinforcement, and Renewal*.[116] The following paragraphs look at five priorities and assess the extent to which these deliverables were achieved. Broadly speaking, the implementation of the initiatives set out in the Strategic Plan of Action depended on the readiness of member states to contribute, thus limiting the co-chairs' room for manoeuvre.

According to the Strategic Plan of Action, the aim of *Results* was to enhance the impact of GCTF framework documents, best practices and recommendations. To this end, the plan proposed to conduct needs assessments to improve the contextualisation of policies, and to translate the policies into toolkits and organise awareness-raising. However, a needs assessment was never conducted due to a lack of support from the members. Moreover, as an informal platform, the GCTF does not have a mechanism for monitoring and promoting the implementation of policies by its members. It relies on the willingness of member states to take the initiative in adopting good practice documents for their own policy development.[117] For this reason, in order to facilitate implementation, the co-chairs instead placed more emphasis on improving the relevance of the documents and on raising awareness among stakeholders. The idea was to improve relevance and thus achieve better results by ensuring more contextualised and tailored practices that were cognisant of the specific local needs.

[113] *https://www.thegctf.org/What-we-do/Initiative-Activities/ArtMID/815/ArticleID/130/Virtual-Launch-Countering-the-Financing-of-Terrorism-Measures-While-Safeguarding-Civic-Space-Initiative* (last retrieved on 23 June 2021).

[114] The participants included the US, Canada, the UK, France, Australia, the EU and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT).

[115] Particularly at the beginning of the co-chairmanship, there were considerable tensions in bilateral relations between Morocco and the Netherlands on the issue of entitlements to Dutch social security benefits. However, thanks to the fact that both countries successfully insulated their GCTF teams and activities from other policy areas, this diplomatic conflict did not undermine their relations in the GCTF.

[116] GCTF Co-Chairs' Strategic Plan of Action. 2016-2018.

[117] See also section 4.2.1 for more information on the uptake of GCTF frameworks and best practices.

The *Resources* priority area was intended to mobilise and coordinate existing and additional resources and expertise for building CT capabilities around the globe. Two key deliverables that the Action Plan set out were a central GCTF mechanism for identifying gaps in programming and avoiding overlap (known as the 'International CT and CVE Clearing House Mechanism pilot project') and a FTF Knowledge Hub for exchanging knowledge on the FTF threat and providing analytical support. Both initiatives failed to get off the ground, since most GCTF members were reluctant to supply the necessary information for them.

Another deliverable involved facilitating and supporting networks of experts, and organising local donor coordination meetings in support of the GCTF Regional Working Groups. Although no structural mechanism for local coordination meetings was put in place, the Dutch RSC based in the East African region[118] organised *ad-hoc* meetings with donor countries for exchanging plans and coordinating capacity-building initiatives. However, the results of these meetings in terms of follow-up and increased engagement were limited.

The *Relations* priority area underlined the Forum's ties with the UN and non-member countries and with institutions established under its auspices. The GCTF sought to create an environment that fostered the exchange of expertise and good practices among stakeholders. The Plan of Action proposed building on and extending existing relations, by organising meetings and involving non-members and non-state actors, including civil-society and private-sector organisations. The co-chairs presented their accomplishments in this connection in a Legacy Paper,[119] which listed the number of non-members that participated in GCTF activities and highlighted the engagement of 13 non-members in hosting or co-hosting regional meetings. In addition, more regular meetings were organised, in particular with the UN, which resulted in a stronger relationship between the UN and the GCTF. Regional organisations were regularly involved in working groups and in the planning of activities, including the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. However, no long-term relationships were forged. This had an adverse impact on the Results objective of improving the contextualisation and implementation of GCTF policies. The Netherlands successfully invested in raising the involvement of civil-society organisations (CSOs) in GCTF meetings. However, the CSOs invited to attend tended to be the 'usual suspects' and the processes for enabling CSOs to take part in the meetings proved to be complex and opaque.

Reinforcement was intended to strengthen the Forum's capacity to supply the appropriate tools to accomplish its objectives. The co-chairs sought mainly to streamline working methods, develop a communication strategy and restructure the supporting role played by the Administrative Unit. They succeeded in improving synergy between the different working groups[120] by organising coordinating meetings between the co-chairs of the working groups so as to align their work plans. Although the co-chairs prepared a communication plan for improving the outreach of the GCTF, a lack of indecisiveness on the part of the GCTF members meant that no substantial dissemination activities were undertaken. During the period of the co-chairmanship, the Administrative Unit moved to The Hague and its working methods were reformed and streamlined. The co-chairs also set out a proposal for giving the Administrative Unit a stronger mandate and expanding its analytical capacity, but there was not enough support among GCTF members to put this proposal into practice.

[118] The RSC was based in Nairobi, with a territory covering the Horn of Africa.

[119] Global Counterterrorism Forum. *Legacy Paper; 4 years of the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum Co-Chairmanship 2015-2019. Morocco and the Netherlands*: pp. 3-4. Available at https://www.thegctf.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=Jm7n19uSdBE%3d&portalid=1 (last retrieved on 28 May 2021).

[120] See Annex 1 for information on the various working groups.

Finally, the aim of the *Renewal* priority area was to consolidate the GCTF's capacity for anticipating trends in the dynamics of terrorist threats and violent extremism. The proposed deliverables overlapped considerably with those of other priorities; these included organising joint activities with the UN and regional organisations to promote contextualised approaches to CT. Another deliverable involved engaging with both members and non-members to identify new trends, and building on these by developing good practices. Arguably, this is a reiteration of one of the primary objectives of the GCTF, and overlaps with the Relations priority. However, a noteworthy innovation introduced by the Netherlands was the introduction of scenario-based discussions. These involved using fictional case studies based on a given scenario, with GCTF members being invited to reflect on the situation, bearing their own contextual circumstances and policies in mind. This provided a means of raising awareness of emerging threats and policy gaps. The use of fictional case studies lowered the threshold for taking part in the discussions.

4.2.1 GCTF best practices and framework documents

Having discussed the five key priorities of the Dutch-Moroccan co-chairmanship, we now turn to the uptake of GCTF framework documents and best practices in general. These framework documents were draw up by the GCTF working groups or other GCTF bodies (see Annex 1). The GCTF positions itself as an apolitical, practice-oriented platform that paves the way for other international organisations to address topics regarded as being highly sensitive. The GCTF aims to provide a setting in which countries feel more comfortable discussing CT and P/CVE issues, so that other organisations can then pick up on the topic. The objective is to keep policy development on CT moving and effectively address emerging threats posed by terrorism. Overall, we found that GCTF documents did contribute to policy development at the UN and the EU. However, there was very little evidence of the assumed trickle-down effect to national policies. There was no immediately visible impact on national CT and P/CVE approaches.

In some cases, the GCTF has set benchmarks for other organisations to follow. The adoption of UN SC Resolution 2178[121] and the Council of Europe's 'Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism'[122] are two examples of this. Both focus on criminal law responses to FTFs and turn GCTF recommendations into binding obligations. Other examples are the adoption of UN SC Resolution 2482[123] in response to the GCTF's framework document entitled 'The Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism',[124] and the adoption of UN SC Resolution 2396[125] following the publication of the GCTF's 'Antalya Memorandum on Good Practices on the Protection of Soft Targets in a Counter-Terrorism Context'.[126] GCTF framework documents also inform the guiding documents of the UN's Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED),[127] which form the basis for the UN CTED's dialogue with UN member states on their obligations to enforce UN SC Resolutions. The 'Guidelines on the Links between Terrorism and Transnational Organised Crime' drawn up by the Council of Europe draw heavily on the GCTF's 'Addendum to The Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crimes and Terrorism: focus on criminal justice'.[128]

[121] UN SC Resolution 2178 (2014). UN Doc S/RES/2178 (2014). 24 September 2014.
[122] Council of Europe's Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism. CETS No. 219. Riga. 1 July 2017.
[123] UN SC Resolution 2482 (2019). UN Doc S/RES/2482 (2019). 19 July 2019.
[124] The Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism. September 2018. Available at *https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Framework%20Documents/2018/GCTF-Good-Practices-on-the-Nexus_ENG.pdf?ver=2018-09-21-122246-363* (last retrieved on 5 April 2021).
[125] UN SC Resolution 2396 (2017). UN Doc S/RES/2396 (2017). 21 December 2017.
[126] The GCTF Soft Target Protection Initiative. The Antalya Memorandum on Good Practices on the Protection of Soft Targets in a Counter-Terrorism Context. September 2017. Available at *https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Links/Meetings/2017/Twelfth%20GCTF%20Coordinating%20Committee%20Meeting/GCTF%20-%20Antalya%20Memorandum%20on%20the%20Protection%20of%20Soft%20Targets%20in%20a%20Counterterrorism%20Context.pdf?ver=2017-09-17-010844-720* (last retrieved on 5 April 2021).
[127] Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate. Technical Guide to the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001) and Other Relevant Resolutions. 2017.
[128] Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism, Working Group of Experts on Terrorism and Transnational Organised Crime. Guidelines on the Links between Terrorism and Transnational Organised Crime. 17 November 2020. CDCT-TTOC (2019) 01 rev 9.

The GCTF's framework documents primarily influence policy development at the UN and the EU. When GCTF members were asked, as part of this evaluation, about the impact of good practice documents on their own national CT policies, none of the respondents or interviewees could point out clear examples of national policies or practices that had been adjusted as a result of GCTF documents. Similarly, Dutch policy officers were not able to share any concrete examples of how the GCTF's good practices documents had affected Dutch CT policies. Overall, most GCTF members seem to be more inclined to advocate their own policies and lessons than they were willing to listen to and adopt those shared by others.

4.3 The GCTF from a global perspective: the handicap of a head start

As is clear from the previous section, the Netherlands, together with Morocco, has been only partially successful in achieving the objectives stated in the Plan of Action. Moreover, with policy documents drafted by the GCTF primarily resonating within global and sometimes regional forums, they have not had an immediately visible impact on national policies and countering terrorism in practice. The performance of the Netherlands as a co-chair has been influenced by the role played by other GCTF members and their willingness to contribute to joint initiatives. It has also been affected by the GCTF's changing international position. Two key characteristics of the GCTF are discussed in the following sections, which also reflect on its current position in the global policy field of CT and P/CVE.

4.3.1 Limited membership

The GCTF was established as a US initiative. The US regarded the UN as being too political and bureaucratic to be able to respond effectively to imminent terrorist threats. So as to enable a swift response, the GCTF was deliberately set up with a limited membership (see Annex 1). However, this limited membership has increasingly become a topic of debate. Those in favour argue that it keeps the Forum agile and action-oriented. Others claim that its membership is no longer representative of those states that are most actively involved in CT and P/CVE. One of the most striking aspects of the membership of the GCTF is the limited number of African member states, even though the continent has experienced significant terrorist threats. This is particularly surprising as the GCTF has two regional Capacity-Building Working Groups on East and West Africa. The participation of African states is vital for sharing experiences and expertise and for encouraging other countries to adopt the GCTF's good practices, recommendations or action plans (Framework Documents).

The GCTF's informal character does enable non-members (both state and non-state actors such as CSOs) to attend meetings, once they have been vetted by the co-chairs of the Working Group and the GCTF co-chairs and provided that none of the GCTF members opposes their presence. Non-members should also be able to demonstrate their support for the GCTF's principles and objectives and have plenty of relevant expertise to share. The experiences of non-members suggest that the selection procedure is highly arbitrary, and is at times motivated by political factors. The fact that non-members do not have a regular seat at GCTF meetings makes it difficult to forge sustainable relationships with stakeholders outside the GCTF membership.

4.3.2 An apolitical nature?

In order to foster open debate and remain action-oriented, the GCTF positions itself as an apolitical forum. In practice, however, the forum is highly political. Over the years, the GCTF has produced a set of non-binding good practice documents, recommendations and toolkits that are the result of consultations among diplomats, practitioners and experts that were adopted with the consensus of all members.[129] The GCTF also organises annual high-level ministerial meetings, during which framework documents are endorsed by consensus. Even though the GCTF's documents are non-binding in nature, the fact that the five permanent UNSC members are on board paves the way for other international organisations to follow and build on the agreements.[130] This has undoubtedly contributed to text negotiations becoming increasingly political in nature in recent years. To a growing degree, GCTF members now use the negotiations on draft texts of new GCTF Framework Documents to push certain positions, using the silence procedure at the end of negotiations to intensify the political pressure to agree on these positions, and avoiding transparent debates with other GCTF members to compromise on the wording of the documents.

4.3.3 Diminishing added value?

The GCTF was formed at a time when the UN was regarded as being too political and bureaucratic to be able to respond swiftly to terrorist threats. One of its objectives was to support and catalyse the implementation of the UN GCTS.[131] Over the years, however, the GCTF has become increasingly political, while at the same time the establishment of the United Nations Office of Counter-terrorism (UNOCT) in 2017 has brought a positive change to the abilities and resources available within the UN to initiate capacity-building activities. The GCTF has therefore lost some of its added value in relation to the implementation of the UN GCTS. Moreover, recent years have seen a proliferation of like-minded forums that undertake similar activities on CT and P/CVE. These include the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Centre of Excellence for P/CVE and the Strong Cities Network.[132] Although several of the GCTF's documents contain guidance on 'how to' implement certain policies, much like some of the guidance documents published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) or the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR),[133] they still fail to contextualise the policies needed for effective implementation and capacity-building at regional and national levels. This is still considered to be one of the main challenges facing the GCTF.

Furthermore, the large number of meetings hampers constructive interaction on matters of content. One of the co-chairs claimed to have attended 95 meetings in the course of four years, which is equal to approximately two meetings a month. This high frequency means that GCTF members are no longer able to send subject-matter experts to all these meetings, which has implications for the quality of the discussions.

Overall, the GCTF seems to be losing its significance. According to representatives of some member states, it is becoming increasingly difficult to guarantee ministerial attendance during the annual ministerial meeting. Nonetheless, both the GCTF members and other stakeholders continue to regard the GCTF as an important actor in the field. In particular, the non-binding nature of the GCTF's good practice documents means that it continues to be a platform fostering multilateral debate on politically sensitive topics.

[129] See the GCTF website (*www.thegctf.org*) for a full list of all framework documents adopted by the GCTF.
[130] See section 4.2.1 for examples.
[131] See *https://www.thegctf.org/Who-we-are/Background-and-Mission* (last retrieved on 23 June 2021).
[132] See also Rosand, E. Preparing the Global Counter-terrorism Forum for the Next Decade. USIP Special Report No. 476. August 2020: 5.
[133] See for instance OHCHR. *Human Rights Principles Applicable to Watchlisting*. United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures. 2020. Available at *https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Terrorism/Pages/Research-papers-and-Inputs.aspx* (last retrieved on 28 May 2021); OHCHR. *Guidance to States on Human Rights Compliant Responses to the Threat posed by Foreign Fighters*. 2018. Available at *https://www.ohchr.org/EN/newyork/Documents/Human-Rights-Responses-to-Foreign-Fighters-web%20final.pdf* (last retrieved on 28 May 2021); see also the UNODC website on Technical Assistance Tools and Publication. Available at *https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/terrorism/technical-assistance-tools.html* (last retrieved on 28 May 2021).

5. The network of Regional Security Coordinators[134]

Using the extra funds allocated to the MFA in 2015 for countering radicalisation and terrorism, DVB/TN set up a network of six Regional Security Coordinators (RSCs) as described in section 3.1.1 above. The network currently covers South East Asia from Bangkok, the Mashreq region from Amman, the Horn of Africa from Nairobi, the Sahel from Ouagadougou, the Maghreb region from Tunis, and the Western Balkans from Sarajevo (see also section 3.1.1 on page 39).

[134] This chapter draws on IOB. Eyes and Ears on the Ground. 2021.

This chapter examines the operation of this network and analyses the objectives set for the network in terms of its mode of operation and results. Section 5.1 describes the tasks of RSCs and the organisational structure of the RSC network. Section 5.2 looks at the network's main objectives: the Dutch information position and political reporting. Section 5.3 assesses the role played by the RSCs in promoting the Dutch approach to CT and P/CVE. Section 5.4 discusses the RSCs' engagement with other donors. Finally, section 5.5 analyses the network's country portfolio.

These are the main findings presented in this chapter:

- The RSC network has proved to be a strategic model for building up a relatively high profile in CT and P/CVE with relatively few resources.
- The broad nature of the RSCs' job description, coupled with the large number of countries covered by some of them, hinders a shift towards more political reporting and analysis.
- The strategic, coordinated management of the RSC network by DVB is hindered as line responsibility for each RSC lies with the Head of Mission (HoM) at the RSC's duty station.
- There is scope for improving the systematic articulation of information needs by and from clients in The Hague, as well as cooperation with partners in the Dutch security chain.
- The composition of the country portfolio and the selection of duty stations is not always the result of a strategic decision based on a threat analysis and information needs.
- RSCs are spread too thinly, particularly those responsible for South East Asia and Africa. The system of 'local spokes' in the Western Balkans enables the RSC to cover more ground and work more effectively.

5.1 Roles and responsibilities

The RSCs have a very wide-ranging job description. Based on the result areas outlined for the CT network[135] (see also section 3.1.1 on page 39), the RSCs have four main objectives:

1. to establish and maintain a network of national CT authorities, local stakeholders and counterparts from other diplomatic missions;
2. to analyse country-specific and regional security threats and trends, and inform The Hague comprehensively and in good time (see section 5.2 on page 57);
3. to promote the Dutch approach to CT and P/CVE internationally (see section 5.3 on page 58);
4. to identify and monitor projects on CT and P/CVE in their countries of operation (see chapter 6 on page 61).

The first few years after the launch of the network in 2015 were regarded as a period of 'pioneering' and 'learning by doing'. This meant that individual RSCs were given plenty of latitude to shape their own position and portfolio, and decide which objectives to prioritise and how to achieve them. This enabled the RSCs to adapt to their local contexts: there are differences from one region to another in terms of specific extremist threats, what these imply for Dutch policies, what is possible in terms of networking (e.g. cultural differences), the needs and opportunities for projects, and so on. This pioneering period also created space for RSCs to shape an individual position, depending on their personalities and particular preferences. It also allowed RSCs to build on their personal strengths. At the same time, it also resulted in heterogeneity in the position, roles and tasks of RSCs. As a result of the limited amount of guidance from The Hague, the RSC network and its counterparts at DVB functioned as a fairly loose-knit structure.

[135] *Preventie aan de Bron. Goedkoper & Duurzamer – Het BZ CT-netwerk. Raamwerk BZ-aanpak radicalisering en terrorisme.* Internal DVB/TN document.

Following this start-up period, DVB/TN tried to streamline and harmonise the RSC network. Result frameworks were developed for each region based on a common format, and additional emphasis was placed on the objective of strengthening the Dutch information position and political reporting. The RSCs were also given instructions for producing personal annual plans and had weekly calls with their point of contacts at DVB/TN in The Hague to discuss project portfolios and political reports. DVB/TN also began to organise annual team meetings and, more recently, initiated monthly videoconference meetings with all RSCs.

Nonetheless, some RSCs have found it hard to sharpen their focus on political reporting and analysis, and have suffered from what they feel is a lack of guidance from The Hague. As far as the latter is concerned, three factors hinder DVB/TN's coordinated, strategic management of the RSC network.

1. First, the wide-ranging nature of the RSCs job descriptions, coupled with the large number of countries covered by some RSCs, does not help to bring about the desired shift towards a greater emphasis on political reporting and analysis. Apart from political reporting, RSCs have to travel regularly to each country of operation in order to build and maintain a network, and follow-up on project results and reports. They also perform certain tasks in their country of posting on behalf of the embassy that may not fall within their remits.

2. Second, even though DVB/TN is responsible for job descriptions, the posting of RSCs and overall policy guidance, the ultimate responsibility for the selection of RSCs as well as the line authority for each RSC lies with the Head of Mission at the RSCs duty station. In the absence of a formal mandate, it is difficult for DVB/TN to assume responsibility and set the network's strategic and thematic priorities. As the line manager is responsible for performance assessments, the RSCs naturally perform duties set by their managers. Although this helps to embed each RSC as a member of embassy staff, it produces great variance in the ways in which the RSCs operate and limits DVB/TN's ability to coordinate and manage.

3. Third, in one region political reports on CT and P/CVE prepared by the RSC did not always coincide with the embassy's standpoints on bilateral relations. The RSC sometimes had to spend a great deal of time discussing the contents of their reports with embassies, at the expense of focus and speed.

5.2 Information position and political reporting

In the past few years, DVB/TN has increasingly prioritised political and security reporting. DVB/TN wants the RSC network to provide useful information to MFA staff as well to other partners in the Dutch security chain, such as the NCTV, public prosecutors and possibly the Ministry of Defence and the security services.

The MFA's added value stems from its reports on security trends and from the fact that its reports are public – as opposed to reports produced by the security services, for instance. The degree of interest taken by Dutch security chain partners in reports emanating from the RSC network is mixed, however. In some cases, their interest is limited to specific countries or lies in topics other than CT and P/CVE. Yet, in view of the 'glocal' and 'networked' character of CT and P/CVE – which may include ties to global criminal networks and involvement in human trafficking and drug and arms smuggling – there is a great potential for coordination and information-sharing among partners in the Dutch security chain. Although DVB/TN has taken action to map information needs of Dutch partners, there is scope for improving the systematic articulation of information needs by and from clients in The Hague, as well as cooperation among partners in the Dutch security chain.

Several of the embassies where the RSCs work also employ liaison officers from other ministries and entities, such as the Ministry of Defence, the Royal Dutch Military Constabulary and the police force. Cooperation between RSCs and these liaison officers often depends on an RSC or an ambassador taking the initiative, and may include *ad hoc* exchanges of information and/or participation in regular meetings of the embassy's 'security cluster' (as is the case in Bangkok and Tunis). However, neither the MFA nor other ministries have issued any guidance on cooperation or the division of responsibilities among different government staff working on security-related issues. Where there is coordination between RSCs and liaison officers from other ministries, this generally involves demarcating tasks rather than cooperation and seeking synergy from the exchange of information and analyses.

One factor that affects the relevance of the reports shared by the RSCs is that they focus exclusively on what is a niche in overall security policy, i.e. CT and P/CVE. The advantage is that the RSCs can provide specific expertise on this topic, particularly for embassies. Another advantage of operating in a niche is that work can be attuned specifically to the needs of the target audience. As has already been mentioned, this could be improved by articulating more specific information needs that the RSCs should address. However, the downside of operating in a niche is that the added value of an RSC is limited to issues related to terrorism, and that his or her information is therefore only generally of interest to a small audience. For example, several policy officers from the MFA's regional departments indicated that they had only limited contacts with RSCs.

5.3 Promoting the Dutch approach

Another key objective of the RSC network has been to promote the Dutch approach to CT and P/CVE abroad. In essence, promoting the Dutch approach involves sharing Dutch experiences and the methods used in the Netherlands, and adapting these to the contexts of other countries. There are severe limitations to this, however: the experiences with the rehabilitation of a very small number of FTFs backed by the coordinated efforts of police forces, detention centres and social services are not easily translated to settings involving large numbers of FTFs and limited state capacity. Despite the fact that most countries around the world continue to emphasise hard security approaches, the Netherlands – together with a number of like-minded European countries – has provided a counterweight by promoting a softer, integrated approach to countering violent extremism.

The RSCs use two strategies to promote the Dutch approach:

1. funding of projects;
2. building networks and connecting silos.

First, a number of projects have drawn explicitly on the Dutch approach to the prevention of violent extremism. These include projects bringing together a range of stakeholders in a whole-of-government approach, and projects promoting community policing. Secondly, RSCs build local networks in their countries of operation and use their position to connect silos that have not been working together, such as regional governments, national security coordinators and local NGOs. Moreover, the RSCs help countries to devise CT and P/CVE action plans and try to incorporate Dutch aspects of CT and P/CVE (such as human rights and a soft approach) in these action plans.

5.4 Engagement with other donors

In all countries in which the RSCs are active, like-minded donors are engaged in similar activities. Only a small number of donors use a model similar to the RSC network, even though it has proven to be a strategic model that has enabled the Netherlands to build up a relatively high profile in CT and P/CVE with relatively few resources. As a result, the Netherlands is a respected partner of key stakeholders such as the US, the EU and the UK. The level of coordination and cooperation with other donors depends on the country in question. In several countries, the RSC plays or has played a coordinating role in a donor group (e.g. in Jordan, Somalia and Tunisia) or has organised regular meetings with like-minded donors on CT and P/CVE (e.g. in Kenya). In other countries, engagement with other donors is more informal and *ad hoc*. This coordinating role in donor groups is regarded as a strength, as it allows a relatively small financial player to play a leading role in the field.

5.5 RSC country portfolio

The capacity of the RSCs to contribute effectively to the four main objectives listed above, and the relevance of their political and security reports for The Hague, is affected by the choice of countries making up their portfolios and the relationship between their country portfolio and the information needs of The Hague. Somewhat surprisingly, there is no policy framework to guide the use of the RSC network.

The composition of their country portfolios and the selection of their duty station does not result by definition from a strategic decision based on a threat analysis or needs assessment. Indeed, it is heavily influenced by more practical or bureaucratic considerations. For instance, the Mashreq portfolio of countries does not follow from a needs assessment, but is based primarily on the fact that the three countries in the portfolio are priority countries for wider Dutch development cooperation. This means that it excludes important countries such as Syria, Iran and Turkey. The RSC for the Sahel region was initially stationed in Addis Ababa, before being relocated to Ouagadougou (rather than Bamako or Dakar). The preferred duty stations for RSCs have also been opposed by embassies and other policy departments due to concerns about logistical support and divisions of labour with other staff with a regional or security focus.

The ability to build networks and obtain information depends very much on the RSCs' individual initiatives and their presence in the countries in their portfolios. At present, there is a wide variety in the number of countries covered by an RSC, with some RSCs covering three countries and others as many as ten. Particularly in South East Asia and Africa, the RSCs are spread too thin. They have been assigned too many countries to really understand local dynamics and security contexts. An in-depth knowledge of in-country trends in radicalisation, and an ability to form trust networks and get acquainted with realities on the ground are essential prerequisites for making a difference in terms of the CT and P/CVE agenda. Without these, analysis remains superficial, projects cannot be monitored closely enough and effective local networks are hard to set up and maintain. For example, the RSC for South East Asia (who is stationed in Bangkok) needs to cover Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Indonesia and Bangladesh (core countries) as well as 'flex countries', i.e. Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and India.[136] The RSC for sub-Saharan Africa focuses on the wider Sahel, in particular the Liptako-Gourma region (i.e. Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger) and the Lake Chad region (i.e. Nigeria, Niger and Chad). At the same time, he or she has to look at the possible spill-over effects from the Sahel to coastal states such as Ghana and Ivory Coast, and also to be available for *ad hoc* responses to situations affecting Benin, Mauretania, Cameroon, Sudan and Ethiopia.[137]

[136] Multiannual results framework for CT and P/CVE in the South East Asia region. Internal document.
[137] Multiannual results framework for CT and P/CVE in the sub-Saharan region (focus on Sahel). Internal document.

The RSC for the Western Balkans has six countries in his portfolio. However, he works in close cooperation with the 'stability coordinator', who covers the same countries. The RSC and the stability coordinator also share a system of local spokes; in every embassy, a local staff member is available to support the RSC and the stability coordinator. These local staff members usually have a background in security, possess extensive networks and are acquainted with local (cultural) customs and languages. Other regions do not have a similar system, although some embassies have staff available to assist the RSC. Overall, the support of local staff enables an RSC to cover more ground and work more effectively.

6. Project implementation[138]

Supporting and funding projects is one of the policy tools used by the MFA in pursuit of its policy objectives on CT and P/CVE. Between 2015 and 2020, mainly with the aid of the capacity-strengthening funds[139] and the Stability Fund,[140] the MFA financed some 60 projects that were designed to contribute to its policy objectives on CT and P/CVE. A total budget of over EUR 28m was allocated to these projects between 2016 and 2019. Most projects were identified and monitored by the RSCs in their countries of operation.

[138] This chapter draws on IOB. *Eyes and Ears on the Ground*, 2021; Glazzard, 2021; White, 2021; Zeuthen, 2021; and Glazzard, Zeuthen & White, 2021

[139] Part of the capacity-strengthening funds. Some projects were also funded from delegated budgets at embassies or from the Human Rights Fund managed by the Department of Multilateral Institutions and Human Rights.

[140] The Stability Fund was set up in 2003 to support activities at the intersection of peace, security and development in countries and regions threatened by conflict or in which conflicts have taken place. By financing demand-driven activities, the Fund seeks to contribute to stability, reconstruction and state formation in conflict and post-conflict countries. The Stability Fund is managed jointly by DVB and DSH.

These projects are intended to achieve the following objectives:

1. to improve the MFA's information position;
2. to promote the Dutch approach to CT and P/CVE;
3. to pilot innovative approaches to P/CVE; and
4. to address violent extremisms and its causes.

This chapter looks at the extent to which projects are able to contribute to the objectives listed above. Section 6.1 analyses the projects' contributions to the MFA's information position. Section 6.2 discusses projects used to pilot approaches, including the Dutch approach. Finally, section 6.3 presents the findings of a systematic literature review of the effectiveness of P/CVE programming.

These are the main findings presented in this chapter:

- In a number of cases, projects have yielded specific information or contributed to a network position that gave access to wider CT-relevant information in a particular country. However, projects can be used more effectively for the purpose of political reporting and analysis.
- DVB/TN has supported pilot projects, particularly those promoting the Dutch approach to P/CVE, and some pilot projects have received follow-up support. Learning and sustainability has been limited, however.
- There is little evidence available for the effectiveness of projects that seek to prevent or address violent extremism and terrorism.
- There is no systematic linkage between the MFA's short-term security programming targeting the symptoms of violent extremism and longer-term prevention strategies targeting wider political and socio-economic factors.

6.1 Projects and the MFA's information position

In a number of cases, projects have yielded specific information or contributed to a network position of the Netherlands that has given it access to wider CT-relevant information. Examples include information supplied by other governments about the identities and locations or travel routes of FTFs. In most cases, however, projects do not directly shape Dutch policy choices or positions. Rather, projects are used to illustrate Dutch policy positions in international forums or to answer questions raised by parliamentarians.

The focus has shifted in the past two years towards identifying projects that could help the RSCs gather information or intelligence on CT, P/CVE or security-related issues. For this reason, RSCs are increasingly likely to promote activities that help to establish connections with government offices. These include projects involving the prison or border services or community policing. However, while there is a degree of overlap with liaison officers from other Dutch ministries, who also seek to strengthen relations with other governments, it is their contacts with civil society that set the RSCs apart. Indeed, these constitute one of their added values. The fact that different ministries and liaison officers gather information on the security situation in a given country using their own channels underscores the need for political and security reporting to be based on an assessment of the information needs in The Hague and be carried out in conjunction with other Dutch government departments.

6.2 Pilot projects and the Dutch approach

Particularly during the first few years of the RSC network, RSCs were asked to identify innovative projects that could act as pilot projects and, if successful, be scaled up, and which could promote the Dutch standpoint on P/CVE. These included, for instance, projects on community policing, human rights, and the rehabilitation of former members of violent extremist groups (see Box 6 below). The focus on pilot projects was also in line with the relatively small budget that the MFA had reserved for P/CVE projects. Implementing agencies are positive about the fact that DVB funds allowed small-scale pilot projects to be initiated, as donors often favour larger programmes requiring more complicated tender procedures.

The downside of small-scale projects, however, is that their impact and sustainability is generally limited, especially if they are not embedded in broader institutional settings and if there are no long-term sources of funding. A few projects started as small-scale pilot projects and were subsequently continued and scaled up, some with MFA funds and some with funds from other donors. At the same time, there is an overall tendency among donors in the field of P/CVE to favour pilot projects and new initiatives. This makes it difficult to connect short-term security programmes targeting the symptoms of violent extremism with longer-term prevention strategies that address wider socio-economic factors. We also found that the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of P/CVE projects was often poor, making it hard to ascertain whether a pilot project had worked and achieved the desired results.

6.3 Impact on preventing and countering violent extremism

Information about what does and does not work in P/CVE forms crucial input for future decisions on the funding of projects. However, little information is available in the documentation of projects funded by the MFA about their effectiveness. Furthermore, most projects are relatively small-scale. At the individual level, projects can bring about a positive contribution, for example by supporting children who have been abducted by a terrorist group, or by support vulnerable young people. However, the effectiveness of such small-scale projects in preventing violent extremism is by definition extremely limited.

Box 6 *Examples of projects supported by the MFA*

The Strong Cities Network in Lebanon and Jordan
The Strong Cities Network builds prevention networks in Lebanon and Jordan that bring together local professionals for the coordination and delivery of P/CVE activities with youth and other key stakeholders in vulnerable local communities. Creating a locally owned platform like a prevention network empowers local authorities in the two countries to adopt a more focused approach to prevention, and makes it easier for them to coordinate prevention activities. The activities of the networks include identifying causes of risk behaviour, raising awareness of the recruitment tactics used by violent groups, and developing prevention strategies.

SPARK's Networks of Change in Iraq
This project aims to combat youth radicalisation in the Kurdistan region of Iraq by means of positive community-based and digital approaches (2019-2022). The activities include strengthening and building the capacity of youth centres in the cities in the region, as well as local universities, secondary schools and communities.

Prevention of child recruitment in Somalia
The project helps to prevent and seeks to respond to child recruitment by adopting an integrated case management approach at community level. It supports the sustained reintegration of children associated with armed forces and groups in Somalia. A total of 100 children have been placed under case management, 200 duty-bearers have increased their capacity by means of training, and 2,000 community members are involved in outreach activities.

Prevention of radicalisation in prisons in Tunisia
The project aims to prevent Tunisian detainees from engaging with violent ideologies during and after their period of detention, with the aid of improved rehabilitation and reintegration programming. The activities include raising the capacity of staff working in prisons and child detention centres to manage, rehabilitate and reintegrate detainees.

Prevention of radicalisation in prisons in the Sahel
The project supports the rehabilitation and reintegration of returning FTFs, mainly by training prison staff and other officials. The project plans included 13 workshops for 150 people, and the production of a framework document on FTFs.

In order to gain a better understanding of the conditions required for effective P/CVE programming, IOB commissioned the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) to conduct a systematic review of the available literature.[141] The review focused on the three types of intervention most commonly funded by the MFA:

- youth engagement (aimed at preventing recruitment);
- reintegration (aimed at disengaging violent extremists);
- capacity-building of national government and law enforcement (aimed at the containment of violent extremism).

The review included all publicly available literature on CT and P/CVE available worldwide in English. It therefore constitutes a knowledge base on the effectiveness of P/CVE interventions in general, not specifically of the projects in the MFA portfolio.

The overall conclusion of the RUSI review is that the evidence base on effectiveness is very limited.[142] There has been very little investment in M&E in the field of CT and P/CVE, and most projects do not go beyond determining whether they have succeeded in delivering their activities. As a result, the evidence of impact – in the form of reduced terrorist threats or deradicalisation – is very scarce. Nonetheless, several key lessons can be distilled from the literature:

- Many programmes are designed with multiple components and types of intervention. When a programme appears to have had beneficial effects, this makes it difficult to determine which elements have contributed to its effectiveness. M&E should be designed in such a way that components can be assessed individually.
- The context in which a programme is implemented matters a lot. Programming must recognise and integrate into designs the importance of interplay between individual grievances, structural drivers (e.g. repression, poverty, human rights abuses, etc.) as well as enabling environments (e.g. presence of radicalising mentors/narratives, social networks with VE connections, etc.) in relation to the wider context when designing P/CVE programmes.
- Programmes need to be specific about which populations they are targeting (e.g. age, gender, geographic location, etc.) and include a gender lens. For example, lack of attention to which geographic areas have populations at risk of radicalisation and recruitment to VE groups, lack of definition of age categories of youth, and the absence of a gender lens have often led to lost opportunities for effective programming and learning from evaluation.

The following sections look at the specific findings for each of the three intervention categories.

[141] See Glazzard, Zeuthen & White, 2021 for an executive summary; see: White, 2021 for a report on youth engagement; see Zeuthen, 2021 for a report on the reintegration and disengagement of violent extremists; and see Glazzard, 2021 for a report on capacity-building of national government institutions and law enforcement agencies.

[142] This section draws on Glazzard, Zeuthen & White, 2021.

6.3.1 Youth engagement: preventing recruitment[143]

Youth engagement programmes target 'at-risk' youth in order to prevent their radicalisation or recruitment. The activities performed under these programmes include setting up youth groups, facilitating youth mentorship programmes, engaging youth in sports and culture, training youth leaders, vocational training and income-generating activities, and online/media counter-narratives in cooperation with youth. Three key findings from the review of this type of intervention are:

- Overall, there is a great lack of evidence of what works in youth engagement. Most forms of youth engagement include an educational component, and while there is sometimes evidence of young people acquiring new knowledge or skills, there is often no evidence of whether this knowledge is applied in practice – for instance, in real-life situations where young people need to resist recruitment.
- Many youth engagement activities in P/CVE programmes are borrowed from programmes aiming to keep youth from committing crimes. Very often, programmes that are already running are converted to gain access to CT or P/CVE funding. This may result in inconsistency in focus and design across programming.
- Many practitioners in these types of environments lack confidence that they are actually engaging their target groups in projects that target the most 'at-risk' youth.

6.3.2 Reintegration: disengaging violent extremists[144]

This intervention category includes support for the disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration of (former) detainees, members of terrorist and violent extremist groups. It can involve vocational training, coaching and psychosocial support, and in-kind or cash support. All the interventions included in this review were implemented by governments or implementing partners, providing support to a government led process. As such, it is evident that rehabilitation and reintegration programmes reviewed in this study are predominantly led by governments and placed within a broader national strategy to counter and prevent terrorism. Four key findings from the review of this intervention category are:

- It is not clear what programmes are seeking to achieve. Ideologically focused programmes aimed at deradicalisation and changing an individual's beliefs might require different types of interventions (e.g. value-based education or religious teaching, etc.) than programmes aimed at disengagement and social or economic reintegration (e.g. vocational training, income generation, etc.). Programmes should be clear about their objectives and provide measures of success.
- There is a need to measure impact in more diverse ways than by the scale of returns to violent extremist behaviour or terrorist groups, and to include other factors (e.g. economic opportunity, social and political engagement, and attitudinal change, etc.).
- In areas where there are active conflicts with VE groups, there is a particular need to identify the national position on amnesty of defectors and victims (e.g. children, forced recruits), and to discuss what type of defector is eligible for rehabilitation versus prosecution, so that justice and human rights are upheld.
- The review also looked at literature on disengagement programmes focusing on criminal gangs, on which more literature is available. A lesson that could benefit P/CVE programming is that supervision (e.g. incarceration, probation, etc.) and sanctions do not show significant impact in reducing recidivism and can even have the opposite effect of increasing recidivism rates. Support provided with the aim of enabling reintegration into mainstream society, on the other hand, shows positive results. Mentorship in particular appears to be an intervention area with positive results, although it is critical to tailor the intervention to individual needs.

[143] This section draws on White, 2021 and Glazzard, Zeuthen & White,2021.
[144] This section draws on Zeuthen, 2021 and Glazzard, Zeuthen & White, 2021.

6.3.3 National government and law enforcement capacity-building[145]

This category covers interventions to build CT and P/CVE capacity in national government and law enforcement agencies. In the studies included in the review, capacity-building usually meant the delivery of training workshops, supported in some cases by technical assistance – the supply of equipment or expertise – or, in one case, the development of an institution that took on some responsibility for training. Four key findings from the review of this intervention category are:

- Two general assumptions seem to underpin capacity-building of governments and law enforcement in CT and P/CVE: 1) that it is possible to transfer capacity from high- to low-capacity states, i.e. that VE in developing countries can be countered by importing knowledge, skills and techniques from (or with the assistance of) donor countries; and 2) that training and technical assistance are effective methods of transferring capacity.
- Overall, there appears to be an over-reliance on training workshops as the principal method of capacity-building. However, research suggests that workshops are unlikely to achieve significant and sustainable impacts unless they are part of long-term interventions that address institutional capacity gaps (e.g. security forces' abuse of human rights, structural unequal representation of the population, etc.) systematically and strategically.
- Any intervention that seeks to build the capacity of law enforcement agencies has human rights implications and risks doing harm, and possibly even more so in the field of CT and P/CVE. Implementers and donors need to actively manage these risks. Capacity-building may involve a donor-led imposition of an unrealistic, Western-oriented security model. Moreover, by potentially changing the balance of power in fragile contexts, SSR brings a significant risk of inadvertently doing harm. Providing security organisations with capabilities they would not otherwise have means that donors and implementers need to be especially alert to the human rights implications of their interventions.
- The literature on community policing shows that such approaches tend to command greater support from citizens than, for example, paramilitary approaches, even if they have not been proven to be more successful at preventing and detecting crime. This suggests that community policing initiatives may be valuable outputs and outcomes of P/CVE interventions, where distrust of security forces has been shown to be a factor in radicalisation and recruitment.

6.4 Connecting short-term security interventions with longer-term prevention strategies: the PVE toolkit

Addressing violent extremism and terrorism requires short-term security programming targeting the symptoms of violent extremism to be connected with longer-term prevention strategies addressing wider social, economic and psychological factors. This means bridging silos and enhancing cooperation and coordination between policy departments at the MFA. In theory, there is interaction between departments, in particular between DVB and DSH, which are jointly responsible for managing the Stability Fund. Broadly speaking, DVB/TN is responsible for projects focusing on CT and CVE, while DSH is responsible for PVE. In practice, however, the definitions of CVE and PVE overlap, which means that there is also some overlap between the projects managed by DVB and DSH in this connection.

However, there is also some friction between political departments such as DVB and development departments such as DSH, given that they work with different points of departure and use different working methods. On the one hand, DVB prioritises the use of projects for obtaining information for political reporting. On the other hand, DSH prioritises the monitoring of project results, both for accountability purposes and for learning about their effectiveness. This is particularly clear in the joint management of the Stability Fund. In those cases in which DVB/TN needs to use development programming in order to connect short-term security interventions with longer-term prevention strategies, it needs to adopt reporting requirements that are common in the development sector.

[145] This section draws on Glazzard (2021) and Glazzard, Zeuthen & White, 2021.

At the same time, connecting CT and CVE policies into longer-term prevention strategies compels DSH to incorporate CVE in its development programming. Unfortunately, however, DSH is currently downscaling its PVE activities, mainly due to a desire to limit the number of themes and activities in its portfolio rather than as a result of a strategic policy assessment. Given the essential role of development support in prevention strategies for curbing extremism , it is crucial that development departments at the Directorate-General for International Cooperation remain fully engaged.

The PVE toolkit developed by DVB/TN and DSH can potentially help to connect short-term security programming with longer-term prevention strategies. This toolkit was launched in November 2018 and is designed to:

(i) assess (at entry) the possible PVE relevance of development projects;
(ii) ensure PVE-sensitive programming in contexts where VE plays a role;
(iii) where relevant, include project indicators for monitoring activities that could contribute to the prevention of violent extremism.

Training workshops on the toolkit were organised for policy staff in The Hague, and for both embassy staff and implementing NGOs. There have been a number of instances in which the toolkit has helped to improve the PVE- and conflict sensitivity of development projects operating in a context of violent extremism. However, this has been limited to a small number of individual projects, most of which have been funded by a small number of Dutch embassies.

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Annex 1
Key international actors

A variety of international organisations are involved in countering terrorism. This annex lists the most important organisations and describes their role with regard to CT, CVE and PVE policies.

United Nations

Terrorism is a threat to international peace and security and for this reason the UN plays a role in countering terrorism. Especially since 9/11, the UN has become more actively engaged in this field, in particular through the Security Council.

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

The UNSC adopted the first legislative resolution on terrorism in 2001. Resolution 1373 (2001) criminalised the financing of terrorist activities and led to the establishment of the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC).[146] The CTC comprises all 15 UNSC members and is tasked with monitoring the implementation of the resolution. Under UNSC Resolution 1535 adopted in 2004, the Council established a Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) to assist the work of the CTC and coordinate the process of monitoring the implementation of resolution 1373.[147]

Operating under the aegis of the UNSC, a number of Sanction Monitoring Teams monitor the sanction resolutions imposed by the UNSC. As far as CT is concerned, there is a ISIS (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee,[148] which is supported by the Analytical Support and Sanction Monitoring Team.[149] This Monitoring Team consists of ten experts who, in addition to monitoring the enforcement of sanctions, also regularly draft threat and trend assessment reports.[150] The UNSC set up an Office of the Ombudsperson in 2009. Actors sanctioned by the ISIS (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, for example, can ask the independent Ombudsperson to be delisted.[151]

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

The UNGA is another UN entity that plays a role in countering terrorism. In 2005, the UN Secretary-General set up a Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), which was endorsed by the UNGA when it adopted the UN's Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (GCTS) in 2006.[152] The CTITF was mandated to enhance the coordination and coherence of CT efforts among 38 international entities all of which play, to one degree or another, a part in multilateral CT efforts. Examples of such entities are Interpol, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the UNDP. The CTITF tried to dismantle these silos and achieve better coherence among the various policies.[153]

146 UNSC. S/RES/1373. 28 September 2001.
147 See https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/content/our-mandate-0.
148 UNSC. S/RES/1267. 1999; UNSC. S/RES/1989. 2011; UNSC. S/RES/2253. 2015. The Netherlands was a member of this sanction committee in 2018, when it had a seat on the UNSC. UNSC members are automatically members of this committee.
149 For information on the mandate of this Monitoring Team, see UNSC. S/RES/2255. 2015: paras. 51-52 & Annex; and UNSC. S/RES/2368. 2017: paras. 94-100 & Annex I.
150 See https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/1267/monitoring-team/reports.
151 The Office of the Ombudsperson was created under UNSC S/RES/1904 of 17 December 2009.
152 UNGA. A/RES/60/288. 20 September 2006; for further information on the CTITF, see https://www.un.org/victimsofterrorism/en/about/ctitf.
153 Ginkel van, B. *The Practice of the United Nations in Combating Terrorism from 1946 to 2008: Questions of Legality and Legitimacy*. Intersentia, 2010: p. 205.

In practice, however, the CTITF did not produce the results the UN had hoped for. In 2017, therefore, the UNGA decided to set up a UN Office of Counter-terrorism (UNOCT).[154] The UNOCT's objectives are to provide leadership on the UN's CT agenda, enhance coherence and coordination among the entities of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact[155] to ensure a balanced implementation of the UN's GCTS, and to strengthen capacity-building assistance for member states. The UNOCT is also intended to improve the UN's visibility and advocacy role on CT and ensure that priority is given to CT across the UN system. The establishment of the UNOCT, with its strengthened mandate and – just as important – its greatly increased budget, significantly changed the UN's role in the international CT agenda. The UNOCT provides technical assistance and capacity-building, for example on border security, countering terrorist financing and youth engagement, mainly through the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) and the Special Projects and Innovation Branch (SPIB).[156]

Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF)

The GCTF is an organisation that aims to assist the UN in pursuing its GCTS. It was launched in 2011 and consists of 30 members[157] including the EU (see chapter 4 on the Dutch involvement in the GCTF).[158] The US took the lead in setting up this 'informal, apolitical, multilateral counter-terrorism platform that contributes to the international architecture for addressing terrorism.'[159] This was in response to the general perception at the time that the UN was too political and bureaucratic a forum to be able to respond effectively to the terrorist threats facing the world.

An annual ministerial meeting is held every September during the Summit of the UNGA, and gathers at a high political level, with the attendees consisting mainly of foreign ministers, special envoys or senior directors. The GCTF's Coordinating Committee, consisting of representatives of each member's national security coordinator or foreign ministry, provides strategic guidance on the GCTF's priorities and activities. The Committee also oversees the mandates of the thematic and regional working groups,[160] which do most of the work, i.e. drafting framework documents. There are currently five working groups, which are co-chaired by two GCTF members. These are the Foreign Fighters Working Group,[161] the Criminal Justice and Rule of Law Working Group, the Countering Violent Extremism Working Group, the Working Group on Capacity-Building in the East Africa Region, and the Working Group on Capacity-Building in the West Africa Region.

[154] UNGA. A/RES/71/291. 15 June 2017.
[155] On 23 February 2018, the UN Secretary-General signed the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact to replace the CTITF coordination mechanism.
[156] See *https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/what-we-do* for more details.
[157] The members of the GCTF are Algeria, Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, Denmark, Egypt, the EU, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
[158] With a selected membership of 29 countries plus the EU, the GCTF sought to bridge the views of: 1) the five permanent members of the UNSC; 2) other Western States with first-hand experience of terrorism, the financial resources needed to sponsor activities and the expertise required to deal with the problem; and 3) a selection of Islamic countries with front-line experience of terrorism within their borders.
[159] GCTF. *Background and Mission*. Available at *https://www.thegctf.org/Who-we-are/Background-and-Mission* (last retrieved on 25 May 2021).
[160] See GCTF. Terms of Reference. 4 August 2017. Available at *https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Foundational%20Documents/GCTF%20Revised%20Terms%20of%20Reference%202017.pdf?ver=2020-01-21-095304-547* (last retrieved on 5 March 2021).
[161] The Netherlands co-chaired this working group from 2014 to 2017.

The GCTF wanted to break with the classical mode of interaction, i.e. by diplomats meeting in international forums, by bringing together experts and practitioners from around the world with policy officers to share their experiences and expertise, and to develop strategies and tools for countering the evolving terrorist threat.[162] In practice, these strategies and tools are delivered in the form of Framework Documents endorsed by the GCTF members. These framework documents are developed by the GCTF working groups or as products of other GCTF initiatives. They consist of good practices, recommendations and action plans and sometimes more technical tools or manuals for use by policy-makers and practitioners worldwide. The framework documents address a wide range of topics, from effective responses to FTFs to community-oriented policing as tools for CVE, and from countering terrorist use ofunmanned aerial systems to human rights-compliant CT practices in the criminal justice sector.[163] The GCTF framework documents and best practices are discussed in more detail in section 4.2.1.

European Union

Counter-Terrorism Coordinator

In the wake of the terrorist attacks in Madrid on 11 March 2004, the EU leaders adopted a declaration on combating terrorism. Among other measures, a Counter-Terrorism Coordinator[164] was appointed to coordinate the work of the Council of the EU in combating terrorism, propose policy recommendations and priority areas, and monitor the implementation of the EU's CT strategy adopted by the Council in 2005.[165] The Counter-Terrorism Coordinator regularly reports to the Council on the implementation of CT tools and also works closely with the EU institutions to advance EU efforts on tackling terrorism.

Council of the European Union

Although there is one comprehensive EU CT strategy, a wide variety of actors in the EU are involved, to differing degrees, in translating this strategy into policies and implementing the policies in question. However, CT as a matter of national security is mainly a competence of each individual member state.

Nonetheless, a number of EU actors are involved in CT. For example, there is the European Union External Action Service (EEAS), which focuses on the external dimension of CT. The EEAS's role is to coordinate CT external outreach and capacity-building assistance provided to non-EU countries by the EU and member states, so as to ensure coherence and efficiency.[166]

The EEAS works in close cooperation with the member states in the EU Council Working Group on Terrorism (COTER). COTER coordinates the positions of the EU member states on international aspects of the fight against terrorism. It carries out threat analyses regarding non-EU countries with the aim of enhancing cooperation between the EU and these countries in countering terrorism.[167]

[162] Van Ginkel, 2021; and GCTF. *Global Counter-terrorism Forum Official Launch.* Political Declaration. New York, 22 September 2011. Available at https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Foundational%20Documents/GCTF-Political-Declaration_ENG.pdf (last retrieved on 25 May 2021).

[163] See https://www.thegctf.org/About-us/GCTF-framework-documents for all the GCTF's Framework Documents.

[164] Gijs de Vries, a Dutch politician and diplomat, was appointed as coordinator in 2004. He was succeeded by Gilles de Kerchove in 2007.

[165] Council of the European Union. *The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy.* 30 November 2005.

[166] EEAS. *Counter-Terrorism.* 3 May 2016. Available at https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/counter-terrorism/411/counter-terrorism_en (last retrieved on 26 May 2021).

[167] European Council. *Working Party on Terrorism (International Aspects).* 9 November 2017. Available at https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/preparatory-bodies/working-party-terrorism-international-aspects/ (last retrieved on 26 May 2021).

There is also a Working Party on Terrorism (TWP). This council working group consists of representatives of the member states and meets three to five times every six months. The TWP assesses the level of threat to Europe every six months. Its remit also includes practical cooperation and coordination between the European Institutions in the field of CT as well as with Europol, the EU's CT coordinator and COTER. It maintains a list of the most dangerous terrorist organisations and exchanges information on terrorist threats.[168]

Finally, there is a working party on the application of specific measures to combat terrorism (COMET), which examines and evaluates information on the listing and de-listing (i.e. the imposition and lifting of sanctions) of persons, groups and entities involved in terrorism.[169]

Information exchange

Since CT is principally the competence of individual member states, the EU fosters information-sharing among the member states. Europol (the European Police Office) is an EU agency that supports this exchange of information. In 2016, the Council mandated Europol to create a European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) to step up the fight against terrorism. The ECTC is an operations centre and expertise hub that provides operational support upon request to EU member states, tackles FTFs, and shares intelligence and expertise on terrorism financing, online terrorism and illegal arms trafficking.[170] The EU has also set up a variety of other coordination and cooperation mechanisms to facilitate data sharing and criminal justice cooperation, including mechanisms for enhancing external border security. For example, the Council adopted new rules in 2018 for strengthening the Schengen information system, including new types of alerts for cases related to terrorist activities.[171]

European Commission

The Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) was founded in 2011. The RAN is funded by the European Commission and plays an important role in P/CVE, by bringing together front-line practitioners in different fields (e.g. the prison service, youth care, education, the police force) to exchange good practices and develop hands-on practical guides for improving interventions.[172] The Commission also adopted a new Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU in 2020,[173] setting out a way forward for EU action on CT.

As a member of the GCTF, the EU takes part in all the GCTF's activities.

[168] Council of the European Union. *Working Party on Terrorism (TWP).* 13 September 2018. Available at https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/preparatory-bodies/working-party-terrorism/ (last retrieved on 22 June 2021); and Europa Nu. *Groep Terrorisme (TWP).* Available at https://www.europa-nu.nl/id/vh7ej5swx01r/groep_terrorisme_twp (last retrieved on 22 June 2021).

[169] Council of the European Union. *Council Common Position on the application of specific measures to combat terrorism.* 2001/931/CFSP. 27 December 2001.

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Military cooperation

Although the mandate for military responses to counter terrorism lies primarily with the Ministry of Defence and not with the MFA, the following international actors are also worth mentioning.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

NATO invoked its collective defence clause (article 5) for the first – and only – time in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. As far as CT is concerned, NATO seeks to heighten awareness of the threat, develop capabilities to prepare and respond, and enhance engagement with partner countries and other international actors. In 2004, NATO developed a Defence against Terrorism Programme of Work (DAT-PoW) to prevent non-conventional attacks, such as attacks with improvised explosive devices or unmanned aerial systems (drones). The DAT-PoW is also directed against other challenges, such as attacks on critical infrastructure.

NATO set up a Centre of Excellence of Defence against Terrorism in Turkey in 2006. The centre provides training in CT and helps to improve NATO's capabilities. It also advises NATO, for example in the form of Defence Against Terrorism Reviews.[174] NATO has been a member of Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS since 2017.

Global Coalition against Daesh

The Global Coalition against Daesh was formed in September 2014. It has 83 members and seeks to tackle Daesh (ISIS) on all fronts, including beyond the military campaigns in Iraq and Syria. The Global Coalition focuses on tackling ISIS's financial and economic infrastructure, countering ISIS propaganda, preventing the flow of FTFs and supporting stabilisation and the restoration of essential public services in areas liberated from ISIS. The Global Coalition has set up a number of working groups in order to coordinate activities in the different areas. These include a working group on FTFs, which is co-led by the Netherlands, and a working group on communications that focuses on ISIS propaganda. [175]

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