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Vijandbeelden : de veiligheidsdiensten en de democratie, 1912-1992

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English Summary

IMAGES OF THE ENEMY: THE SECURITY SERVICES AND DEMOCRACY, 1912-1992

'Images of the enemy' explores the history of the Dutch security services between 1912 and 1992 from a political, societal, and bureaucratic perspective. Where, to present, the historiography has chronicled the organisational and operational history of the Dutch security services, this study shifts the focus to the interaction between the security services and their political, social, and bureaucratic environment. In line with more recent developments within the academic discipline of the intelligence studies, as reflected in the publications of Scott, Jackson, Davies, and O'Connell – most notably their work on intelligence cultures and intelligence systems – this historical study sheds light on how the political, bureaucratic, and societal environment have helped shape the threat and enemy perceptions, the organization, and the legitimacy of the Dutch security services over time. This has resulted in a historical, and not a social scientific, book. This implies that no theories are tested or formulated on the basis of the archival research. The aim of this book is not to explain how security services in general function; instead it tries to shed light on the specific Dutch security services.

This historical study does so by adopting an approach that is analogous to the *Begriffsgeschichte* or conceptual history. Drafting on a wide variety of primary sources, it shows how the meaning of the word 'security service' has evolved over time, by analyzing how, in different eras, different actors in the environment of the security services have directly and indirectly influenced the policies and practices of the security services. It is, therefore, studied what the employees of the security services, politicians, journalists, members of parliament, concerned citizens, and high civil servants have considered to be the nature and added value of the security service; and to what extent these actors have been able to actually impose their will on the security services, by changing its dominant threat perceptions, organization, and the legitimacy in accordance with

their own ideas and thoughts. This has been done by answering the following twofold research question: what shape and contents have been given to the Dutch security between 1912 and 1992 as a result of the interaction with its political, bureaucratic, and societal environments? And under what circumstances has the character of the security services changed?

In order to answer this question this book traces, in different eras, the process through which the shape and contents of the security services are transformed, i.e. the dominant threat perceptions, the organization and/or legitimacy of the security services. It therefore puts at the center of attention the discussions and debates about the security services, and the material and immaterial consequences of these discussions for the security services. Did the security service have to end or alter certain operational activities as a result of a parliamentary debate? Were new forms of oversight introduced, since the media started writing more critically about them? Did the threat perceptions change due to the appointment of a new head of the security service?

Different political, bureaucratic, and societal actors – each with their own ‘images of the enemy’ in mind – have over time shaped the threat perceptions, the organization and/or legitimacy, and thus the character of the security services. The beginning, evolution, and conclusion of these transformation processes are analyzed in six chronologically and thematically-arranged chapters. The beginnings and endings of these transformations, and so the periodization that was chosen for this book, were designated on the basis of the historical analysis. In each time period, thus in each chapter, a new or different actor (or ‘team’ of actors) started to meddle with the security service, from which – in the end – a new kind of security service (with different threat perceptions, organizational features, and/or aspects of its legitimate existence) emerged.

An array of events has functioned as prefigurations and apotheoses of these transformations. Change sometimes set in when a new organization or bureau was set up; in 1912 and 1952, the ‘formative moments’ of the new security services were of institutional character. In 1912, as we shall see below, a new military bureau for intelligence was established and in 1952, a body for parliamentary oversight of the Dutch security service was formed. In 1961 (new head of the security service) and 1982 (changes in the cabinet and thus a new minister) the beginning or ending of a transformation process was marked by changes in personnel. In 1940, the German invasion of The Netherlands marked the emergence of a new kind of security service; in 1972 the introduction of a new royal decree, which included new formulations of the responsibilities and powers of the security services, preluded a different kind of security service; the year 1992 was chosen as an end point because, in this year, the reformed post-Cold War security service presented itself to the world. To sum up, heterogeneous factors could mark the beginning or ending of a transformation period, but at the core of the transformation process, lies the emergence of a new kind of security service.

In the first chapter, this process is traced between 1912 and 1940. In 1912, the first step in the process of institutionalizing a security service in the Netherlands was taken, when the Bureau for the Study of Foreign Armies (*Studiebureau Vreemde Legers*) was established within the General Staff of the Dutch army. It was supposed to be the solution to the lack of information concerning the armies of the larger European states. When international relations deteriorated at the beginning of the twentieth century – the Moroccan crises symbolized increasing tensions between, amongst others, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom – it became clear that in The Netherlands not much was known about the strategies and tactics of the armies of other nations. In the prospect of a possible war, Dutch parliamentarians started to worry and asked the minister of Defense whether Dutch neutrality would be recognized by the larger European nations. And would that not be the case, did he know anything about the German military strategy, should war come? The Minister of Defense was not able to answer these questions and, therefore, systematized the gathering of open source intelligence on the capabilities and intentions of foreign armies.

Just before Franz Ferdinand was shot, the bureau was upgraded: it was now called the third section of the General Staff (GS III). It was headed by the officers Han Fabius and Carel van Woelderen. During the First World War the number of employees grew to about 25 employees by the end of the war. It became an important instrument to help uphold the Dutch neutrality, collecting intelligence for the mobilized troops at the Dutch borders, documenting the losses of the warring parties on the basis of newspapers, studying the activities of agents of foreign intelligence services, and trying to gauge the spirit of the Dutch soldiers. By the end of the war, when social and political unrest spread over Europe (in Germany socialist and communist republics were proclaimed all around), Dutch authorities feared that revolution would come to The Netherlands as well. Their fears seemed to materialize when, on 12 November 1918, the Dutch social democrat Pieter Jelles Troelstra, in an hour long speech before parliament, came to the conclusion that the momentum for a Dutch socialist revolution had come. Because the municipal police forces from large cities such as Rotterdam and Amsterdam reported about the activities in social democratic parties, unions, and other workers' organizations, the military intelligence service proved to be a useful node of information about the activities of organized workers – and thus the potential for revolution. This practice was the blueprint for the new, civil security service that Fabius envisaged. He feared that the revolutionary threat would not fade away in the short-run and, therefore, advised the cabinet to establish a security service.

Not many military and police officials supported the idea. They asked whether the revolutionary threat might fade away and wanted to know why the new organization should be institutionalized within the military. They also questioned the legitimacy; in their eyes the government should not monitor citizens that are not suspected of any crime. Fabius nevertheless went ahead

with it and took it – through the chief of the General Staff Willem-Frederik Pop – to the political level. Members of the cabinet Ruijs de Beerenbrouck were enthusiastic about the idea, but lacking experience with such an organization – thus not knowing what its added value was – they proved unwilling to provide it with substantial resources. In September 1919, the Central Intelligence Service (*Centrale Inlichtingendienst*) was established. This service existed until May 1940. Throughout this interwar period, the main intelligence producers and consumers were within the military and the police. Politicians were not involved.

The security service, therefore, became a small-scale, secretive, and autonomous security service in the hands of military and police officials. Only a few people worked for the service, which was partially paid for from the secret budget of the Ministry of Defense, whilst the Minister of the Interior was politically responsible. Its threat perceptions solely focused on the revolutionary threat of socialism and communism, although in the 1930s fascist and national socialist organizations, which posed a threat at the time, were added to the list of organization that the security service collected intelligence on. It transferred the First World War focus on the capabilities and intentions of armies stemming to the domestic political domain, and now tried to establish to what extent revolutionaries in The Netherlands, supported and/or inspired by extremists from abroad, were capable and willing to bring revolution to The Netherlands.

Its organization was – due to the lack of funds – decentralized: police forces and several other local or other authorities and institutions collected the actual intelligence, mostly from open sources, but also from human sources (police officers visited the meetings of revolutionary organizations), and the Central Intelligence Service collated the police reports, thus producing regular political intelligence assessments, and kept lists of foreign (but residing in the Netherlands) and domestic revolutionaries up to date. Counterintelligence was not considered important and, therefore, played a negligible role in the activities of the service.

Legitimacy was only discussed in the institutionalization phase, but was not discussed in depth throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Parliament and the public were not informed about the existence of the security service, and there was no legal or formal administrative document in which the mission statement and powers of the security service was laid down. The domestic intelligence practice in the interwar period was to a large extent of informal nature.

In May 1940, during the German invasion of The Netherlands, a transformation process set in. The prewar security service was disbanded and the Dutch government fled to London, where it underwent a geopolitical reality check. Because no *stay behind*-arrangements were made, the Dutch political elite in exile had no means of communicating with the occupied territory. It, therefore, had no information concerning the way the Dutch occupying authorities treated Dutch citizens, nor did it know how the authorities and population reacted

to the changed circumstances. In addition, many Dutch citizens who fled to the United Kingdom were imprisoned for months, awaiting interviews with British authorities. The British security service aimed to establish the political trustworthiness of refugees coming to the British Isles, before the newly arrived were granted the freedom to move around the country. There was a risk that among them there would be German spies. Because the numbers ran through the roof, and since the Dutch looked and sounded like Germans in British eyes and ears, Dutch citizens who risked their life by fleeing the German occupation were imprisoned for lengthy periods of time.

In the light of these problems, Dutch politicians instantly required intelligence for their policy and decision-making. Politicians and high-ranked government officials, therefore, established new intelligence and security services in the Second World War. The Dutch services did not do much more than recruiting Dutch young men, who had come to London. They were subsequently trained and operationally employed by the British intelligence community. Since, at the same time, more and more people in the resistance were engaged in intelligence and security work (collecting military, political, and economic intelligence and covertly sending this to London), there was broad political and social support for an expansion of the intelligence community after the war.

Politicians and high-ranked civil servants now took an interest in intelligence. Consequently, since there were budgets to be granted and bureaucratic prestige to be won, the security service became the object of political and bureaucratic infighting between 1945 and 1949. The Justice and Interior Affairs departments tried to usurp the domestic intelligence activities, each with their own enemy perceptions, organizational preferences, and thoughts about legitimacy. In 1949, after two committees investigated the arguments, it was decided that the security service should fall under the minister of Interior Affairs. Intelligence was therefore framed as something that would be collected to help uphold public order, rest, and security. Although parliament entered the debate in 1949 casting doubt on whether the security service had a legitimate right to exist in the Dutch democracy, in 1952 on a parliamentary committee for oversight was created. The security service now had a firm legal, administrative, political, financial, and bureaucratic basis.

The threat perceptions were completely structured by the Cold War. The fight against communism was the primary reason why generally politicians, civil servants, and citizens embraced the security service as an essential part of bulwark of democracy against communism. From a politically-unimportant, very small, autonomous organization it was before the war, the security service had transformed into a relatively large, financially sound, and bureaucratically and politically firmly established security service: the domestic security service or *Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst* (BVD).

Now the basis for the security service within democracy had been secured, there was room to extend the policies and activities of the domestic security ser-

vice. Between 1952 and 1961, the political and bureaucratic interest in the security service subsided. The most influential actor in this period was the head of the security service, Louis Einthoven, who thought of the security service as the 'opponent of a subversive mentality'. He transformed the security service into an offensive intelligence organization, with a wide span of activities. The security service became a front soldier in the Cold War, with close ties to the CIA. It even resorted to psychological warfare. The communist 'fifth column' became the most important strategic goals.

There were bureaucratic actors that tried to influence the threat perceptions, organization, and legitimacy of the security service. The Special Communications Committee (*Bijzondere Voorlichtingscommissie*) hoped to gain from the political, bureaucratic, and societal support for anticommunist security measures by arguing that the security service needed the Committee for communicating with the public. It even argued that it was illegitimate for the 'spooks' of the security service to talk to citizens and journalists directly. The parliamentary committee for oversight also tried to increase its grip on the security service, as well as the newly established coordinator for the intelligence and security services. Most of these bureaucratic players in the environment of the security service, were not capable of effectuating their claims. And if they did, the effect on the threat perceptions, organization, and legitimacy were very limited. Einthoven, singlehandedly, built the character of the BVD.

His retirement in 1961 heralded a period of societal contestation of the security service, lasting until 1968. This was the first time in history that citizens extensively discussed whether the security services had a right to exist, and it was paralleled by a new dynamic, which in turn transformed the shape and contents of the domestic intelligence practices – again. The security service was increasingly criticized, in an increasingly aggressive way. Although communist parliamentarians and communist newspapers and journals had a long tradition of 'BVD critique', invariably concluding that the security service should be abolished, the 'bonafide' or non-communist strands within society, voiced their concerns about the security service.

In 1962, following an 'eavesdropping scandal' in West-Germany, the Dutch parliament kicked-off a discussion about the legitimacy of the security service, questioning the right of the security service to eavesdrop on telephone conversations of citizens. Several newspapers reported about it, for quite some time after. In 1963, an Amsterdam-based vicar stirred up the debate about the security service's legitimacy by calling on other vicars to stop supplying the security service with information about parishioners. He had come to the conclusion that what he was told in confidentiality was more important than state security.

The most radical attack on the security service, however, was staged by the Alliance of Scientific Researchers (*Verbond van Wetenschappelijk Onderzoekers*) in the same year. They wrote an elaborate and well-researched lampoon, in which they attacked the practice of vetting. The BVD did background checks

to ban communists from assuming sensitive positions in government and Defense. The concerned researchers deemed this secret practice unconstitutional. The debate echoed in the press and in parliament, thereby strengthening the public distrust of the security service.

Between 1965 and 1968 the public suspicion of the BVD even hit the streets. A demonstrator was supposedly told that he was blacklisted by the security service – he ran to a journalist and made the headlines; a greengrocer who had accidentally found a secret policy document, called a journalist, which caused another public stir about the security service. A scandal at Leiden University in 1967 even led some students to call for the abolishment of the security service, which in their view, had become an ‘anachronism’. Although initially, the management of the security service cheered for the public attention, since higher political and societal visibility might be beneficial for the security service, after a few years, the head of the security service Jacobus Smede Sinninghe Damsté hoped that ‘the curtains would go down again’.

The opposite happened. Because of this ongoing public discussion about the service, the new head of the security service, Andries Kuipers, who took office in 1967, introduced a policy of public relations. Kuipers feared that ongoing public criticism might, in the long run, result in crumbling political trust in the security service, which ultimately might lead to budget cuts. In order to prevent that, Kuipers gave several interviews, informed journalists more regularly, and even admitted a television crew into the BVD building. Trying to correct public misunderstandings and responding to unrest voiced in parliament and in the press, the security service had obtained a public face as well.

Criticism did not fade away in the years between 1968 and 1980. On the contrary, press and parliament increasingly reinforced each other when they addressed topics that concerned the security service, thereby maximizing their impact. What changed, however, was that unlike in the 1960s, in this era the public criticism no longer resulted in calls for its abolishment. Public and parliamentary criticism was now more precisely formulated and aimed at specific rules, practices, or incidents. The effects of these interventions, in terms of changing threat perceptions, organization, and legitimacy, was manifest but at the same time limited. It led to adjustments, but no longer caused existential troubles.

The character of the security service nevertheless changed markedly again, because new threats arose. Student activism came to the fore. Although Kuipers did not consider this as a phenomenon that justified the attention of the BVD – in his eyes the royal decree in which the powers and tasks of the security service were formalized, justified the domestic intelligence activities only when groups were extremist: they had to have the intention to overthrow democracy as a whole – he gave in to the political pressure to collect intelligence on student activism. Not much later, the rise of terrorism also compelled Kuipers to accept this new threat as one that the BVD had to report on.

This accommodating attitude satisfied the political, bureaucratic, and societal environment of the BVD, although it invoked problems at the same time. Student activism, but even more so terrorism, was difficult to counter. Where the workers' revolution of the communist threat was no longer expected to materialize in the short run, these new threats did so very regularly. Student actions and terrorist attacks took place time and again. The youngsters participating in these actions and attacks were generally no longer members of the political organizations the BVD studied so thoroughly, and their motivations and ideologies were heterogeneous, to say the least. It was, therefore, difficult to track them down; security services case officers had difficulties with running agents and informants in these milieus, as well. Most importantly, the management of the security service was not willing to redefine the nature and added value of the security service in the light of these changing circumstances. Instead, it held on to its anticommunist worldview. It accepted student activism and terrorism as extra tasks, but at the core of the BVD was still protecting the Dutch democracy from its one true enemy: the communist.

Due to this way of thinking, the security service became increasingly estranged from its political, bureaucratic, and societal environment between 1980 and 1992. The legitimacy of the security service was at stake again, but now the consequences were not limited to damage in terms of public relations; the security service came into existential trouble. This surfaced not only in debates about whether it was justified that the security service monitored the peace movement (in order to monitor communist involvement), but also when the Dutch social democrat Ed van Thijn became minister of Interior Affairs in 1982. He tried to put an end to the intense operational activities of the BVD in the Dutch communist party, the CPN (*Communistische Partij Nederland*). He clashed heavily with Pieter de Haan, the head of the BVD at the time. Although the cabinet Van Thijn fell, and he was thus unable to see it through, the BVD started asking existential questions, too. What was the nature of the security service; what was its added value? How did it try to fulfill its duties, was that still adequate?

These questions were not answered until in February 1989 a new head of the BVD was appointed, Arthur Docters van Leeuwen. He was politically assigned and had the task to modernize the security service. Were he to fail, then the BVD ran the risk of being dissolved, a risk that was very real after November 1989, when more politicians, citizens, and civil servants rendered the BVD as a Cold War relic, and therefore now potentially obsolete. Modernization was absolutely necessary. Docters van Leeuwen started a reorganization, which he embedded in a broad, fundamental reflection and redefinition of the nature and added value of the security service. Instead of trying to obtain a complete picture of threats, as the BVD had done with the communist adversary, Docters van Leeuwen argued that the security service should focus on risk assessment. The security service was, in his view, fundamentally a serving element in government, and therefore, it should supply reports that other branches of

government could use to properly in conducting their work. The security service specified certain 'values' that were essential to the normal functioning of the democratic process, tried to establish what kind of threats were presented to those values and, considering the 'resistance' of those values to those threats, it assessed the risk. Being part of a broader changes in the public sector, along the lines of New Public Management, the security service was fundamentally redesigned: its threat perceptions, organization, and legitimacy were defined in a completely different way. This 'new BVD' was presented to its political, bureaucratic, and social environment in 1992.

This analysis showed that between 1912 and 1992 different actors directly and indirectly influenced the threat perceptions, organization, and legitimacy of the security services. In each period, a different actor dominated the debate and was capable of redefining the meaning of the word 'security service'. Although every politician, journalist, citizen, or government official did so with his or her own image of the enemy in mind, everyone agreed that the security service should never be allowed to become an enemy of the democratic state. This image was everyone's enemy. The security service was to be a moderate, limited, restrained, and above all a *democratic* security service.

