

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION: COMPARING U.S. AND THE NETHERLANDS

BY

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USAWC CLASS OF 2010

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 14-01-2010			2. REPORT TYPE Strategy Research Project		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) Sep 2009-Jan 2010	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Interagency Cooperation: Comparing U.S. and the Netherlands					5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
					5b. GRANT NUMBER	
					5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Colonel Cornelis J. Matthijssen, IF					5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
					5e. TASK NUMBER	
					5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Professor William J. Flavin Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI)					8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013					10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
					11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Unlimited						
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Only a work of the United States Government is not subject to copyright. Based upon the nature of a particular student-author's employment, a paper may not be a work of the United States Government and may, in fact, be protected by copyright.						
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15. SUBJECT TERMS Civil-Military Cooperation, Leadership, Culture, Counterinsurgency						
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON	
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			UNLIMITED	30

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Colonel Cornelis J. Matthijssen
TITLE: Interagency Cooperation: Comparing U.S. and the Netherlands
FORMAT: Strategy Research Project
DATE: 14 January 2010 **WORD COUNT:** 5,977 **PAGES:** 30
KEY TERMS: Civil-Military Cooperation, Leadership, Culture, Counterinsurgency
CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

Current counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan have made clear that interagency cooperation is essential. Both the US and the Netherlands have been trying to improve their interagency in recent years. This SRP provides a concise overview and assessment on both countries' current interagency cooperation at the strategic level followed by a comparison with a thematic focus on structure, resources, culture and leadership. This comparison makes clear that both countries have their differences but also best practices that might be mutual beneficial. The US' current interagency system has been institutionalized decades ago whilst the Netherlands' system has evolved incrementally in the last decade. The US has put a lot of emphasis on the structures within the system and currently there is a proposal to reform the whole National Security system. The Netherlands has put more emphasis on culture and leadership as a prerequisite for adequate interagency cooperation. This SRP argues, amongst other things, that it might be useful for the US to invest more in leadership and culture to make the structures work, whilst the Netherlands should put more effort into formalizing the structures.

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION: COMPARING U.S. AND THE NETHERLANDS

Both the United States and the Netherlands participate in the current counterinsurgency in Afghanistan in which interagency cooperation is a key factor to achieve success. Both countries have a different history in the field of interagency. The US has a long history in nation building. The most impressive example is probably the rebuilding of Germany and Japan after the Second World War. To ensure interagency cooperation in the future the US government crafted the National Security Act in 1947 which still is the foundation of the current National Security and interagency structure. The interagency history in the Netherlands is different. After World War II the Netherlands was confronted with the Indonesian nationalist revolt. About 140.000 troops were sent to the Indies to seek a conventional military solution, while a strategy that included a comprehensive approach would have been more appropriate. Since then the Netherlands has been involved in various stability operations but only since the deployment in Afghanistan in 2006 a true integrated interagency approach has evolved. Although there is a disparity in scale between the U.S. and the Netherlands, it might be interesting to compare both countries on their current interagency cooperation and related recent developments to identify mutual beneficial best practices.

Structure

This paper examines the interagency cooperation in the US and the Netherlands, mainly at the political and military strategic level with a thematic focus on the aspects of structure, resources, culture and leadership. Structure relates to the way relevant mechanisms are organized at the strategic levels. Resources relate to the capacity that is or should be available to enable the interagency. Culture is the set of values and

norms within the relevant organizations that enables the people to do the work successfully. Leadership sets the tone in the organizational climate and provides the intent and the right focus.

This SRP will consist of three parts. The first part will discuss the US by giving an overview of the current interagency organization and developments in recent years followed by an assessment. The second part will discuss the Netherlands, also by providing an overview of developments in recent years with an assessment thereafter. The third part will compare the US and the Netherlands and will identify mutual lessons and recommendations for both countries. This SRP does not intend to renew the overwhelming amount of reports and recommendations on interagency reform in the US. It merely compares the two countries with a thematic focus to identify some pragmatic lessons that may be beneficial.

Interagency in the US

Shortly after an elected American president takes office it is a common procedure that he issues a presidential directive on the organization of the National Security Council (NSC) system. In this type of presidential directives the President directs the NSC system on its organization in order to support the President in carrying out his responsibilities in the area of national security. The NSC system has basically three levels in its organization: (1) the NSC Principals Committee (NSC/PC) as its senior interagency forum for consideration of policy issues on national security, (2) the NSC Deputies Committee (NSC/DC) as subordinate forum responsible for reviewing and monitoring the work of the interagency process and (3) the Interagency Policy Committees (NSC/IPC), as the main day-to-day fora for interagency coordination.

The dramatic absence of coordinated planning on the reconstruction of Iraq after the removal of Saddam Hussein in 2003 was the main driving cause for new impulses to the improvement of the interagency process.¹ In April 2004 the Bush administration decided to create a Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) in the State Department. S/CRS was established in August 2004 and its goal was to lead interagency efforts and coordination between civilian agencies and the military in building a sustainable peace in countries emerging from conflict.² In 2005 Bush issued National Security Presidential Directive (NPSD)-44 in which, amongst other things, the Secretary of State was designated to coordinate all interagency efforts focused on reconstruction and development.³ In 2008 Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to have an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization to conduct a study on the national security interagency system. This Project on National Security Reform (PNSR) presented its report in November 2008.⁴

Just before the Obama administration came into office, the US government issued the US Government Counterinsurgency Guide. This document provides government wide doctrine on counterinsurgency intended to help prepare decision-makers of many kinds for the tasks in counterinsurgency campaigns. The document emphasizes the need for comprehensive civilian and military efforts and an integrated approach to assessment and planning.⁵

Department of Defense (DoD) published Directive 3000.05 in 2005 in which, amongst other things, stability operations were defined as core US military missions equal to combat operations and further interaction with civilian elements was directed as the lead of any post-conflict reconstruction operation. This was at least an attempt to

institutionalize national policy in a coherent manner although appealing mainly to the military culture.⁶ This year JCS issued JP 3-08, Interorganizational Coordination during Joint Operations. This document provides the doctrinal basis for interagency coordination and for US military involvement in multinational operations.⁷

Assessment of US interagency

Structure. The structures within the NSC seem solid with Presidential authority and with relevant departments and/or agencies represented in the various fora. The PNSR report however states that the NSC interagency committees are ineffective. This is caused first by the tension in roles for the departments. Their institutional role is to build capacity for their department while sometimes they need to sacrifice department equities for broader interagency objectives. Second it is caused by the lack of collaboration and interagency culture.⁸ The creation of S/CRS was supposed to improve interagency cooperation, but its success is assessed as limited. S/CRS is lacking sufficient manning and it is argued to be used by State and the White House only for relatively secondary functions when convenient.⁹ Its contribution in Afghanistan was limited to a few members counting Integrated Civil-Military Action Group (ICMAG) for Afghanistan, attached to the Embassy in Kabul and meant to improve civilian-military coordination. In Iraq the office did not take part at all. This all left S/CRS with inadequate authority and respect within the executive branch.¹⁰

At the theater and country level other challenges exist for two reasons. First is that DoD and DoS do not use common boundaries to divide the world for its mission purposes. The areas of responsibility for DoD's Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC) do not match with those of DoS's regional bureaus in Washington. This disparity does make coordination more difficult. Because of the differences in structures

command relationships and lines of authority among them can vary as well as interagency planning processes depending on the nature of the mission.¹¹ Second is that the levels of planning differ. Both DoD and DoS develop policy in Washington, but DoD strategy is crafted by the GCC's for their theatre and DoS strategy is crafted by the embassies for their specific country. Embassy Country Teams are responsible for the interagency coordination in their country of responsibility. For specific operations, like in Iraq and Afghanistan, DoD has a Joint Task Force (JTF) level subordinate to GCC. There is not a civilian equivalent at the JTF level to ensure proper interagency coordination at that level. The relevant US Embassy, e.g. in Afghanistan, has to coordinate with two military strategic levels, GCC and JTF. This does not have to be a problem if there is sufficient information sharing at those levels. But that is not always the case. Different chains of command and personal turnovers can further complicate working in this structure.¹²

Resources. Having or not having sufficient manning provides challenges for the NSC, DoS and DoD. First the NSC staff is too small and under-powered to ensure that all but the most important policies are undertaken effectively or reflect optimal resource tradeoffs.¹³ Second DoS faces major personnel shortfalls.¹⁴ Although SecState Powell created more than 1,000 diplomatic positions, these numbers were quickly absorbed because of Iraq and Afghanistan. Further it appears that during the Bush administration there has been too little effort to prevent Congress from cutting its foreign aid budget request by 10 percent.¹⁵ This shows the need for an administration to put sufficient effort in getting Congress to approve budgets. Third DoD is the most well manned executive organization, but this has another effect. Although NSPD-44 has directed DoS to

coordinate government-wide stabilization and reconstruction operations, in reality DoD is actually assuming most of the responsibility.¹⁶ Part of this problem may have been solved with the Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act of 2008 in which the establishment of a “Civilian Reserve Corps” provides DoS with a permanent U.S. Government-wide civilian reconstruction and stabilization response capacity.¹⁷ The effects of it remain to be seen however.

Apart from sufficient manning there is the challenge of getting required budget resources approved by Congress. On the one hand Congress is historically distrustful of “slush funds” not programmed to any specific activity.¹⁸ On the other hand Congress has a stove-piped structure that leads to a fragmented judgment of budget proposals that takes a lot of bureaucracy and time. Congressional oversight of national security programs is divided among many different committees. In one of its reports the Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services stated: “In many ways, Congress is as “stove-piped” as the agencies and functions we oversee.”¹⁹

Culture. There are a few elements that are worth noting. The first is the lack of cooperative culture between departments and agencies. Institution specific cultures and values dominate the bureaucratic landscape and a sense of interagency culture remains limited.²⁰ There seems to be more competition between agencies instead of cooperation and more information hoarding instead of information sharing.²¹ Strong and enduring department and agency cultures exert primary influence over behaviors.²² This all hinders collaboration and adds to misunderstanding and different interpretations, since culture also affects interpretation.²³ From a certain perspective this culture is explicable.

Capabilities and activities that fall outside the core mandate of the organization, which typically is codified in statutes, receive less emphasis and fewer resources.²⁴ One of the reasons for this is that funding is provided by Congress and it is very difficult to get funding for nontraditional capabilities or activities.

Second are the cultural differences that exist between DoS and DoD. An important aspect is the deep cultural difference regarding the value of planning. For military personnel plans and planning, both general and detailed, are important core activities. State department personnel are not used to planning in detail.²⁵ They rather plan in general terms to achieve objectives and value flexibility and innovation.²⁶

Leadership. The PNSR report stated that it would be facile to blame it all on particular leaders, since no leader could have handled these issues without being hampered by the weaknesses of the current system.²⁷ Still leadership is an important factor that cannot be denied. By creating a proper organizational climate, initiating cultural change and leading by example, senior leaders can have great influence on their organization and the NSC system. This was proven by President George H.W. Bush and his key advisors in the NSC of which is said that they formed a national security team that is often described as the model of a well-functioning NSC and interagency process.²⁸

The proper functioning NSC of his father is a sharp contrast with the one in the George W. Bush administration. The key leaders in his team have not been able to set a good interagency climate that would allow the NSC system to function properly. The climate was poor. The relationship between DoS and DoD was bad and SecDef Rumsfeld did not care what the NSC staff said.²⁹ Within DoD there was no internal

process and Rumsfeld apparently felt no compunction undercutting his subordinates.³⁰ SecState Powell initiated changes within DoS and he seemed to have been able to lead and manage the organization well, but despite this, State's influence within the policy process was less relevant.³¹ He was not part of the in-group with the President and Vice-President Cheney like Rumsfeld was. In addition, Vice-President Cheney had a more dominant role than the system required. Rice, as the NSA, saw her primary role as the president's adviser instead of having a leading role in coordinating the rest of the government. This weakened the position and the processes of the NSC.³²

Apart from climate there is friction between DoS and DoD about roles and responsibilities. The disputes over roles and responsibilities in international relations have proven to be an impediment to cooperation. Because of its own capacity and the lack of DoS capacity, DoD has been seeking new authorities to conduct operations that State views as infringing on its primacy in conducting foreign affairs.³³ This further complicated a coherent integrated approach.

After Obama's administration took office in 2009 there are indications that the climate has changed. SecState Clinton has stated that interagency cooperation is one of her priorities.³⁴ Further she and SecDef Gates seem to be on speaking terms and both expressed their willingness to cooperate. Answering questions after a speech at the Army War College, Gates stated: "I feel that the team we have, in this administration, is a team."³⁵ It remains to be seen however to what extent these indications will have a positive influence throughout the NSC system. So far the only presidential directive is the initial directive on the organization of the NSC system.

Interagency in the Netherlands

The Netherlands does not have a coordinating interagency organization, like e.g. the NSC in the U.S., or a single Minister with coordinating responsibility. In its 2003 coalition agreement the government formalized its integrated foreign policy. This document stated that foreign and security policy should be subject to an integrated and coordinated process of decision-making, taking into account policy objectives in all relevant areas. These areas were specifically identified in the Explanatory Memorandum to the 2005 Budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as peace and security, good governance and human rights, trade, poverty, the environment and migration. It is explicitly stated that these areas are interrelated and therefore require an integrated approach and a combination of diplomatic, military, economic and developmental instruments.³⁶ Also in 2005 the government issued the policy that defined integrated policy as: “A clear role for the various players and a comprehensive approach, both nationally and internationally.”³⁷

In 2008 the Dutch government issued her most recent strategy on Security and Reconstruction in Fragile States.³⁸ The strategy is crafted under responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but in close cooperation between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Development Cooperation (MDC) and Defense (MoD). This strategy emphasized the integrated whole of government approach and declared it a starting point for the involvement of various Ministries.

The Dutch whole of government approach is supported by coordinating mechanisms at the governmental levels. At the highest level the Council of Ministers, chaired by the Prime Minister, is responsible for decision-making and arbitration of differences of opinion among Ministries.³⁹ In addition there are regular meetings

between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Development Cooperation and Defense concerning specific missions. Occasionally these Ministers meet with the Prime Minister and his two Deputies for specific purposes related to whole of government issues.⁴⁰

Subordinate to these Ministerial fora there are three mechanisms aimed specifically at the implementation of integrated foreign policy on stability, security and development:

1. Steering Committee for Security Cooperation and Reconstruction (SVW).

The SVW develops and coordinates the whole of government strategy for the Dutch government with a focus on a broad range of issues.

2. Steering Committee Military Operations (SMO). This Committee consists of high-level representatives from MFA, MDC and MoD. It has a more executive character and deals with the deployment of armed forces and civilian capacity.

3. Steering Committee Police and Rule of Law. This Committee with representatives from MFA, MoD and the Ministries of Justice, Internal Affairs and Finance focuses more on participation in police-type of operations and missions concerning rule of law.

These committees report to their representatives' Ministries. Since the start of the Dutch participation in Afghanistan in 2006 there have been small changes in the steering committees. One of the changes is to incorporate the Ministries of Internal Affairs, Justice and Finance in the SVW.⁴¹ Although the MFA is formally responsible for foreign policy, there is no doubt that the government has a collective responsibility on whole of government issues and involved Ministers operate as joint as possible. An example is

that letters to inform Parliament about progress in Afghanistan will always be co-signed by Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defense and Development Cooperation.

To further improve coordination of interagency efforts and a comprehensive approach in fragile states, the Minister of Foreign Affairs decided in November 2008 to create the Fragile States and Peacebuilding Unit (EFV) within MFA. This unit is responsible for coordination and support of all Dutch efforts in fragile states. The EFV works closely with embassies, other Ministries and other national or international organizations.⁴²

In 2008 the Dutch government has asked the Advisory Council for International Affairs (AIV) to evaluate the comprehensive approach related to literature, research and international and national best practices. The Afghanistan related experiences have played an important role herewith. The AIV presented its report in March 2009.⁴³

Assessment NLD interagency

Structure. Since 2006 it has been more of an incremental process in which cooperation further improved. The government emphasized the integrated approach in its Fragile States strategy, but without adding specific responsibilities or structures to it. Implicitly the government means that it expects that departments work closely together to achieve an integrated approach. The AIV has agreed with this point of view.⁴⁴ Having no separate organization by the way does not mean there is no structure. As described earlier MFA has created the EFV and there are three major coordinating steering committees. Subordinate to those committees there is cooperation between departments that is not formalized into structures.

Despite the governments intent to enhance cooperation some shortfalls have been identified.⁴⁵ The first is that the SVW should be the most important coordinating

forum, but in practice there is room for improvement on aspects of frequency of meetings, the agenda and level of representation. The second is the lack of a clear distinction between the three steering committees. Mutual collaboration is mainly on an informal basis. The third is that MFA has an organizational matrix structure with region directorates and thematic directorates. This structure has the risk that different directorates work on the same issues or operations with coordination problems as a result. A clear distinction of tasks and responsibilities is necessary to minimize this.⁴⁶ The fourth is the lack of guidance from the SMO towards the executive civilian and military components in the field.

Within each country the Netherlands embassy has the role of coordinating all efforts. In Afghanistan, with a large Dutch military and civilian contingent in the field, there is a separate senior civilian representative (CivRep) with his staff working fully integrated with the military staff of the operational level Task Force in the Dutch led province Uruzgan. The CivRep has a responsibility for governance and development in that province in which he is fully equal to the military commander, who is responsible for all military issues related to security and building Afghan security institutions. With this there is in fact a dual leadership structure in which the military commander and the CivRep work integrated continuously. The CivRep contributes on development and governance to the commander's reports in the ISAF chains of command. The CivRep also reports to the Embassy, that still has a countrywide responsibility, and the MFA. This leadership structure has two advantages. First there is a clear civil-military face to the mission which reflects the interagency approach. Second this dual leadership benefits to proper mutual understanding and bridging the cultural differences.

Resources. In the decision making process to provide contribution to post-conflict operations the required military capacity will be assessed in terms of availability and sustainability. Because of this, in general, the military capacity is sufficient and suitable to do the job. Civilian capacity is lean and mean and sometimes not sufficient to cope with the challenges like in Afghanistan. This is because MFA is not an executive type of Ministry like MoD is and it certainly does not have sufficient redundancy to have a rotational system in these types of missions. Additionally embassies lack the capacity to engage themselves with local relevant organizations.⁴⁷

In terms of financial resources the Dutch government has a separate budget construction in which all foreign activities are concentrated. It is called the Homogeneous Group of International Cooperation (HGIS). HGIS was created in 1997. This construction within the government's budget is aimed to bring all foreign activities of all Ministries together and therewith it also contributes to a more integrated foreign policy.⁴⁸ It drives agreement and is an important instrument for the government for its whole of government approach. Potential disagreements need to be solved amongst Ministries and ultimately in the Council of Ministers.

Culture. The Netherlands is known for its governmental "polder-culture", which means their approach of finding solutions together in consultation with each other. This also explains the government's approach in the interagency without creating a separate structure. This culture provides a relatively good basis for cooperation, but it does not mean that organizational cultures do not hamper collaboration. The most important cultural differences exist between MoD and MFA. Military are more focused on measurable objectives and planning towards achieving those, while Foreign Affairs and

Development personnel is used to focusing on more abstract objectives without detailed planning. Doing a process of planning integrated however is assessed very valuable for both sides. In recent years major improvements have been identified.⁴⁹ The close cooperation related to Afghanistan in recent years has improved mutual understanding and it has accelerated the interagency culture.

Leadership. The involved senior leaders, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defense and Development Cooperation, all have a clear view on the interagency or integrated approach that the Dutch government strives for. Minister of Foreign Affairs Verhagen argues that the problems of fragile states need to be understood from an integrated perspective, in which the different fields are interconnected with each other. He further stated that: "We are all in it together."⁵⁰ With regard to communication about the mission in Afghanistan in general there is coherence between the three ministers. It is not only the formal co-signed letters to parliament that prove this. Every three months there is also a press conference on the progress in Afghanistan in which high level representatives of the three ministries brief the press jointly. Still it does mean that personal relationships are important to have close cooperation and to have its effect into the organizations, but a coherent presentation to the external environment appeared really helpful. It not only is a sign of cooperation at the strategic level, but it also sets an example for subordinate levels.

Recently the Netherlands government has decided on an updated version of its Assessment Framework. This framework provides relevant points of interest to structure the consultation with parliament prior to the government's decision concerning participation of Dutch Armed Forces in international operations. This updated and

broadened version has, amongst other things, added the aspect of development cooperation for those missions that are related to creating preconditions to initiate reconstruction and/of development.⁵¹ This provides parliament the opportunity to check whether interagency cooperation is properly prepared before the actual deployment of troops and/or other means.

Comparison and recommendations

This comparison is aimed at identifying mutual benefits. Before this however some remarks are necessary to put this comparison in the right perspective. It is obvious that there is a disparity in scale. The US is currently the world's most powerful country with a leading role in the world. The Netherlands is a small country and clearly has not a leading role, but on the other hand it takes its responsibility in Europe and the world. The Netherlands is a typical multilateralist country that needs partners, alliances or existing organizations to execute its influence and power. This difference in scale and role in the world has two implications worth mentioning. First is that the US has a government with large departments and agencies. The bigger the organization, the more people, the more challenging coordination becomes. The Netherlands has a government apparatus that is much smaller than that of the US. Coordination may seem easier, but on the other hand the challenges of bureaucracies remain. Second is that both countries' position in the world reflects their cultures. The US as a very powerful country can exert its power on its own if necessary. The implication is that there is no "natural" need to cooperate and coordinate with others. It is a choice. The Netherlands as a small country always needs partners and alliances. The implication is that it is a kind of second nature to cooperate and coordinate with others.

Structure. Comparing both countries structures shows that the US has formalized its structures in legislation, documents and doctrine at the political and military strategic levels, while the Netherlands has not done so. One would think that formalized structures are beneficial for application in practice but this doesn't necessarily appear to be the case. Reality shows that in the US these structures do not always function successfully, while in the Netherlands the structures seem to be functioning relatively well. This is even more surprising if history is taken into account. The US has the structures since 1947. In the Netherlands the structures have evolved in the last years, mainly since the deployment in Afghanistan. Both countries have created new mechanisms to improve coordination in the interagency, S/CRS in the US and EFV in the Netherlands. Although there is are some differences in both organizations it is interesting to see that the US has not used S/CRS for Iraq and just partially in Afghanistan, while the Netherlands has used EFV for Afghanistan immediately. The US has been focusing a lot on changing structures to try to improve interagency cooperation. One cannot deny that structures are important, but the lack of resources on the one hand and leadership and culture on the other hand are the main factors that prevented the structures to function successfully more than occasionally.

The US should consider putting more emphasis on adapting culture and leadership to enable the structures to function effectively. Senior leaders can make the difference as shown in the George H.W. Bush administration. Especially in the short term this might be worth considering. Although PNSR argues for a holistic reform of the national security system, this radical change might be a bridge too far in the short term, especially in the context of the current other challenges of the administration. PNSR

assumes that the system needs reform, but the question is whether administrations have tried really hard to make it work. The Netherlands should consider formalizing its structures more clearly preferably within a strategic level interagency doctrine document. This will secure successful structures for the longer term.

Resources. Sufficient resources are essential to achieve proper interagency cooperation at the strategic levels, but also to achieve the desired effects on the ground. This has been challenging for both countries. The structures and the coordinating mechanisms at the strategic levels in the US require a lot of additional non-military capacity to enable effective and efficient interagency coordination. Combatant commands and theatre commands need sufficient civilian capacity to plan and execute the required interagency strategy.

The congressional oversight structures have made it difficult to get funding for additional manning capacity or required financial means. PNSR is arguing that a change in legislation is necessary to provide that the Senate and House Budget Committees recommend allocations for all national security budget function components.⁵² For the time being however there are things that may be worth considering. History has shown that administrations have not always tried hard enough to convince Congress.⁵³ The administration should consider to make its case for Congress more coherently and integrated to get required funding. If the administration would fight for it, based on a whole of government approach and related arguments, support of Congress could be more likely.

Further the US should consider creating a budget construction within its budget for foreign activities, like HGIS in the Netherlands. This way Departments are forced to

concentrate their foreign activities in this budget construction and leaving it out of their own budget. The benefit of this is not only that it enhances integration of policy, it also reduces competition between Departments and agencies.⁵⁴ This will also help to ease the oversight challenge. All foreign activities will be presented to Congress in a coherent and integrated way. This might also make it easier to get required funding for the less military activities.

Culture. Culture is important within organizations. It is the people who really define the character of the institutions and who make the processes what they are.⁵⁵ The Netherlands has had a more cooperative culture throughout history. This does not mean that further improvement is not necessary, but the basis is different than in the US of which is said that change is needed. Making the interagency process work in the US requires reforming the bureaucratic culture across agency lines, a task perhaps more important and more challenging than wholesale structural changes in the foreign-policy and national security architecture created by the National Security Act of 1947.⁵⁶ Culture is manageable, although it might take time. Adjusting culture into a more interagency minded culture with a whole of government focus is something that does not have to wait until decisions have been made upon the proposals of the national security reform. All departments need to adapt, although some maybe more than others. To succeed in collaboration bridges have to be built and mutual understanding has to grow. This needs to start on all sides. The US should consider making this a priority across the board within government and its agencies and departments.

Changing the culture should be accompanied by measures in the personnel system in organizations. It is important that personnel development programs enhance

the necessary interagency cultural mindset by having incentives e.g. for people that have been operating in a risky interagency environment, but also that career perspectives are offered for those that have been working with their “boots in the mud.” Willingness to take risk may even be considered as a criterion for promotion.⁵⁷ Adjusting personnel development programs to enhance interagency culture should be considered by both countries.

Leadership. An important condition for whole of government structures to be effective is that participants share a sense of urgency. This sense of urgency will most effectively be enhanced if the political level presses for results.⁵⁸ Establishing a sense of urgency is crucial to gain the cooperation that is needed.⁵⁹ Senior leadership can establish a sense of urgency by expressing this coherently and repeatedly in communication, documents and acts. The relevant leadership in the Netherlands such as the Ministers of Defense, Foreign Affairs and Development cooperation apparently express a shared vision on an integrated whole of government approach that has been formulated as policy.⁶⁰ At this political level the involved Ministers show unity of effort.

In the Obama administration there are signs of improvement. SecDef Gates has emphasized the role of leadership by stating: “You have to have leadership, at Cabinet Departments and at the NSC, who are willing to work together.”⁶¹ There is an encouraging approach between SecDef Gates and SecState Clinton that could prove to be a good basis to make steps forward to more coherent leadership across the board. Two recommendations from Dutch experience are worth considering for the US. First is to strive for a more obvious expression of an interagency effort by having both SecDef and SecState to sign the status reports to Congress about Afghanistan. Second is to

give the US efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq a civil-military face. It would be relatively easy and worthwhile to have a senior civilian representative as a counterpart to the US commanders in those countries. Apart from the previous mentioned benefits this structure will also relieve some of the burden for the US ambassadors. The US has had examples of civilian and military leaders who worked very close together, such as General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker in 2007-2008 in Iraq and Lieutenant General Barno and Ambassador Khalilzad in Afghanistan in 2003. Lt. Gen. Barno saw the need for a close relationship with Ambassador Khalilzad and, after being installed as commander of Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan (CFC-A), decided to establish his office adjacent to the ambassador's office inside the embassy. This itself sent a message throughout the ranks on both sides that the civil-military relationship in Afghanistan would be different.⁶² Although it paid off, this structure was not institutionalized. Their model of civil-military partnership ended once they rotated out of theater and their replacements arrived.⁶³ This example of close civil-military leadership equals the Dutch experiences in Afghanistan.

There is another factor that differs between the two countries and that affects interagency performance. The US system of political appointees causes major challenges in the transition from one administration to another. It robs agencies of continuity and it subjects the career workforce to uncertainty.⁶⁴ This complicates the continuity in the interagency process, prevents building long-term relationships and makes it difficult to lock relevant experience.

The way ahead. The Dutch government has already stated its response to the recommendations provided by the AIV.⁶⁵ This clarified that the Dutch government

continues its incremental approach to further improvement of the interagency process. The US government has not responded to the PNSR report yet. Meanwhile the Executive Director of the project presented a follow-on report in which key reform themes, ideas and implementation initiatives are outlined.⁶⁶ It is not clear what the US government will decide upon the recommendations. The PNSR follow-on report suggests some short-term initiatives to start the reform. The most important immediate step would be for the President to issue an executive order defining the national security system, especially with respect to setting up processes for strategic management.⁶⁷ This order is considered the foundation for the changes that should result in a more cohesive and agile national security interagency system that integrates all the elements of national power. Although the argument behind the recommendation is clear, the question remains what the added value would be with regard to Presidential Policy Directive-1, President's Obama directive on the organization of the NSC System. Further the report contains a lot of recommendations for the other key decision-makers in the administration. Comparing both countries' approach shows a difference. The US seems to look for the holistic approach while the Netherlands continues its incremental approach.

Conclusion

The comparison of the US and Netherlands interagency system brings some interesting observations. Although there is never a single template for interagency cooperation within countries, learning from one another may result in applicable best practices. The US has its PNSR recommendations for a holistic reform of its security system. There may be some short-term possibilities such as creating a budget construction for foreign activities, having leadership encourage interagency by setting

the example, starting changing cultures, putting civilian leadership next to the military commander in civil-military type of operations like Afghanistan. The Netherlands has had more of an incremental approach. In the last decade the system evolved into a fairly well functioning system, although further improvement is required. There are a few things to consider, such as developing interagency doctrine and formalizing interagency structures in documents and doctrine. Besides the US and the Netherlands, interagency cooperation has attention in other countries as well. Incorporating more countries in the comparison was beyond the scope of this SRP, but exchanging best practices amongst countries and looking for applicability in one's own system should be considered a worthwhile common practice.

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