Bound by silver cords. The Dutch intelligence community in a transatlantic context

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The Dutch Intelligence Community in a Transatlantic Context

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It has often been stated that the Dutch intelligence and security community is tied with silver cords to the United States.[1] Both countries have a comparable outlook on world affairs and have common interests. For the United States, the Dutch ally was important throughout the Cold War, but even today the Netherlands are considered to be "a vital trans-atlantic anchor" in Europe.[2] Although the Dutch intelligence community maintained and maintains good relations with Great Britain, France, (West) Germany and Israel, this made Dutch-American bonds exceptionally important. The American-Dutch liaison contributed to the national and international security of the Netherlands, and increased the small country's ability to be involved in world affairs.

How did this allegedly pro-American tilt within the Dutch intelligence and security community come about and how did it evolve over time? One could argue that the general political culture and elite depended on and supported the United States, and that this was mirrored within the intelligence community. Dutch historians such as Duco Hellema have however demonstrated that Dutch interests did collide with US politics on several occasions, for example regarding the

1 De Graaff B. and Wiebes C., "Intelligence and the Cold War behind the Dikes: the Relationship between the American and Dutch Intelligence Communities; 1946-1994", *Intelligence and National Security*, 12, 1997, pp. 41-58, here: p. 47; De Graaff B., "Dutch-American Intelligence Relations", in Krabbendam H., van Minnen C. and Scott-Smith G. (eds.), *Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations 1609-2009*, Amsterdam, Boom, 2009, pp. 674-682, here: p. 681.

2 US Cable "Why Holland is So Important to US", 22 August 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/38987> (accessed 1 March 2012).

decolonisation of Indonesia in 1947-1950 and during the New Guinea crisis of 1958 and 1961. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs did steer its own course, even when this amounted to severe conflicts with the US. However, these misgivings were not reflected within the intelligence and security services, who were "allowed to operate in ways that diverge slightly from current government policies".[3]

What about the intelligence and security services themselves? To further explore the American influence in the Dutch security and intelligence domain, this chapter focuses on the relations between the Dutch intelligence community and the US and how they changed from the Cold War to the post-Cold War era. What were the main issues for transatlantic security and intelligence cooperation between the two countries? In what way did they diverge from the overriding political-cultural *Zeitgeist*? Has the Obama administration caused a re-examination of the Dutch-US relationship on security matters? In examining these questions we will focus mainly on the Dutch security service and its transatlantic relations and less on the Dutch intelligence service, the two being different organisations during the Cold War. The intelligence service and its transatlantic ties have been covered relatively extensively, especially during the 1950s and 1960s period.[4]

To explain these processes of continuity and change, two concepts are used here: intelligence liaison and political transfer. Intelligence liaison entails four different kinds of (transnational) cooperation between different intelligence agencies: complete intelligence liaison (unilateral/bilateral and formal), intelligence support (exchanging equipment, advise, training, warnings), operations sharing (joint, allocated, and parallel operations), and intelligence sharing (sharing mostly finished intelligence reports).[5] This concept provides a framework with which we can explain how and why close bonds between the US and the Netherlands evolved and changed over time.

The political transfer concept includes the import, adaptation and insertion of a certain policy perspective, strategy or measure of one country into another country's policy. Political transfer theory focuses on the international transfer and diffusion of political practices, looking into factors such as transmitters, receivers, and communication channels.[6] It theorises the question as to what degree one political culture was influenced by another and how this came about. Intelligence agencies institutionalised to a large degree after World War II, a process that often involved copying, imitating, or being influenced by each other's systems of organisation, oversight, budgets, operational practices and powers.[7] This holds true for the American services which learned a great deal from their British counterparts (the British were the first to possess effective intelligence and security services), but especially for the post-war Dutch security service. While the British influence was great in the early post-war years, it made way for American influence in the years thereafter.

3 De Graaff, "Dutch-American Intelligence Relations", p. 674.

4 Commission for the Supervision of the Intelligence and Security Services (Commissie van Toezicht betreffende de Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdiensten, CTIVD), report 22a, *Toezichtsrapport inzake de samenwerking van de AIVD met buitenlandse inlichtingen- en/of veiligheidsdiensten*, 2009, pp. 18-19.

5 Wiebes C., "De problemen rond de international intelligence liaison", *Justitiële Verkenningen*, 30, 2004, pp. 70-82, here: pp. 74-79; Abels P.H.A.M., "Inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten en terrorismebestrijding", in de Graaf B.A., van Reijn J. and Muller E. (eds.), *Inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten*, Hoofddorp, Kluwer, 2010, pp. 205-224, here: pp. 219-220.

5 Wiebes, "International Intelligence Liaison", p. 73.

The Origins of Dutch-American Intelligence Liaison

The first intelligence contacts between the Netherlands and the United States took place during World War II. The United States, involved in the war since the attacks in Pearl Harbour, established its first intelligence agency in June 1942: the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The OSS in London started cooperating with the Dutch Bureau of Intelligence (BI), founded at the end of 1942, a bureau for coordinating and carrying out intelligence operations in occupied Europe. However, for the Dutch, cooperation with the British security service (MI5) and Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, or MI6) were of far greater importance during the war, because the Dutch were totally dependent on the British services for their know-how, training, equipment, communication, and cooperation (in short, for almost everything).[8]

The British influence remained during the liberation and immediate post-war transitional period when the Dutch military authority was entrusted with maintaining the security of the liberated territories, and on British instigation the Bureau for National Security was erected, which detected German espionage and guarded against communist agitation. This bureau was succeeded by two different organisations: the Foreign Intelligence Service, established in January 1946, and the Central Security Service (CVD). The organisational structure and the

6 Te Velde H., "Transfer: an Introduction", *European Review of History*, 12, 2005, pp. 205-221, here: pp. 209-209.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 217.

8 Engelen D., "Mars door de tijd van een institutie: beknopte geschiedenis van de AIVD", in De Graaf *et al.*, *Inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten*, pp. 59-70, here: pp. 59-63.

political embedding (a small and agile organisation without executive powers concentrating on supplying the executive with intelligence on espionage and threats to the democratic order and state security) were directly transferred from Britain to the Netherlands.[9]

After a few years, British dominance in the Dutch intelligence and security domain gave way to closer intelligence cooperation with the Americans. Already in the founding of the Dutch security service, the American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was a model with its centralised filing cabinet system and counter-intelligence strategies.[10] The cooperation between the Dutch security service CVD (in 1949 renamed BVD, Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst), and "Karel", as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) became known in Dutch intelligence circles, reached maturity in 1949-1950.[11]

In 1948 the rise of communist power and influence in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Berlin increased the Western fear of a communist advance, not only in Eastern Europe, but through the popularity of communist parties, also in the West. The Czech coup painted a frightening picture of how dangerous the communist "fifth column" could be. Czechoslovakia had been a country with a long democratic tradition. If this stable system could be toppled by communists, they perceived, other European countries like Italy or France could fall pray as easily. US President Harry Truman therefore appealed to Congress on 17 March 1948 to support a new national security programme. He defined the communist coup in Prague not only as a regional setback, but also as a threat to the free West in general.[12]

American containment policy led the CIA to launch programmes to combat communism on a global scale, and so the CIA was looking for friends. In terms of capabilities and expertise, the US needed the cooperation of (relatively) major services (the British, Canadians, and Australians).[13] However, smaller countries like Norway and even the Netherlands were of interest as well. The CIA had three reasons to desire a good intelligence liaison with the Dutch BVD. First, the Netherlands was one of the Western countries that could help them to get a closer look at communist operation in Europe. How strong was the

9 Engelen D., *Geschiedenis van de Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*, The Hague, SDU Uitgevers, 1996, p. 91.

10 De Graaff and Wiebes, "Intelligence and the Cold War behind the Dikes", p. 43.

11 Engelen, *Geschiedenis van de Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*, p. 296.

12 Hogan M.J., *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State 1945-1954*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 95.

13 Richelson J.T., *The US Intelligence Community*, New York, Ballinger, 1989, pp. 265-287.

Soviet hold on its sentinels in the West? Second, the Netherlands became of strategic importance, since it shifted from its policy of neutrality to a policy of international alliances. In 1948 the Netherlands co-founded the Western European Union, and in 1949 it joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. East European communist regimes laid eyes on Dutch military and political secrets: an American air force squadron was stationed at Soesterberg, and nuclear weapons were secretly stored near Volkel. As in pre-war times, the Netherlands became an important locus of counter-intelligence activities, which gave the Western services (through their liaison with the Dutch security service) lots of information about the communist intelligence requirements (what do they want to know?), their *modus operandi* (how do they try to obtain that information?) and their intelligence assets (the actual people involved in the intelligence business).[14]

The third reason for the American interest in a close intelligence relation with the Dutch was the fact that other Western services had serious problems at the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s. The British services were compromised when it became known that the Soviet-run "Cambridge five" had penetrated the British services for many years, the French services were – because of the Vichy past – not yet fully trusted, and the German services were still under construction.[15] During the war, CIA's predecessor OSS had worked with the Dutch resistance in different military operations, and moreover, from a CIA perspective, BVD personnel were trustworthy because of their past in the resistance. These were men with an unconditional loyalty towards one another which made them good security personnel.[16]

The Dutch had their own motives for and interests in intensifying the intelligence liaison with the CIA. Generally speaking intelligence liaison is essential to small services, since their resources are relatively scarce and they therefore rely on other agencies for their intelligence position and know-how *vis-à-vis* the craft of intelligence. Indeed, as the Cold War emerged, American contacts were essential for the Dutch agency.[17] After a false start (when a Colonel Johnson ran American operations on Dutch soil without informing the Dutch security service, a *faux pas* in intelligence liaison), the CIA (founded in 1947) set up its

14 De Graaff and Wiebes, "Intelligence and the Cold War behind the Dikes", p. 43.

15 Andrews C., *The Defence of the Realm*, pp. 339-349.

16 Bentley S., "The Dutch Resistance and the OSS: of Market-Garden and Melanie", *Studies in Intelligence*, 41, 1998, pp. 105-118.

17 De Graaff, "Dutch-American Intelligence Relations", pp. 674-677.

first branch in the Netherlands in 1948. Terms for cooperation were set and relations improved.[18]

Close Bonds: Dutch-American Liaison 1950s-1980s

Besides multilateral intelligence sharing concerning NATO security, the BVD and the CIA developed a bilateral intelligence liaison in three domains: intelligence support, intelligence sharing, and operations sharing. The intelligence support consisted of an influx of special equipment, such as radio communication equipment for surveillance, microphones, and wire recorders, but also money, flowing from the CIA to the BVD. Although most of the CIA dollars were spent on special equipment and fixed costs, a substantial number of BVD-employees were *de facto* on the American payroll, and this direct payment was only reduced during the latter half of the 1960s. Another form of intelligence support was the training of intelligence officers. Since the beginning of the 1950s, the BVD annually sent some of its most excellent intelligence officers to Langley, where they were trained by CIA officers for a number of weeks. These Dutch intelligence officers not only learned the trade from their American colleagues, but also received courses on international politics and ideological thinking. As part of their training, BVD officers were asked to interview high profile intelligence assets, such as the KGB defector Yuri Nosenko.

In return the BVD shared its intelligence generously with the CIA. Unlike the Dutch foreign intelligence service (Inlichtingen Dienst Buitenland) where only the head of service maintained liaison with the CIA, BVD-CIA relations were of a very informal character. CIA operatives approached Dutch intelligence officers individually, and since no formal rules and procedures as to which intelligence was to be shared existed, sharing took place by word of mouth. No records of the intelligence shared were kept. It was up to mid-level officers and the chiefs of the operational units to decide what kind of intelligence they wanted to share with their American counterparts, so there was practically no boundary to what was possible. Former BVD employee Frits Hoekstra remembered that up until the end of the Cold War "the most sensitive operational source was shared with the CIA". Be it "products of technical operations, transcripts of microphone-operations" or "telephone taps", everything was "routinely given" to the Americans.[19]

[18] Engelen, *Geschiedenis van de Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*, p. 297.

[19] Hoekstra F., "The Dutch BVD and Transatlantic Co-Operation during the Cold War Era: Some Experiences", *The Journal of Intelligence History*, 3, Summer 2003, pp. 46-54, here: pp. 47-49.

The Dutch and Americans carried out several joint operations as well. One example of this third type of intelligence liaison was Project A, a far-reaching counter-intelligence operation starting in the early 1950s which entailed the deployment of recording devices in all Russian commercial enterprises and the Russian embassy in The Hague. The CIA supplied wire recorders and translated the Russian conversations. The BVD subsequently processed the "takes" and forwarded transcriptions of telephone conversations to the CIA. The BVD, in turn, was responsible for the "follow up", whenever the BVD and CIA agreed this to be necessary. This could take the form of following and observation actions, the interception of telephone conversations, and new microphone operations.[20]

The intelligence, operations, and intelligence sharing paid off. For the Americans it was the first and only country in which Soviet activity was completely monitored, which provided very valuable intelligence about Soviet "shopping lists" and *modus operandi*. The BVD benefited too, for the organisation expanded, its intelligence position improved and it professionalised through CIA equipment and training.[21]

There were three important consequences to this. In the first place, the extensive intelligence support in all its forms contributed to a strong dependency of the intelligence sector on US national security perspectives. The intelligence support in the form of training provides the main explanation why the BVD's national security paradigm remained so solidly fixed on the Cold War and the communist threat: a generation of intelligence officials was created that had received training, support and world views from the Americans.

Secondly, Dutch organisational culture changed as it became an end in itself to find the approval or appreciation of the American agencies. Hoekstra, the former BVD employee, remembers that "it was a reason for great pride when the CIA station reported that an operation success or a political analysis produced by the BVD was brought to the attention of the State Department or even the White House". In the organisation "it was regarded as almost one of the highest possible rewards in a BVD career".[22]

This changed in the 1970s and 1980s. Although anti-American attitudes had surged from time to time over colonial disputes, even within the Dutch Foreign Ministry, those sentiments never inhibited the ongoing transfer and liaison on intelligence level. But now, the transatlantic

[20] Engelen, *Geschiedenis van de Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*, pp. 298-306.

[21] Engelen D., *Frontdienst: de BVD in de Koude Oorlog*, Amsterdam, Boom, 2006, p. 46.

[22] Hoekstra, "BVD and Transatlantic Co-operation", p. 50.

attitudes changed from within. Parallel to societal and political changes, gradually a new generation of intelligence officers came to the fore within the BVD. These often younger recruits were termed JIMS (a reference to the Dutch words for "young intelligent coworkers") because they generally had a university degree. This group came into conflict with the senior personnel and it took a social worker to reduce the tensions inside the BVD organisation. The younger personnel respected different values *vis-à-vis* the state, the service, and the job, but also *vis-à-vis* the communist threat and the intelligence liaison with the CIA. They grew more critical of the way the United States acted in Vietnam and Latin America and, from the 1970s on became more critical of the blunt and bullying way CIA intelligence officers sometimes acted.[23]

This did not mean – before 1989 – that the intelligence liaison deteriorated. When in the 1980s the BVD infiltrated the anti-nuclear peace movement, it even allowed CIA officers to collect human intelligence within peace activist circles. In the case of Abdul Quadir Khan, the Pakistani spy who retrieved through his studies in the Netherlands knowledge to set up a gas-centrifuge uranium enrichment programme for Pakistan's nuclear deterrence, the CIA successfully pressed the Dutch not to prosecute Khan further after his initial arrest in 1986. Together with the BVD, it continued to monitor Khan for a longer time.[24]

However, the emergence of a new generation of intelligence officers did lead to a transformation of the intelligence liaison in the long term. Political transfer of cultural outlook, psychological warfare techniques and ideological outlook were modified to a more critical, less virulent anti-communist stance. But it took a radical change in threat perception before this new orientation really took shape.[25]

Loosening the Cords: the "Holiday from History" (1989-2001)

On 9 November 1989 the Berlin Wall was opened and in subsequent months the whole of the Warsaw Pact unravelled. One result not noticed at the time was that the Western intelligence community also lost coherence and direction. The perception of an impending communist military or political threat was adjusted and an "atomisation of the enemy"

23 Engelen, *Frontdienst*, pp. 59-62.

24 "CIA mengde zich in strafzaak tegen Abdul Khan", *NOVA tv*, 9 September 2005; "Nederland liet atoomspion Khan gaan", *Nu.nl*, 9 August 2005; *Argos*, 9 August 2005; *De Telegraaf*, 7 February 2004.

25 Hoekstra, "BVD and Transatlantic Co-operation", pp. 51-52.

supplanted the old menace.[26] In 1990 the BVD was reorganised, after a private consultancy company had written a devastating report about its organisation.[27] Personnel were cut from 637 in 1990 to 580 in 1993. The most far-reaching change however related to the underlying security approach. Instead of basing its tasks on perceived threats, the BVD from now on took the vital interests that had to be protected as its starting points.[28]

This new strategy for the BVD conflicted with the tasks set for the foreign intelligence service, since the BVD did not follow a purely defensive strategy of fending them off but took an offensive stance of following the threats back to their source. After some internal scandals additionally undermined the foreign service's credibility both at home and abroad, Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers decided in February 1992 to dismantle the organisation, thereby turning the Netherlands into one of the few countries without its own intelligence service. The BVD and the military intelligence service took over some tasks, but in essence, non-military intelligence gathering abroad ground to a halt. This led to some unforeseen side-effects, when the British Secret Intelligence Service tried to take over complete Eastern European espionage rings through former foreign intelligence service staff. The Dutch government was not amused and asked the SIS representative to leave the country.[29]

This new threat environment nudged the BVD closer towards the other European countries, thereby subtly decreasing the liaison with the US. Bilateral liaisons with the British, French, German, and Israeli intelligence and security services had always been of importance, but as the Cold War bonds started to wane, these liaisons gained importance. Unilateral liaisons assumed larger importance as well. The TREVI (the informal conference of European Community ministers in charge of police, justice and security, begun in 1975 as a Dutch initiative to exchange information about terrorism), the Schengen Information System and Europol now gained momentum. After initial public resistance about the possible infringement on individual rights, the Dutch government joined Schengen.[30]

26 De Graaff B., "From Security Threat to Perception of Vital Interest. The Changing Perceptions of the Dutch Security Service, 1945-1991", *Conflict Quarterly*, 12, 1992, pp. 9-35, here: pp. 20-26.

27 *Trouw*, 15 March 1991.

28 De Graaff, "From Security Threat to Perception of Vital Interest", p. 25.

29 De Vreij H., "Dutch Spies Back in Business", Radio Netherlands (*Wereldomroep*), 21 January 2004.

30 Daun A., "Intelligence – Strukturen für die multilaterale Kooperation europäischer Staaten", *Integration*, 2, April 2005, pp. 136-149.

What significance did these structural changes have for the intelligence liaison with the US? To start with, some crucial conditions for a close liaison changed. As the Cold War ended the overarching threat perception of Communism faded. Threat perceptions had to be redefined and Dutch and American interests did not coincide anymore, especially as economic espionage was gaining in importance. Much of the signals intelligence equipment which was used for spying on the Russians during the Cold War was now employed for the collection of economic intelligence. A further blow to the *quid-pro-quo* principle that underlies intelligence liaisons was the above mentioned decision to disband the foreign intelligence service in 1992-1994. Together with the personnel cuts at the BVD, the Dutch intelligence community had not much to offer anymore, nor was it able to run bilateral intelligence operations abroad.

Only after some time did new interests provide for new liaison and transfer opportunities. During the difficult phase of intelligence reorganisation in the early 1990s, the BVD learned from the American FBI approach to organised crime and corruption in public administration and was able to lift this threat to the status of a national security interest, something it had not been before 1989. Drug trafficking and human trafficking – important American security interests – became important for the BVD as well.[31]

During the second half of the 1990s, two common threat perceptions and interests emerged once more. The first entailed the preparation and carrying out of humanitarian peacekeeping missions, supported by intelligence capabilities. For the Dutch, it took a major intelligence failure to return at least the military intelligence liaison with allied partners to its old pre-1989 levels of intensity. The 1995 massacre in the Bosnian Muslim enclave of Srebrenica, where Bosnian-Serb forces overran Dutch UN peacekeeping troops and subsequently executed an estimated 7000 Muslim troops and civilians, drove home to The Hague that the lack of an intelligence service with relations to foreign partners could have serious consequences on the ground.[32] Srebrenica showed the dependency on US military and political willingness to assist in military missions and humanitarian intervention. Especially within the military intelligence community, this insight brought about a thorough professionalisation and expansion of the service – including building up

[31] Buro Jansen en Jansen, *De snuffelstaat: Nederland en de BVD*, Amsterdam, Papieren Tijger, 2002, pp. 24-50, 172-176.

[32] Wiebes C., *Intelligence en de oorlog in Bosnië 1992-1995. De rol van de inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten*, Amsterdam, Boom, 2002.

their own agent networks, partly modelled after the American example.[33]

In the same period, another common Dutch-American security interest evolved. The intelligence community in both countries increasingly started to worry about the so-called new trend of religious terrorism, emanating from the Middle East and Muslim countries. One of the first government agencies to break the taboo in Europe on the negative aspects of an easy-going integration policy was the Dutch BVD. In a threat analysis published in February 1992 the BVD reported on the danger of religious isolationist and anti-integrative tendencies within immigrant circles, especially amongst young, dissatisfied Muslims of Moroccan origin.[34] It soon saw religiously-inspired terrorism organised by Osama bin Laden's network, sheltered by rogue states such as Afghanistan and Sudan, as the main terrorist threat to the Western world. The BVD declared itself committed to following international security risks back to their origins. It signalled an approach of "offensive prevention" and participation in international counterterrorism efforts. This mirrored threat assessments made by the CIA and FBI at that time, although it is hard to say whether political transfer from one country to another took place.[35]

9/11: a Shared Destiny?

The attacks on the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001 sent shockwaves around the world. The Al Qaeda attacks catapulted international terrorism high onto the Dutch political agenda. Abroad, the Netherlands were among the first supporters for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and sent in special forces and military intelligence officers years before they started to operate within the International Security Assistance Force in 2006-2010.[36] On the domestic front, the Dutch government was however hesitant in responding to this new challenge. In the Netherlands, counter-terrorism policy was framed more in relation to immigration and asylum politics.

[33] Interview with an MIVD official, May 2011.

[34] Abels P.H.A.M. and Willemse R., "Veiligheidsdienst in verandering. De BVD-AIVD sinds het einde van de Koude Oorlog", *Justitiële Verkenningen*, 30, 2004, pp. 83-98, here: p. 91; BVD, *Ontwikkelingen op het gebied van de binnenlandse veiligheid. Taakstelling en werkwijze van de BVD*, The Hague, 1992, p.25.

[35] BVD, *Terrorisme aan het begin van de 21e eeuw. Dreigingsbeeld en positionering BVD*, Leidschendam, 2001.

[36] Dimitriu G. and de Graaf B., "The Dutch COIN-approach: Three Years in Uruzgan, 2006-2009", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 21, September 2010, pp. 429-458.

However, on a structural base, the 9/11 attacks helped to accelerate the necessary reform of the BVD and the establishment of a new foreign intelligence directorate. In February 2002 a new Law on the Intelligence and Security Services was enacted, creating a new Foreign Intelligence Directorate (Directie Inlichtingen Buitenland) within the BVD, which was duly renamed the General Intelligence and Security Service (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst: AIVD). The Foreign Intelligence Directorate began with 70 staff, growing to over 100 in the following years. The AIVD (now 1584 employees) and the military intelligence service MIVD (Militaire Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdienst, 785 employees) moreover established a national organisation for signals intelligence.[37] This gave the services a much better intelligence position and helped to intensify intelligence liaison with the US again.

Contrary to the Cold War period, transnational counter-terrorism co-operation was predominantly stimulated within the so-called "second pillar" of the EU (Common Foreign and Security Policy). However, bilateral exchange with other partners including the US remained important. Since the Netherlands served as a transit country or temporary quarters for jihadi fighters and other members of Islamic terrorist networks with international branches, international information exchange was seen as being of paramount importance.[38] An important condition to improve liaison in this domain was the Dutch ratification of the UN Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (December 1999) on 1 January 2002 via an amendment to the Dutch Sanctions Act, which made sharing of data easier. In August 2004 the Dutch government followed the EU Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism of 13 June 2002 by announcing a Crimes of Terrorism Act. This new law enabled the Dutch authorities to cooperate with other states and intelligence agencies like the FBI to confiscate the proceeds of crime and prosecute the financing of terrorism, money laundering and goods related to preparing or committing a terrorist offence.[39]

In 2004 the terrorist threat materialised in the Netherlands. In the early morning of 2 November Mohammed Bouyeri, the son of Moroccan immigrants, shot the controversial Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, great-grandnephew of the painter Vincent van Gogh, in an Amsterdam street and then murdered him with a curved machete.[40] The

37 This process had already begun some years before. See Vrijsen E., "De staat slaat terug", *Elsevier*, 2 December 2000.

38 AIVD, *Annual Report 2002*, The Hague, p. 21.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

40 See for a more detailed account Buruma I., *Murder in Amsterdam*, New York, Atlantic Books, 2006.

public shock was intense and extra funds for rising material costs and for more manpower to combat Islamist terrorism were released: €15m in 2005, growing to €46m in 2009 (the total budget in 2004, when AIVD-staff grew by more than 100 new employees, amounted to €87.5m, rising to €111.7m, with 150 new employees, in 2005).[41] These institutional and structural reforms and the concrete terrorism threat brought the intelligence communities of the US and Europe closer together than they had been for some years. The re-erection of a foreign intelligence capability within the AIVD and the establishment of five permanent liaisons, including one in Washington, improved the working relationship between the AIVD and the American agencies.[42]

However, the martial tone of the Bush administration's War on Terror, and the one-sided approach to counter-terrorism as taken by the US and its agencies, troubled the practice of intelligence liaison. In December 2003 right-wing parliamentary representative Geert Wilders had already asked the ministers of home affairs, foreign affairs and justice whether they could confirm the American reluctance in sharing intelligence with their European allies.[43] Although this was denied, the *Washington Post* revealed how a lack of transatlantic intelligence cooperation debilitated the joint struggle against terrorism. European officials ascribed this lack to "a matter, in part, of culture": "They [the Americans] believe strongly in the need-to-know operational function, and they usually believe we don't need to know".[44] A stunning example of this non-cooperative behaviour was revealed in 2008, when it became clear the Dutch government had expelled the CIA's chief of station from the country (once again) in 2005, because he had been carrying out operations in the field of non-proliferation and Weapons of Mass Destruction within Pakistani circles in the Netherlands without informing the Dutch services. This was a classic example of how intelligence liaison can deteriorate, something the Dutch-American liaison suffered from earlier.[45]

The sharpest breach with pro-American loyalty was caused by the war in Iraq and the series of revelations about Guantanamo Bay, extra-legal rendition and enhanced interrogation scandals in Baghram prison near Kabul. It is clear that the AIVD and its military counterpart the

41 AIVD, *Annual report 2004*, The Hague, p. 69; AIVD, *Annual report 2005*, The Hague, pp. 106-107.

42 Wiebes, "International Intelligence Liaison", pp. 71-82.

43 Handelingen Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (HTK), 4 December 2003, vergaderjaar 2003-2004, No. 699, pp. 1483-1483.

44 Farah D. and Eggen D., "Joint Intelligence Center Is Urged", *Washington Post*, 21 December 2003.

45 *De Volkskrant*, 12 June 2008.

MIVD were infuriated by the way their British and American contacts handled them when they distributed their reports on the alleged nuclear capability of the Iraqi regime. Though the AIVD and MIVD acknowledged that they had a weak intelligence position on Iraq (the AIVD was still in the process of erecting its foreign intelligence department and supposedly neither of the services had a human agent in Iraq), they were flatly ignored when the British government sent confidential intelligence reports to the Dutch prime minister and his highest civil servant.[46] Such practices are termed "stovepiping" (deliberately channelling intelligence and excluding certain agencies from the decision-making process), and it was a deliberate attempt to go around the AIVD's possible critique of the reports. Especially the intelligence liaison with the British was harmed.[47]

The Obama Administration: New Hope, New Ties?

In a *Foreign Affairs* article in mid-2007 presidential candidate Barack Obama announced that his foreign and security policy would strive to "rebuild the alliances, partnerships, and institutions necessary to confront common threats and enhance common security".[48] Richard Holbrooke captured this new outlook with the contention that Obama was committed to an open, forward looking diplomacy in response to a world in transition, as compared to McCain who appeared trapped in the past.[49] Although many commentators later contended that rhetorical flourishes aside, the similarity between the former administration and the White House course under Obama was more striking than the differences, new strategic directions were indeed offered.[50]

In May 2010 President Barack Obama issued a new National Security Strategy. In it, the White House mapped out a new strategic approach for defending American national security interests, defined as "the security of the American people, a growing American economy", and "support for our values and an international order that is able to cope with 21st century challenges". In this strategy, Al Qaeda is still

46 Davids W.J.M. et.al., *Rapport Commissie van Onderzoek Besluitvorming Irak*, Amsterdam, Boom, 2010, pp. 321-322 and p. 343.

47 Scott Smith G., "Davids and Chilcot: the Long Shadow of Iraq", *Atlantisch perspectief*, 34, 2009, p. 100; Bosscher D., "Beleidsgeschiedenis in een snelkookpan", *Openbaar Bestuur*, April 2010, pp. 12-16; De Graaff B., "Inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten als schaamlap", *Openbaar Bestuur*, April 2010, pp. 24-28.

48 Obama B., "Renewing American Leadership", *Foreign Affairs*, 86, July-August 2007.

49 Holbrooke R., "The Next President: Mastering a Daunting Agenda", *Foreign Affairs*, 87, September-October 2008, pp. 2-24.

50 See Randall S., "The American Foreign Policy Transition: Barack Obama in Power", *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, 11, Fall/Winter 2008-2009, pp. 1-24.

seen as the most important threat to these interests. Although the Obama Administration no longer speaks of a War on Terror, it still views fighting terrorism as its utmost priority. Obama's strategy, however, differs in two important respects from the Bush administration. Firstly, the White House stressed the importance of cooperating with allies in countering terrorist and insurgent networks all over the world. The "going alone" principle would only be adopted in the last instance. Secondly, the counter-terrorism approach has been broadened from fighting the terrorists only on a military level to also preventing radicalisation and taking away root causes.[51]

If we consider Dutch national security priorities, especially regarding the terrorist threat, two developments should be stressed. Firstly, Dutch international and security interests continue to diverge from American ones, signalled by a stronger orientation towards the EU and a slight move away from NATO. The decades-old intelligence liaison continues, but it is not as multifaceted and intense as it was during the Cold War.[52] Moreover, Dutch intelligence and security efforts regarding counter-terrorism have focused more on preventing and deradicalising on a local level than in organising counter-insurgencies or counter-terrorism operations abroad. The so-called "Dutch approach" is therefore both more inclusive and more preventive than the American one.[53]

Secondly, despite the above, bilateral cooperation at the tactical level and the exchange and transfer of security threats continue to be a priority. Regarding the threat of international terrorism, insurgency and failed states, not much light exists between the Dutch and American threat assessment. Fighting jihadis in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, North-Africa, Somalia and the Arabic Peninsula is also a priority for the AIVD. Former head of the AIVD Gerard Bouman announced in April 2010 that the service would concentrate on "forward defence", suggesting that Dutch agents would venture deep into terrorist enclaves to pre-emptively neutralise them before they reach the West.[54] This rather offensive line of national security sounded more like traditional CIA black ops and deviated strongly from the Dutch political line that saw a withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan.

51 *National Security Strategy*, May 2010, p. 21.

52 Janssens R., "Het Wisselend Belang van de VS in het Nederlands Buitenlandse Beleid vanaf de Tweede Wereldoorlog tot op heden", powerpoint presentation, available at <http://www.atlcom.nl/upload/AOCC%202011%20Janssens.pdf> (accessed 1 March 2012).

53 NCTb, Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland [Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands] (No. 22), August 2010, HTK, vergaderjaar 2009-2010, 29 754, No. 193.

54 See *NRC Handelsblad*, 20 April 2010.

On the other hand, the American threat perception is shifting nearer to the Dutch perception, as American policy makers are seriously considering the work of the AIVD on the issue of terrorist recruitment, since the US has experienced an emerging indigenous terrorism threat as well over the last five years. Dutch studies focusing on jihadi recruitment in the Dutch context are seen as useful for American security officials, since the recruitment processes described in the Dutch studies have universal value and could be identified in the US as well.[55] In June 2007, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs invited the Dutch Deputy Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Lidewij Ongering to explain the added value of the Dutch approach, involving a comprehensive linkage of authorities to "tackle the dangers of radicalisation and terrorism as a coherent whole". This approach "includes repressive measures against terrorists, but puts an equal emphasis on prevention".[56]

Conclusion

The continuing security transfer and policy contacts do not entail that transatlantic loyalties have been restored to their Cold War heights. Although the Cold War liaison led to a transfer of security interests and the transformation of Dutch intelligence culture, the arrival of new generations of intelligence officers changed intelligence culture again. The predominant loyal attitude of Dutch intelligence officers towards the US was replaced by a more critical and unilateral stance. Privacy laws, human rights concerns and legal standards put a brake on their relationship with American services and agencies. The change of administration in the US in 2008 has brought new hope for a better relationship, but so far, the misgivings about Guantanamo Bay, the extralegal renditions and the hangovers from the war in Iraq have not yet been fully removed.

The status of Dutch-American intelligence relations has not yet come under as much pressure as the German intelligence liaison in recent years. German public opinion has been alarmed over the American wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the War on Terror. Investigative committees studied German intelligence support for

55 See Rosenau W., "Liaisons dangereuses? Transatlantic Intelligence Co-operation and the Global War on Terrorism", in *Co-operating Against Terrorism: EU-US Relations Post September 11 – Conference Proceedings*, Stockholm, Swedish National Defence College, 2007, pp. 31-40, here: p. 6.

56 Ongering L., "Homegrown Terrorism and Radicalisation in the Netherlands", testimony before the U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, 27 June 2007, p. 6.

American operations in Iraq. For Berlin, intelligence cooperation with the US has been a balancing act. Only recently, Germany once again limited intelligence cooperation out of irritation over the fact that their information was used by the CIA to carry out drone attacks against German Islamists in Waziristan, thereby indirectly implicating the German authorities in killing their own citizens.[57]

In short, tactical cooperation will prevail, albeit mainly on an *ad hoc* base. Since the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, operations sharing has revitalised the Dutch-American intelligence liaison. Despite the "four eyes community" (an operations sharing partnership between the UKUSA countries), the Dutch intelligence community maintains very good bilateral operational liaison with the Americans. During their participation in ISAF, they were even invited to join this community, thereby broadening it to a "five eyes community".[58] However, strategic and cultural differences persist. In the Netherlands a reluctance to cooperate and adopt American security assessments and attitudes was supported by the European Parliament's growing criticism of cooperation with US services in exchanging data flows.[59] Dutch politician Jeanine Hennis Plasschaert earned herself a reputation by resisting US demands and guiding the European Parliament to rejecting an EU interim agreement on banking data transfers to the US via the SWIFT network (as part of the Terrorist Finance Tracking Program) due to concerns over privacy, proportionality and reciprocity. Obviously, intelligence liaison can only thrive if based on shared political goals, principles and strategies towards security threats.[60]

So differences persist. The Obama administration has symbolically tried to bridge the transatlantic gap, and tactical exchanges between the intelligence agencies keep their value. Nevertheless, over the course of the past decades Dutch intelligence services have morphed from being loyal sentinels of the US into discerning and rather critical allies.

57 Stark H., "Germany Limits Information Exchange with US Intelligence", *Der Spiegel*, 17 May 2011.

58 Dimitriu G. and Tjepkema A., "Inlichtingenondersteuning bij handhaving en bevordering van de internationale rechtsorde", in De Graaf *et al.*, *Inlichtingen- en veiligheidsdiensten*, pp. 225-253, here: p. 234.

59 Rees W., "Securing the Homelands: Transatlantic Co-operation after Bush", *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 11, 2009, pp. 108-121, here: p. 116.

60 European Parliament / Justice and Home Affairs, press release: "SWIFT: European Parliament Votes Down Agreement with the US", 22 February 2010, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?language=en&type=IM-PRESS &reference=20100209IPR68674> (accessed 1 March 2012).