



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background evaluation

Following terrorist attacks at home and abroad, the Netherlands intensified its counterterrorism policies at the beginning of the twenty-first century. At the request of parliament and after preparatory work by the Suyver Commission, these policies have been evaluated in 2010. The evaluation proposes the formulation of a national counterterrorism strategy to provide an overview of all measures and to safeguard an integrated approach to terrorism. At the presentation of the strategy 2011-2015, the Minister of Security and Justice (VenJ) promised parliament to evaluate the strategy in five years' time.

In the spring of 2015, the Research and Documentation Centre of the Ministry of Security and Justice (WODC) commissioned four researchers of the Utrecht University School of Governance to conduct this evaluation, supported by various experts and an advisory committee. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the contribution of the strategy 2011-2015 in order to reduce the risk of attacks, the fear of attacks, and the potential damage of attacks. The evaluation must also provide input for the national counterterrorism strategy 2016-2020.

Evaluation approach

The effects of counterterrorism policies cannot be evaluated directly. The impact of measures are extremely difficult to determine because policy effects can also be attributed to other circumstances. The strategy 2011-2015 also propagates a comprehensive approach to counterterrorism, meaning that multiple instruments are applied simultaneously. This makes it difficult for an effect (such as a person deciding not to travel to Syria) to be attributed to one specific measure (such as withdrawing the passport).

The context of the strategy is thus characterized by complexity: the developments are unpredictable, the partner group of organizations involved is unlimited, and there are precious few scientifically supported standards which can be used to assess the quality of the strategy. The evaluation must do justice to this complexity, but also deliver a clear judgement on the strength of the counterterrorism strategy between 2011 and 2015.

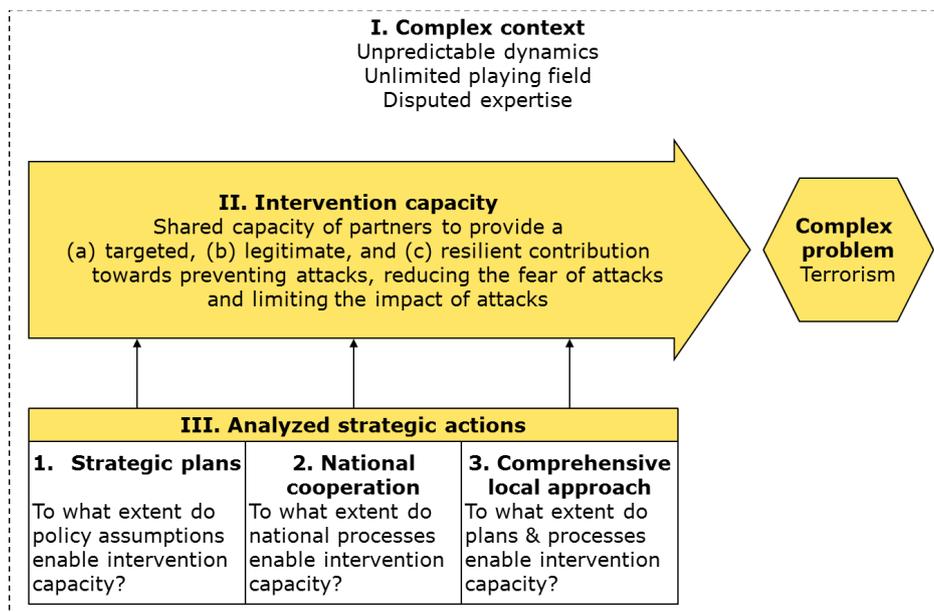


We therefore focus on the joint *intervention capacity*; The joint capability of the organizations involved to deliver a targeted, legitimate and resilient contribution towards the goals of the strategy. Specifically, we examine the combined intervention capacity of the national and local government partners, ranging from Ministries and the National Police to local governments and neighborhood support groups. A strong intervention capacity signifies that these partners can take joint action against terrorism even in complex circumstances, while still recognizing that not all attacks can be prevented.

We evaluate the intervention capacity on three criteria. (A) *Goal orientation*: to which extent are partners and their actions focused on common objectives? (B) *Legitimacy*: to which extent does the strategy retain the support of all necessary partners? (C) *Resilience*: to which extent do partners have the knowledge, contacts and manpower available to act, even in changing circumstances?

We evaluate the strategy by examining three *strategic actions* which the government has undertaken to strengthen the intervention capacity between 2011 and 2015: (1) drafting national strategic plans, (2) stimulating cooperation between the national partners, and (3) implementing a comprehensive approach at the local level. Together, an examination of these three actions constitutes both a plan and process evaluation of the strategy. Figure 4 shows how these different components relate to one and other.

Figure 1 Evaluation framework for counterterrorism





The different partners executed other important actions between 2011 and 2015, such as promoting international cooperation, addressing CBRN/E risks, and actively organizing a public communication strategy. We are, however, not able to examine all the strategic actions. This evaluation wants to focus on the interaction between different interventions and therefore examines three actions where these different measures come together. The analysis so provides an analysis of the strategy from planning to execution and from national coordination to local implementation. From these observations, we should gain an insight in the development of the combined intervention capacity over the five years.

Context of the strategy

The context of the counterterrorism strategy changed significantly between 2011 and 2015. The strategy has been drafted in 2011 in a period of relative calm: After the first series of attacks at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the official threat level had been lowered in 2009 to "limited." In the following years, most developments took place in the external context of the counterterrorism policies, such as the increased use of social media within society, drastic cutbacks across government departments, and changes in the Middle East and North Africa as a result of the Arab Spring.

The terrorist threat itself started to change in 2012. The AIVD (Security and Intelligence Service) signaled a transformation of jihadism in the Netherlands from ineffectively organized groups to cross-functional, fluid networks. Dutch nationals travel to Syria to join ISIS and the threat from returnees or sympathizers increases. Attacks in France in 2012 (Toulouse/Montauban), Belgium in 2014 (The Jewish Museum) and France, Denmark and Sweden in 2015 show that this threat is real. The flow of refugees to Europe and subsequent societal reactions also brings renewed attention to other forms of extremism, such as left- or right-wing extremists. The counterterrorism partners have to maintain the intervention capacity throughout this shift from relative tranquility to renewed turbulence.

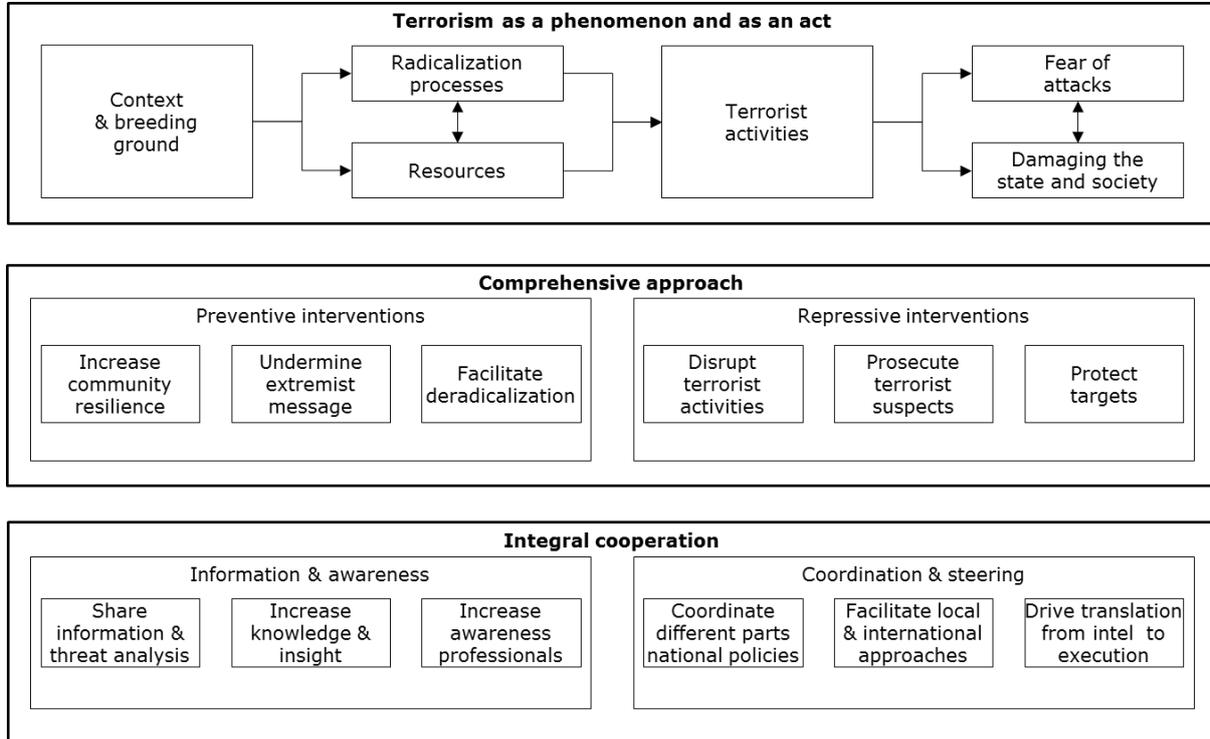
Analysis of the strategic plans

We start with a plan evaluation of the contribution of the strategic plans towards the intervention capacity, based on an analysis of relevant policy documents and the scientific literature. The policy logic consists of three parts: (1) assumptions about terrorism as a phenomenon and as an act, (2) assumptions about the approach of terrorism through a combination of preventive and repressive interventions, and (3) assumptions about the cooperation required of organizations. The plans are characterized by a broad perspective on



terrorism, counterterrorism, and the various organizations that should be involved in the strategy. Figure 5 provides a schematic overview of the different components of the strategy.

Figure 2 Overview of the policy assumptions within the counterterrorism strategy 2011-2015



The strategic plans strengthen the intervention capacity through the consistency between policy assumptions and scientific insights in counterterrorism, as far as the latter are available. Key studies conclude that a powerful prevention and repression strategy consists of a combination of measures oriented towards security *and* social integration. The threat of radicalized individuals can thus be limited while these people are also offered alternatives. Scientific studies also warn, however, for the danger of selective attention in the execution of such a broad strategy, leading to an emphasis on security measure over social measures.

The strategic plans are intended as a "policy compass" to guide all partners, but may inadvertently become a "policy catalogue" from which partners selectively choose actions. The danger of selective attention looms especially large in the absence of a visible threat and political attention, as was the case up to 2013. When the threat becomes visible again and the political urgency increases, the scope of the perspective increases in turn. For example, the Action Program Integrated Approach Jihadism of 2014, drafted in response to the emerging



ISIS-threat, is a concrete reaffirmation of the comprehensive approach and helps to commit both security and social partners to the counterterrorism strategy.

Analysis of the national cooperation

The second part of the evaluation is a process examination of the cooperation, coordination and communication between the national partners, based on 20 interviews and a study of the relevant documents. Although the partners are always willing to work together, the actual attention and capacity for counterterrorism fluctuates between 2011 and 2015. Key players in the security domain such as the intelligence services, public prosecutors, police, and National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) did commit to common goals in 2011, investing in the improvement of prevention, threat analysis and information sharing. Even in many of these organizations, however, counterterrorism knowledge and capacity is lost due to shifting political priorities and budget cuts.

The social integration oriented partners are less, if at all, involved in the counterterrorism policy up to 2013. For example, the Ministry of Education is not a member of the Joint Counterterrorism Committee where the national partners meet to coordinate their policies. Since the Home Office was responsible until 2012 for integration and social cohesion, these particular topics were still connected to the counterterrorism domain. However, when these two topics were reassigned to the Ministry of Social Affairs, this last ministry was also not yet a member of the Joint Committee. Counterterrorism thus unintentionally became equated with a focus on security, without a clear role for the partners focused on social integration.

As the threat becomes visible again, the national cooperation both broadens and deepens. The Ministry for Education joined the Joint Committee after 2013 and the Action Program of 2014 is completed under the joint responsibility of the Minister of Security & Justice and the Minister of Social Affairs. Both security and society oriented partners are working together actively to combat the threat and invest in knowledge, contacts and capacity to increase their collective strength. In this process, the NCTV is valued and respected as the national coordinator, although role conflicts emerge concerning the administrative style of the NCTV and its close contact with the politicians in charge.

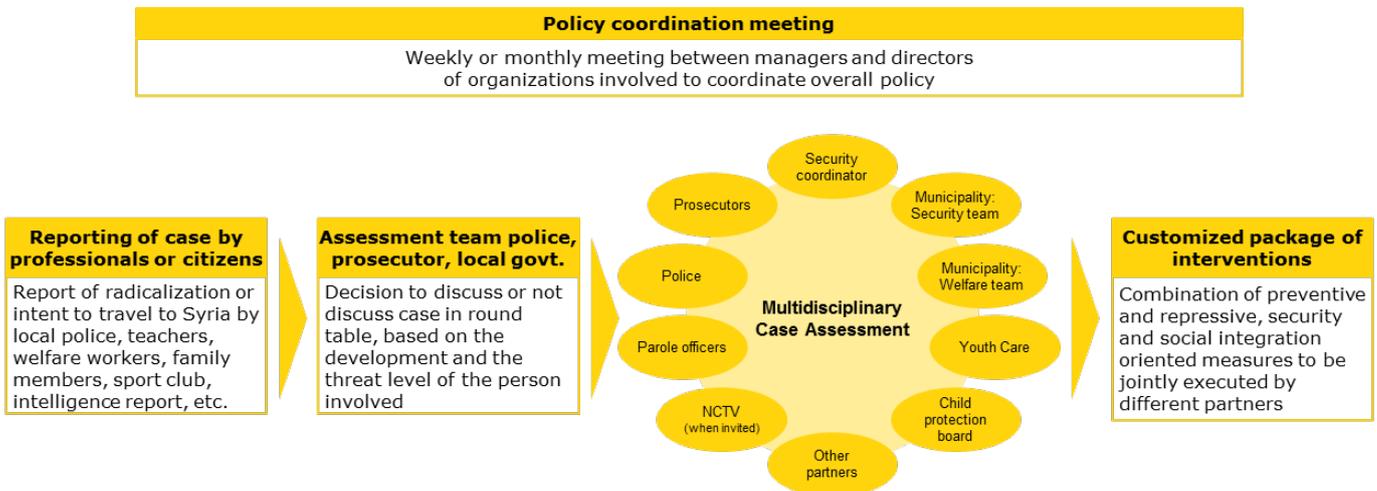
Analysis of the comprehensive local approach

The final component of the study is a plan and process evaluation of the comprehensive local approach. In this approach, local governments, police teams, welfare organizations, and other



local partners cooperate in a multidisciplinary case treatment. Through frequent round tables, the partners devise a tailor made package of interventions aimed at specific individuals, intertwining preventive and repressive, security and social integration oriented measures. This local approach is an essential part of the response to the increased threat after 2012 and is primarily used in municipalities faced with a substantial group of citizens traveling to Syria to join ISIS. We examined three of these local initiatives through a document analysis and 21 interviews with the local government, police, prosecutor teams and child protection board.

Figure 3 Structure comprehensive local approach (design may differ slightly between localities)



The experiences at the local level mirror the experiences at the national level. As there is no visible threat and political attention up to 2013, the capacity of the local partners is reduced to a few employees responsible for the policy or none at all. When the threat becomes apparent, the local partners have to build up their knowledge, contacts, and capacity, needing to quickly gain the trust of the new partners required for a local comprehensive approach. In the end, the comprehensive local approach offers a suitable toolkit of measures which can be customized to fit individual cases. All respondents feel that they can now intervene in potential problem cases in a targeted, legitimate, and resilient manner.

Although the local approach is praised, respondents still feel the consequences of the loss of knowledge, contact, and capacity in the previous years. For example, the first case interventions were heavily reliant on the expertise and networks of a handful of local professionals. In several instances, ill-coordinated national interventions interfered with local measures. Respondents feel that the professionals on the streets still lack the skills to talk to radicalizing individuals. The local approach also generates new questions about the sharing of



information between organizations and whether people deemed to be no longer at risk should remain on the list perpetually. Towards the end of 2015, the local approach is bolstered by an increase in the availability of manpower and by embedding the decision processes within other well-established local networks.

Conclusions on strategy 2011-2015

Across the three strategic actions, we identify five key patterns which influence the intervention capacity as a whole:

1. The broad orientation of the strategy unintentionally leaves room for selective attention. The plans employ a broad perspective on counterterrorism, the combination of preventive and repressive measures, and the scope of cooperation required. This broad approach is validated by the scientific findings available on counterterrorism, but studies also warn that a selective focus on security-oriented measures could occur. The strategy aims to provide all partners with a "policy compass", but inadvertently becomes a "policy catalogue" instead.
2. Partners drift away from each other in times of inattention. This distance does not originate from a difference between preventive and repressive measures – e.g. the NCTV and police also work on prevention- but on an alleged difference between security and social integration oriented interventions. When there is little attention for terrorism, security-oriented partners are still quite active in the counterterrorism domain, but the socially-oriented partners do not see an explicit role for themselves. Yet, without their contribution, the comprehensive approach cannot be fully realized. When the threat becomes visible, the role of these players is explicated once again.
3. The capacity of the national partners has fluctuated strongly over the five years. When the terrorist threat is not visible and/or does not get political attention, the partners are unable to retain knowledge, contacts, and manpower. The security partners still work on initiatives such as the improvement of information sharing, but even the intelligence services, prosecution service, and police are faced with cuts, reforms, and shifting political priorities. The social partners, such as the ministries of Social Affairs and Education, have no explicit role and their capacity decreases also. This means that



the partners have to quickly rebuild their capacity when the threat becomes visible again in 2013.

4. The comprehensive local approach is a potentially powerful instrument according to respondents, but the actual capacity of the local partners has also fluctuated over the years. In the absence of a visible threat, the capacity of local partners is reduced or eliminated. The intervention capacity is restored after the threat becomes visible, as the integrated local approach brings together instruments from different organizations in a customized package of security and social integration oriented interventions. The partners are hindered, however, by the previous loss of knowledge, contacts and manpower. How to coordinate with partners, equip professionals and share information must now be learned quickly, although the local approach has gained considerable strength by the end of 2015.
5. The overall coordination by the NCTV is appreciated by all partners, but specific role conflicts keep resurfacing. Partners recognize the importance of coordination and appreciate that the NCTV has to navigate between the demands of organizations and the commands of politicians. However, organizations such as the Public Prosecution Service maintain that the NCTV should find a better balance between the complexities of execution and the thirst for crisp, data-driven, number-based updates of politicians. Such role conflicts are inevitable for any coordinator in a complex network, but we observe that the position of the NCTV as an honest broker between practitioners and politicians must be actively protected.

When considering the development of the intervention capacity over the years, we conclude that the capacity declined in focus and legitimacy in the first years after 2011. The plans unintentionally leave room for selective attention, leading to an emphasis on repressive and security-oriented measures. In the absence of a clear threat, partners also drift away from each other. When the threat becomes visible once again, the focus and legitimacy is restored as all partners work together on common goals and actively support the comprehensive local approach which combines security and social integration oriented goals.

The resilience of the intervention capacity also follows the decrease and increase in the visibility of the threat and corresponding political attention. Both national and local partners



lose knowledge, contacts, and capacity in the first years when there is little political attention, meaning this capacity has to be rebuilt after 2013. The resilience is strong once again at the end of the strategy period, but it remains to be seen whether the capacity will not simply slip away when the attention decreases again.

Implications for strategy 2016-2020

The key challenge for the next five years is to maintain the intervention capacity throughout periods of turbulence *and* tranquility. The context of counterterrorism is likely to remain complex in the next five years; the events are unpredictable, the group of potential partners remains unlimited, and the expertise on counterterrorism will continue to develop. It is quite possible that the terrorist threat will transform again, become less visible and/or will receive less political attention. The strategy 2016-2020 should therefore focus on retaining the intervention capacity across any type of scenario.

Within this focus on retaining capacity, it is important to make a distinction between the elements of the strategy which should remain rigid and fixed – such as upholding the rule of law and the integration of both security and social-oriented interventions – and elements which should move with the changing nature and origin of the terrorist threat – such as the handling of different types of extremism or the different structures of terrorist organizations. This desired combination of fixation and fluidity should shape the design of the strategic plans, national partnerships, the local approach, and other strategic actions.

Due to the attacks in 2015 and 2016, the political attention for the currently visible type of terrorism seems to be guaranteed for the next few years. A powerful intervention capacity, however, requires a counterterrorism strategy which is targeted, legitimate, and resilient, even when the threat does not get any political attention. Only then can partners deliver the desired comprehensive approach at all time. Over the past five years, this retention of the intervention capacity has proven to be the greatest challenge and the question is now what all parties and partners involved will do to safeguard the capacity in the years to come.



Publication details

Title: *Gericht, gedragen en geborgd interventievermogen? Evaluatie van de nationale contraterorisme-strategie 2011-2015*

Authors: Mirko Noordegraaf, Scott Douglas, Aline Bos, Wouter Klem

Commissioned by : Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum (WODC) van het Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie

Utrecht, 8 April 2016

USBO Advies

Departement Bestuurs- & Organisationswetenschap (USBO)

Utrecht University School of Governance

The research team from USBO Advies consisted of:

- Prof. dr. Mirko Noordegraaf (project leader), Scott Douglas DPhil (executive project leader), Aline Bos MSc, Wouter Klem MA

The researchers were supported by various experts from Utrecht University

- Dr. Karin Geuijen, prof. dr. Beatrice de Graaf, prof. dr. Paul 't Hart, prof. mr. dr. Ton Hol, prof. mr. dr. Henk Kummeling

The team was advised by a committee of professionals and scientists selected by the WODC:

Prof. dr. mr. H. Nelen (voorzitter), prof. dr. E.J. Doosje, drs. J. van Elk, mr. drs. B. den Hartigh, mr. dr. N.J.M. Kwakman, dr. V. Lub, drs. C.S. van Nassau, dr. C.J. de Poot