



IOB Evaluation Newsletter

13 08

Mixed results for Dutch policy in fragile states

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In its foreign policy the Netherlands strives to reduce conflict and promote peacebuilding in fragile states (countries in a conflict or a post-conflict situation). In the period under evaluation (2005-2011) the Netherlands pursued an integrated approach, working with other donor countries and international organisations. This involved a combination of security instruments, diplomatic pressure and development cooperation known collectively as the 3D approach (defence, diplomacy and development). The Netherlands did not focus on all these components everywhere it was active, but rather made choices on the basis of the needs of the fragile states themselves, as well as domestic and international political considerations. In the view of the Policy and Operations

Evaluation Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (IOB), the results of these efforts were mixed. The level of ambition was often at odds with the harsh realities of operating in fragile states. These are some of the IOB's principal conclusions in *Investeren in stabiliteit: Het Nederlandse fragiele statenbeleid doorgelicht* (Investing in stability: Dutch policy on fragile states reviewed). IOB emphasises that supporting fragile states is a matter of perseverance and that without an inclusive peace process, sustainable solutions will not be possible.

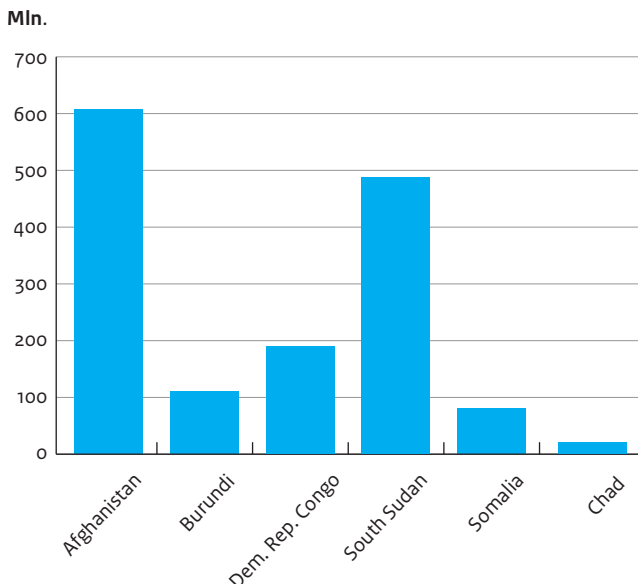
Background

After the end of the Cold War, the nature and impact of armed conflicts changed. Most contemporary conflicts do not take place between states, but are internal. They are especially likely to occur in countries with weak governments and major ethnic and political tensions. State structures in these countries function poorly. Citizens have little trust in their governments, and the economy is often weak. Most of the fragile states have fallen behind in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. As a result of increasing globalisation, states have become more and more interconnected. This also means that fragility and internal conflicts can have implications for other countries, both near and far. Examples of cross-border issues are refugees, international crime, cross-border terrorism and illicit trade. The international community increasingly agrees that fragility and intra-state conflicts can only be dealt with in an integrated way, with a focus on promoting a coherent combination of security, good governance and socioeconomic development. This notion is also the basis of the Dutch policy on fragile states, which began to take shape at the start of the millennium.

In investigating the Dutch role in providing solutions to the problems in fragile states, IOB examined the background and aims of Dutch policy, the resources committed and the results obtained, typically in collaboration with other national and international actors. The report is a synthesis of earlier evaluations and academic research. Besides desk research, interviews were held with officials at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence. The case studies were Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, South Sudan, Somalia and Chad.

Expenses of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in case study countries

Total expenditure: € 1.517,0 billion



Findings

IOB concludes that the Netherlands, as a relatively small player on the global stage, has always operated selectively and on the basis of its own priorities, though it has coordinated its efforts with other national and international players at all times. There has been continuity in its policy priorities: peace, human security, the rule of law, strengthening legitimate governments, and improving social and economic services. Within the parameters of these priorities, the Netherlands operated in a flexible and sometimes experimental manner, depending on the nature of the problems in the country in question (the context). Policy implementation was often built on best practices and characterised by pragmatism and common sense.

The instruments were used in an increasingly integrated manner. The relevant ministries worked together more closely and effectively. These include not only the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence, but also the Ministry of Security and Justice, for example. Thus, the term '3D' is somewhat outmoded.

The Fragile States and Peacebuilding Unit, established in 2008 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, played a key role in knowledge-building on fragile states at the Ministry and at Dutch embassies, and became a pivotal entity in international consultations and policymaking.

Besides peacebuilding, other policy goals include democratisation (an inclusive political process), good governance (a state that takes responsibility for its citizens and is accountable to them) and economic development through market forces. These objectives can be achieved by encouraging processes of state formation by building and strengthening institutions, the rule of law and socioeconomic development. A top-down approach, however, is ineffective in this regard. Outside support can only strengthen national processes, never define them. For that, the political will of local power-brokers and public support is needed. Possible alternatives, such as (conditional) support to existing, but less acceptable (by Western standards) local institutions or political/administrative systems, were not always explicitly taken into consideration.

The IOB's research shows that insights into the local, national and regional context of fragile states have been incorporated into Dutch policy, but that the extent to which this occurred differed by country. The IOB concludes that there was no explicit theory of change to guide interventions in and support to fragile states.

Results

Despite the name, the 3D approach – i.e. a country-specific combination of defence, diplomacy and development – did not mean that the Netherlands was constantly active in all three areas in every country concerned. The choice of instruments depended

not only on the national context and the need to coordinate with other donors, but also on Dutch interests. The intervention in Somalia, for instance, had a predominantly military character, due to its primary aim: protecting merchant ships from piracy.

Military missions and operations – the defence component – tend to have their own dynamic. Short-term results and the security of Dutch and allied personnel are often central. Also, the nature and length of such missions are influenced by the political reality in The Hague.

Although the diplomatic component is usually less visible, diplomatic and political efforts – direct and indirect – often had a positive influence on the situation, e.g. when facilitating and exerting pressure on the parties involved in formulating and implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan, during peace talks in Burundi and in diplomatic and political initiatives in the Afghan province of Uruzgan. The Netherlands was able to influence international policy on Afghanistan through extensive support to the province.

Uruzgan

The Netherlands gave substantial support to the Afghan province of Uruzgan, where it was lead nation. Between 2006 and 2011, this amounted to almost €1.8 billion. Of this, €1.6 billion was provided by the Ministry of Defence (participation of Dutch military in the ISAF mission); the rest came from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for development activities. IOB has some reservations about the approach in Uruzgan. In neighbouring provinces, allies were in charge. Each lead nation claimed to be operating on the basis of a joint approach, but in reality every donor went its own way. Because of the lack of security in the area, the defence component was dominant in Uruzgan. All in all, the Dutch performance resulted in a manageable level of security in a limited area – in and around the urban settlements. There were also achievements in health care and education. However, the sustainability of these results cannot be guaranteed.

The development component often takes centre stage. In most countries, the Netherlands gave financial support to reforming the security sector (army and police), state-building (good governance and services), and strengthening democratic structures and civil society. A great deal of assistance was also provided to improve basic services. Support for the development of the economy and private sector remained limited.

Partly owing to Dutch efforts, positive results have been achieved in these fragile states, beginning with the relatively peaceful establishment of South Sudan in 2011.

The conflict in Sudan


In the conflict in Sudan between the central government and Southern rebels, the Netherlands worked closely with like-minded donors and international and regional organisations. After the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, the Netherlands' main aim was to prevent the outbreak of new armed conflicts. This worked in part. The fact that the break-up of Sudan in July 2011 was relatively peaceful was also due to diplomatic efforts. Yet many disputes between the young Republic of South Sudan and Sudan have not yet been addressed. As a result, the threat of a further flare-up between Juba and Khartoum remains. The issue of continued instability persists within the Republic of South Sudan as well. IOB concludes that the Netherlands and other donors could have paid more attention to improving security, the political situation and the administrative system in Southern Sudan in the run-up to independence.

It is also encouraging that no large-scale armed conflict has broken out in the DRC. Unfortunately, the situation in the east of the country remains highly unstable, and serious local conflicts and human rights violations continue to take place. Socioeconomic and administrative development in both the DRC and Southern Sudan have also remained very limited. The number of attacks by Somali pirates decreased sharply. There is a prospect of more political and administrative stability in Somalia. The reform of the police and army in Burundi has progressed. In this country initial improvements are being made in public administration and human rights. The Netherlands' participation in a European peace mission in Chad only had a temporary effect on the security of refugees and displaced persons.

Expenses

It is not possible to specify the total outlay by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its fragile-state policy. Many expenses, such as contributions to the United Nations and large-scale cross-border multilateral programmes, cannot be attributed to a particular fragile state. But IOB does offer an indication. Between 2005 and 2011 the Ministry spent over €2.2 billion in 11 fragile states, €1.5 billion of which went to the case study countries of this evaluation. Afghanistan and Southern Sudan were the major recipients.

The biggest costs in these countries were emergency humanitarian aid (which does not support conflict reduction as such) and the costs of (re)building and strengthening government institutions and civil society. Considerable resources were spent on strengthening administrative systems, peacebuilding and improving the security situation. > > >



The Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs carries out independent assessments of the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and consistency of Dutch foreign policy. It thus provides accountability concerning the results of policy, as well as information to enhance policy. The quality of the IOB's assessments is guaranteed by means of systematic and transparent procedures.

All IOB evaluations are in the public domain and are brought to the notice of parliament. The IOB also seeks to make evaluations accessible to the Dutch public and to partners in the countries concerned. Reports can be freely obtained and a summary of the most important findings is published in the form of the IOB Evaluation Newsletter.

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Issues for consideration

IOB warns of a gap between optimistic and ambitiously formulated policy intentions and the complexity and risks in fragile countries. It also suggests that more attention could be devoted to scholarly insights about statebuilding and fragile states. In the academic discourse, there has been a shift in emphasis towards supporting and building on local structures and relationships. Finally, the term '3D' does not fully cover the reality of Dutch policy in practice. What is needed is a less ambiguous, theoretically solid definition and interpretation of the 'integrated approach'.