

Terrorism in the Netherlands

A History

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Introduction: 'Historicising Terrorism' as Part of a Security Culture

'Terrorism' as a history of and in a given country can only be written as global history. It is a phenomenon that cannot be studied in isolation, but only properly understood in its connectedness with the wider context of global trends in ideology, technology and political contestation.¹ In this chapter, terrorism is interpreted as a contested concept: as a discursive frame and a political attribution – oftentimes not even properly judicially delineated – with the power to transform conflicting political, ideological or religious positions into repertoires of action and governmental practices. Terrorism comprises various layers of analysis and description (is it an event, a historical trend, a policy, a framework?) and is a moving target, both discursively and legally. This makes it all the more challenging to write its history. Do we start with the emergence of terrorism as political discourse, with the definition of terrorism as a legal category, or with instances of disruptive terrorist events, and the media reporting and terrorist trials that often follow?

Elsewhere, I have introduced the notion of 'security cultures' to make it possible to historicise such notoriously contentious and open terms as 'security' or 'terrorism' throughout the last two centuries. A 'security culture' can be defined as 1) an open, and contested, process of threat-identification and interest-assessment, including the drawing of lines between friends and foes, insiders and outsiders; 2) enabled by institutional structures and agents involved in these processes of threat-assessment and neutralisation; 3) resulting in practices and action repertoires that are introduced and implemented to defend the allegedly

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1 See S. Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2017), p. 5.

endangered interests.² Studying ‘terrorism’ in these terms sheds new light on the nineteenth-century predecessors of the current ‘War on Terror’, and attention to the latter in turn helps nuance broader understandings of the categories and actors, ideas and practices. Current literatures on IR, security and terrorism already work with such concepts (security, security cooperation and counterterrorism), but apply them more often than not in a highly presentist or generalising fashion, giving little or no attention to manifestations of collective threat perceptions and counterterrorism cultures prior to 1945, let alone 1918. Here, ‘historicising terrorism as a security threat’,³ that is, paying attention to the intersubjective and mediated character of threat and interest constructions such as these developed within historical contexts, is explicitly widened to include the nineteenth century as well. Because, with the French Revolution and the emergence of a public space, the early nineteenth century was already seeing the outlines of a global marketplace of ideas, public scares, moral outrages and circulation of threat assessments and enemy images around the notion of ‘terror’ and ‘terrorism’.

For this chapter, the methodological operationalisation of the notion of ‘security culture’ means that the chain of translating terrorism from incident via discursive frame and mediated circulation to policymaking and concrete practices will be followed through time. Thus, we can historicise ‘terrorism’ as a semantic concept, a discourse, an occurrence of political violence and a reality of governmental interventions in public or social life. Terrorist events will be highlighted *inasmuch as they were reported on in the Netherlands*, or when threats posed by international terrorist organisations or foreign groups were mediated within the Dutch context. We will also trace when indigenous Dutch radical groups and individuals triggered national debates – and estimate whether this was followed by national policy decisions and actions or not. As will transpire, the Netherlands were more often than not on the receiving end of international terrorism and global terrorist trends. Yet, there were some instances of terrorist groups and attacks originating in and from the Netherlands, inspired by injustice frames generated on the basis of misgivings about Dutch politics. By and large, the history of terrorism in the Netherlands did follow the trajectories of David

2 B. A. de Graaf, I. de Haan and B. Vick, ‘Introduction’, in B. A. de Graaf, I. de Haan and B. Vick (eds.), *Securing Europe after Napoleon* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 18.

3 B. A. de Graaf and C. Zwierlein, ‘Historicizing Security: Entering the Conspiracy Dispositive’, *Historical Social Research* 38/1 (2013).

Rapoport's 'four waves' of terrorism, albeit with some national characteristics, and always situated within the specific confines of the Dutch national context.⁴

In 'historicising terrorism' in the Netherlands, the notion of 'path incrementalism' should be brought up as well. This chapter starts with the French Revolution as the major event that heralded the emergence of 'terror' and 'terrorism' as a salient political figure and discursive frame in the Netherlands. Interestingly enough, 'terrorism' was perceived by early nineteenth-century pundits as a modern phenomenon, carried out either by groups outside or within the state, and aiming to achieve revolutionary changes in government and society. The French Revolution and the 'Reign of Terror' thus very much set the stage and the tone regarding the introduction of 'terrorism' as a category of political change into the Dutch arena and as a 'bifurcated concept'. Terrorism would always have two faces: terror by non-state actors aimed at overthrowing the government and revolutionising society on the one hand, and terror by the government (the 'reign of terror') in order to quell opposition and dissent on the other. In the following, we will trace the introduction, trajectories and translations of terrorism as a concept, discourse and influence on concrete security practices in Dutch politics, society and law – and we will ask ourselves how this double-edged nature of terrorism played out in these interactions.

The French Revolution and the Birth of 'Terrorism' as a Two-Pronged Threat

The history of terrorism in the Netherlands as a discourse and a category of political change started with the French Revolution. Empirically, the first references to terrorism, terrorists and terror can be found in Dutch journal articles in the years after 1795. Before the French revolution, 'terror' (*terreur*) had been part of the political vocabulary as well, but back then (and this interpretation continued in public texts throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries⁵), it had denoted the righteous, salutary and majestic 'terror of God' – that capacity of gods and princes to instil fear in their enemies. Since Robespierre's Reign of Terror, however, the concept had morphed into a secularised version, the 'terror of the people', the 'tyranny of

4 D. C. Rapoport, 'The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism', in A. K. Cronin, J. M. Ludes and Georgetown University (eds.), *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy* (Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press, 2004).

5 *De Tijd*, 2 March 1864, which cites the 'terror of God's eternal predestination'.

the multitude': in short, into a 'term of abuse that could be used to discredit political adversaries'.⁶ In Dutch discourse as well, references to terrorism pointed to the French Revolutionary or Bonapartist system of governance without law; it could indicate 'fanaticism', 'Jacobinism' or despotism – with the Dutch brand christened 'Batavian terror'. Moreover, through the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, the semantic field of terror/terrorism became connected to chaos, disorder and anarchy as well. The securitising subject of this 'reign of terror' could, however, point in two directions: towards the government, engaging in 'terror' and abuses of power, or towards 'radicals' aiming at revolutionising society and overthrowing government.

After 1793, with the transnational spread of the scare of Robespierre's 'Reign of Terror' as a threat throughout Europe, with the continuation of the 'terror' inflicted by Napoleon's armies after 1803 and the reports on these instances of repression and violence by means of (military) bulletins, 'terror' became a unifying force for collective scares and moral outrages. Only a relatively small political faction favoured the use of 'terror' to revolutionise Dutch society and implement a modernised, centralised state system by force (for these Dutch radicals, 'terrorising' was not necessarily a negative concept). They remained marginal, by contrast with the French situation, never 'spilling one drop of blood'.⁷ Subsequently, with the march of the Allied armies from 1813 onwards, a progressive institutionalisation of collective security policies to combat, neutralise and fend off terror, both in its revolutionary and its Napoleonic guise, was embraced. The peace treaties that marked the end of the Napoleonic wars – culminating in the Final Act of Vienna (June 1815), the Quadruple Alliance and the Paris Peace Treaty (November 1815) – created an international system that defined security as a collective obligation, referring both to the geopolitical challenge of restoring a balance of power and the domestic contexts of preventing revolutionary unrest from erupting ever again.⁸

The Netherlands featured here as well. The first concrete 'terrorist' event that was discursively linked to 'terrorism' both conceptually and in practice after 1815 took place in France, but had the Netherlands as its locus of origin. It started with an assault on the Paris palace where the supreme commander

6 See R. Schechter, *A Genealogy of Terror in Eighteenth-Century France* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2018), pp. 204–5.

7 See N. van Sas, *Bataafse terreur: De betekenis van 1798* (Nijmegen, Van Tilt, 2011); N. van Sas, 'Scenario's voor een onvoltooide revolutie, 1795–1798', *BMGN/Low Countries Historical Review* 164/4 (1989).

8 B. A. de Graaf, *Fighting Terror: Securing Europe after Napoleon* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020).

of the Allied forces and kingmaker of the post-Napoleonic peace, Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, lived during the years of the Allied occupation of France. In the night of 10/11 February 1818 an aggrieved Jacobin from Brussels, named Catillon, awaited the Duke in front of the entrance and fired shots at him. The perpetrator missed – but sparked a massive public outrage. Via optic telegraph and couriers, the news of the attack was disseminated through France and Western Europe, alarm spreading everywhere. ‘They did not aim at me, but at the allied army of occupation’, Wellington correctly surmised.⁹ Police officials in Paris and the Netherlands left no stone unturned in identifying the radicalist perpetrators and soon connected the attack to ‘emigré Bonapartists’ and former ‘terroristes’ from Brussels, where some of the exiled revolutionaries had indeed resettled and found a livelihood in printing and disseminating subversive pamphlets aimed at overthrowing the French and European order. Against this threat of ‘armed Jacobinism’,¹⁰ the Allied ministers in Paris convened in the Allied Council and composed lists of allegedly ‘dangerous radicals’, including Bonapartists, members of Napoleon’s family and a series of regicides and other ‘terroristes dangereux’. These first European ‘blacklists’ were dispatched to all the foreign courts of Europe. Subsequently, after 1818, Metternich (with the support of Russia and Prussia) continued to try to transform the Allied coalition into a kind of ‘European police’, threatening minor countries with military action and enforcement if they would not comply and expel or imprison their radicals. The new King of the Netherlands, William I, was thus pressed into compliance and, reluctantly, introduced a number of new laws and deportation regulations (which they never seriously enforced). With censorship laws, the plotting and wrangling of French exiles and ‘terroristes’ in Brussels – ‘this nest of traitors and libellers’ – was curtailed somewhat.¹¹ Yet, in the Netherlands, the coming decades did not witness new, reported acts of ‘terrorism’.

Over the course of the following decades, from the 1820s until the 1860s, terrorism did surface as a category in media and parliamentary debates, predominantly as a reference to the threat of revolution and anarchy by non-

9 R. Muir, *Wellington: Waterloo and the Fortunes of Peace, 1814–1852* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2015), pp. 111–13.

10 Metternich, Memorandum to Hardenberg, 6 August 1815, GStA, PK III. HA I, nr. 1461, 75.

11 Wellington, Memorandum to ministers on the libels published in the Low Countries, 29 August 1816, attachment of Wellington to the protocol of the Allied Council of Ministers, 29 August 1816, The National Archives, Foreign Office, FO 146/14; see also De Graaf, *Fighting Terror*, chapters 5, 6.

state actors. As in 1818, ‘terrorism’ or ‘terroristes’ did first of all indicate the discrete category of 387 regicide representatives in the French Convention of 1793 and the direct followers of Robespierre, but was soon broadened to encompass newer generations of radicals. Sometimes the terminology was used to identify revolutionary uprisings in Belgium or Poland, as in 1830.¹² In the process of European radicalisation towards the uprisings of 1848, Dutch media indeed warned against the ‘terrorism of the turbulent classes’, pointing to the Swiss revolts in the canton of Vaud (1846), radicals in Italy, Belgium and Ireland, or Kossuth in Hungary. Terrorism was not just a political category, but also undermined social peace and order: ‘La violence et le terrorisme sont les satellites du désordre social.’¹³ Interestingly, at the same time, the threat of terrorism was also invoked to decry governmental despotism, in the form of Dutch governmental action against Belgian newspapers in 1830. ‘Terrorism’ was also attributed to a government, such as the Russian one, which did not refrain from infringing upon constitutional liberties and the freedom of the press in Poland.¹⁴ The Italian and German governments were similarly chastised for their use of violence against oppositional factions. The culmination of this two-pronged threat was reached in 1851, according to the Dutch media, when Napoleon III used the fear for ‘terrorism’ and the memory of ‘Red Terror’ to install his own ‘reign of terror’.¹⁵

In these first post-1815 decades, the security culture regarding ‘terrorism’ was still quite obfuscated and not sharply defined by law. It needs to be stressed that, in the decades before the 1880s, terrorism ‘by the deed’ and ‘by the pencil’ were not yet strictly separated. The epitaph ‘radical’ or ‘Jacobin’ could comprise both radical writers and those who committed violent or seditious acts; terrorism was a category of political unrest and social disorder, or an indication of governmental despotism.¹⁶ Yet, this framing of any radical opposition to authoritarian monarchical rule as potentially terrorist and revolutionary abated somewhat after 1848, when the Dutch king accepted a constitution and made way for a parliamentary monarchy and democracy.

12 *L'éclaireur politique: Journal de la province du Limbourg*, 3 May 1829; *Journal de La Haye*, 17 June 1831.

13 *Journal de La Haye*, 18 April 1846; *Provinciale Overijsselsche en Zolsche Courant*, 21 April 1848; *Journal de La Haye*, 1 January 1849; *Rotterdamsche Courant*, 18 October 1849.

14 *L'éclaireur politique: Journal de la province du Limbourg*, 3 May 1829; *Journal de La Haye*, 17 June 1831.

15 *De Tijd*, 9 December 1851.

16 M. J. F. Robijns, *Radicalen in Nederland, 1840–1851* (PhD thesis, Leiden, Universitaire Pers, 1967).

The legal limbo regarding terrorism remained unchanged, however, and was only marginally adapted with the dawn of international anarchism.

A Failed Recipe: Anarchism in the Netherlands

With the emergence of the Fenians in Ireland, and the repression of the Paris Commune in 1870, the transnational spectre of 'terrorism' was both reawakened and depicted in sharper contours within the Dutch political and public arena.¹⁷ Terrorism would now comprise concrete groupings of non-state actors who carried out political attacks or assassinations, such as the assassination attempts on Tsar Alexander II, and presented themselves as organisations – such as *Narodnaya Volya*, or 'the nihilists', as they were called in the Dutch media.¹⁸ At the same time, such organisations were consciously and deliberately linked by confessional Catholic or Protestant journals to 'demonic liberalism', godless socialism and the 'terror of the masses', or 'the classes', that attempted to subvert the God-given order of society.¹⁹ The national security culture became more polarised, divided into confessional, socialist and liberal factions – a situation mirrored in the fragmented media landscape.

Before any concrete incident of terrorism (such as a political murder or attack) took place, rumours and reports of foreign instances of violent attacks were feverishly collected and circulated by the Dutch authorities. Newspapers, telegraph, telephone and coffeehouse rumours contributed to this process of the public dissemination and securitisation of global anarchist threats. Due to the rise of financial markets and the diamond industry, cities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam experienced an economic high after 1871, followed by a corresponding upsurge in urban security and criminality problems. Public disturbances and riots increased, putting issues of public order and security high on the local and political agenda, advanced by political parties that were founded around that same period. Regarding

17 *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 22 December 1869; *De Locomotief*, 17 April 1871. On the concepts discussed in this section, see See B. A. de Graaf, 'The Black International as Security Dispositive in the Netherlands, 1880–1900', *Historical Social Research* 38/1 (2013); B. A. de Graaf and W. Klem, 'Joining the International War Against Anarchism: The Dutch Police and Its Push Towards Transnational Cooperation, 1880–1914', in R. van Dijk et al. (eds.), *Shaping the International Relations of the Netherlands, 1815–2000* (London, Routledge, 2018).

18 *Arnhemsche Courant*, 21 April 1879. The newspaper reported on failed attempts; the successful one occurred in 1881. *Tilburgsche Courant*, 5 May 1881; *Hoornsche Courant*, 9 July 1879.

19 *De Standaard*, 10 May 1883; 9, 14 September 1885.

these security concerns, it was not the marginal anarchists, but the increasingly organised socialists that represented the largest threat to the established order of confessional, conservative and liberal governments.²⁰ Police reports spoke of ‘red flags’ and subversive socialists roaming the streets.²¹ Moreover, connections were drawn between socialists in the Netherlands and explosive events abroad. In 1887, a new article was added to the constitution, allowing the king to impose martial law and to declare a state of emergency ‘in order to maintain external and international security’.²²

Violent outbursts and attacks – such as those occurring in tsarist Russia, Spain or the United States – did not take place, but Parliament nevertheless felt the need to prohibit transporting and stockpiling explosives ‘with malicious intent’ per royal decree in 1885.²³ On 5 December 1888, on the occasion of the Dutch national celebration of Saint Nicholas, the mayor, police commander and public prosecutor of Amsterdam received ‘hellish machines’ – explosive devices, intended to blow up when they were unwrapped. The true content of the surprise packages was, however, detected before they exploded.²⁴ From the archives, it becomes clear that itinerant anarchists remained a threat in the years that followed. Police commissioners reported on ‘strangers’ within their area, purportedly preparing all kinds of subversive activities.²⁵ Newspapers reported on anarchist attacks abroad (‘Read and tremble’, the *Rotterdamsch nieuwsblad* commented on the Paris attack.²⁶) *De Politiegids* pointed to a potential anarchist constituency in the Netherlands, where ‘the violent school from which the Ravachols . . . originated [knew] many students as well’. The police journal also expanded the threat definition, and turned it into a subversion of the overall public and moral order: ‘And our country? . . . Then a number of shocking attacks against public morality occurred. However different they

20 J. Charité, *De Sociaal-Democratische Bond als orde-en gezagsprobleem voor de overheid (1880–1888)* (PhD thesis, Utrecht, Zuid-Hollandsche Boeken Handelsdrukkerij, 1972); D. Bos, *Waarachtige volksvrienden: De vroege socialistische beweging in Amsterdam, 1848–1894* (Amsterdam, Bakker, 2001).

21 Telegrams of bureau section 5 to central bureau, 25 July 1886; see Gemeentearchief Amsterdam (GAA), 5225, 5.50 afternoon, no. 164 and idem, 7.56 afternoon, no. 148.

22 R. W. van Zuijlen, *Veiligheid als opdracht. Een onderzoek naar veiligheid als fundamenteel recht en als positieve verplichting van de staat in het licht van de politietaken tot strafrechtelijke rechtshandhaving* (PhD thesis, Nijmegen, Wolf Legal Publishers, 2000), p. 66.

23 ‘Royal Decree’, *Staatsblad*, no. 187, 15 October 1885.

24 ‘Uit de Hoofdstad’, *De Nederlandsche politiegids*, no. 37, January 1889.

25 Letter of the public prosecutor of Amsterdam to the Minister of Justice, 14 June 1894, National Archive, The Hague (NL-HaNA), 2.09.05. no. 8, 6486.

26 ‘Aanslagen’, *Tilburgsche Courant*, 24 March 1892; ‘Buitenland’, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 29 March 1892.

might be, they seem to be connected by one single thread', the revolt against authority as such.²⁷

Given the transnational spread of anarchism, the Dutch judicial authorities not only worried about any imminent danger of anarchist bombings in the Netherlands, but were even more concerned about their country becoming a safe haven for fugitive terrorists from abroad.²⁸ In May 1894, the prosecutor of The Hague wrote the Minister of Justice about the retrieval of a recipe for the making of a nitroglycerine bomb in May 1894, via a 'secret informer' within anarchist circles.²⁹ And after the assassination of French President Sadi Carnot in June, the Ministry of Justice warned all prosecutors of a heightened risk of incoming anarchist fugitives and dynamite attacks, and a manual was prepared to instruct the police services 'to deal with hellish machines'.³⁰

Yet, these missives and some additional protective measures around Queen Wilhelmina aside, the Dutch Minister of Justice Van der Kaay remained reluctant to adopt new blanket antiterrorism laws similar to the French, Russian or Prussian ones. He kept to his liberal position and fended off those (represented by his prosecutors and the Prussian envoy), who demanded stricter laws on extradition or high treason. The minister did not see any merit in 'cultivating martyrs' or 'sowing the seed of resentment' amongst the social democrats, thereby 'nourishing that party'.³¹ No war on anarchism was instigated, as far as the minister was concerned. What did change, however, was the level of connectedness and preparedness at police level. Dutch police commissioners participated in the Berlin Conference in 1897 and Rome Conference on International Anarchism in 1898, and under-signed the treaties on behalf of the Netherlands (thereby introducing the first international definition of terrorism to the Netherlands, albeit without legal implications in the form of antiterrorist paragraphs).³² Moreover, after 1898,

27 'Aanranding van 't Gezag', *De Nederlandse politiegids*, no. 103, July 1894.

28 Letters of Serraris to the Minister of Justice, Den Bosch, 2 June 1894, NL-HaNA, 2.09.05, 6486, no. 2; 14 June 1894, NL-HaNA 2.09.05, 6486, no. 9.

29 Exchange between the regional police and Minister of Justice, 22 May–13 June 1894, NL-HaNA, 2.09.05, 6486, no. 10. Another reference to retrieved dynamite recipes can be found in *De Tijd*, 23 December 1892.

30 Letter of Serraris to the Minister of Justice (secret), 6 July 1894, NL-HaNA, 2.09.05, 6642, no. 12139; Minister of Justice to the Minister of War, 3 August 1894, NL-HaNA, 2.09.05, 6642, no. 36.

31 Exchange between the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the German envoy, 18 December 1895 and 8 January 1896, NL-HaNA, 2.09.05, 6488, no. 6.

32 M. Deflem, *Policing World Society: Historical Foundations of International Police Cooperation* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002). R. B. Jensen, *The Battle Against Anarchist Terrorism: An International History, 1878–1934* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014).

structural surveillance and deportation of suspect foreigners, the creation of a central bureau for transnational information coordination and exchange within the Ministry of Justice, and the introduction of a new force of plainclothes detectives ushered in a new mode of security governance: one that superseded the rather laidback and ad hoc measures applied by previous cabinets and that heralded a more internationally oriented, preventive and proactive governmentality.³³

Terrorism Around the Wars

As a spillover of the late nineteenth-century anarchist threat, ‘terrorism’ as discourse and frame was carried into the twentieth century, but mostly to condemn socialist manifestations, strikes and picketing. With the installation of a staunch confessional, reformed government in 1901, chaired by the imposing Calvinist leader Abraham Kuyper, any social-democrat initiative or event, most notably the railroad strikes of 1903, was condemned as ‘terrorist subversion’ by the confessional and mainstream journals. At the same time, social and liberal outlets demanded the right to strike and form and join labour unions, and equally ostracised governmental prosecution and repression of strikers and union workers as ‘police terror’.³⁴ Within the next few years, however, references to anarchist ‘terrorism’ and strikes were overshadowed by reports on ‘terrorist’ attacks in Spain, Russia and Serbia. ‘The Black Hand’ featured frequently, as did the rise of ‘White and Red terrorism’ in Russia after 1910, only to be paralleled by shocking reports on German terrorism in Belgium and France after the onset of the First World War, even amounting to the translated ‘Yellow Book on German Terrorism in Northern France’.³⁵

Obviously, the Russian Revolution and the murder of the tsar’s family – reported in vivid pictures – gave the nineteenth-century moral scare of revolutionary terror a new boost, with ‘Bolshevist terrorism’ swiftly becoming the focus of most of the political and public outrage. With this new definition of violently overthrowing an existing order, the concept itself

33 See for a thorough analysis of transnational police cooperation in the battle against anarchism W. Klem, ‘Founded on Fear: Transnational Police Cooperation Against the Anarchist “Conspiracy”, 1880s–1914’, unpublished PhD thesis, Utrecht University (2019).

34 *De Standaard*, 18 January 1898; *Nieuwe Tilburgsche Courant*, 19 February 1903; *Het Volk*, 8 March 1903; *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, 7 April 1903.

35 *De Telegraaf*, 2 August 1916; *Algemeen Handelsblad, Provinciale Geldersche en Nijmeegsche Courant*, 5 May 1915.

underwent an inflation. 'Red Terrorism' was considered far worse than the previous 'terrorism by the tsars', but other types of hyphenated terrorism were introduced in national discourse as well: 'automobile-terrorism', 'terrorism by guttersnipes and street kids', or 'barge-skipper terrorism' were headlined as the objects of public outcries, while the more serious race conflicts in the US attracted attention as 'terrorism by whites'.³⁶ A failed revolution attempt by Dutch socialist leader Pieter Jelles Troelstra in November 1918 sparked bouts of anti-revolutionary, 'antiterrorist' and pro-monarchist enthusiasm. Moreover, with the parliamentary ratification of general suffrage in 1918 (for men) and 1919 (for women), socialism and social democracy were no longer indiscriminately lumped together with 'terrorism' or 'bombings'. With Sinn Féin in Ireland on the rise, discussion on terrorism returned its focus to organised terrorism and political murders. The assassinations of German politicians Matthias Erzberger and Walther Rathenau were condemned as acts of terrorism, as was 'bomb-throwing' in Spain, the infamous bomb attack on Wall Street and the terrorism executed by the 'white extremists' of the Ku Klux Klan in the US.³⁷

This new wave of post-1917 terrorist attacks manifested itself in the Netherlands as well, with a bomb attack carried out on 7 November 1921 by members of the International Antimilitarist Association. Four men, aged between twenty-four and thirty, conspired to bomb the house of a military judge who presided over a military tribunal against an indicted conscientious objector. Refusing service was still a punishable offence, and the perpetrators were trying to attract attention to their objections against the draft and in favour of the liberation of incarcerated draft dodgers. Interestingly enough, the media stated that the 'nature of the Dutch population was inherently democratic', that 'bomb attacks are fruits from foreign ground', and that the Dutch political climate was not prone to terrorist radicalisation.³⁸ Despite, or because of this climate, the prosecutors demanded stiff sentences (fifteen years). The four defendants (a student, an unemployed male, a mechanic and an electrician) were indicted based on criminal law paragraph 157, which penalised the wilful causation of explosions or inundations, and

36 See *Haagsche Courant*, 22 June 1918; *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 10 November 1918; *De Telegraaf*, 1 August 1919.

37 *De Telegraaf*, 12 December 1919; *De Tribune*, 20 December 1919; *De Tijd*, 28 July 1920; *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 30 September 1920; *Nieuwe Tilburgsche Courant*, 2 June 1921. See also *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 24 June 1922.

38 *Het Vaderland*, 8 November 1921.

were duly convicted (albeit with lesser sentences of eight and five years' imprisonment).³⁹

For the Dutch government, the trigger to step up its antiterrorist measures and policies came with the assassination of Yugoslavian King Alexander I on 9 October 1934 by a member of the Bulgarian nationalist Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO or VMRO). The (aftermath of the) attack was captured on film and caused quite some indignation in Dutch media against countries (most notably Hungary and Italy) that let terrorists and regicides roam their lands without apprehending or expelling them.⁴⁰ The Dutch government actively participated in the drafting of a terrorism convention by the League of Nations, signed by the League Council on 10 December (the day after the attack), and dispatched to the member states for further comments in January 1935. Moreover, a Dutch delegation, including the Amsterdam police commissioner H. J. Versteeg, attended the International Conference for Unification of Criminal Law in Copenhagen, where a new general definition of terrorism was inaugurated.⁴¹ Thus, the trend initiated by police commissioners around the turn of the century, in their efforts to establish transnational cooperation in the field of anti-anarchist police cooperation, was further institutionalised. Furthermore, the Netherlands were one of the founding members of Interpol in 1923 and actively supported the resolution to convince all European countries to report any sighting of fugitive terrorists to Interpol's central offices in Vienna.⁴²

With the outbreak of the Second World War, discussions on international resolutions and definitions were shelved (the League's antiterrorism convention never came into existence) and *terreur* (interpreted as state terror) took over from 'terrorism' (still mostly a non-state activity). The Nazis had already taken over Interpol in 1938 and relocated its headquarters to Berlin, where it became a ploy in the persecution of political enemies and Jewish citizens ('terrorists', according to the Nazis). On 10 May 1940 the German forces invaded the Netherlands, the government and queen fled and the country

39 *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 5 January 1922; *De Maasbode*, 5 January 1922; *De Haagsche Courant*, 22 March 1922.

40 *Limburgsch Dagblad*, 10 December 1934; *De Tijd*, 11 December 1934; *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 30 December 1934.

41 *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 30 December 1934, 23 June 1935; *Het Vaderland*, 1 May 1935; *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 13 September 1935.

42 See also C. M. E. van Schelven, 'Het verdrag nopens bestrijding van terorisme', unpublished PhD thesis, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (1938). See *Friesch Dagblad*, 15 December 1938.

was placed under a civil occupation force. Active resistance, as carried out by a minority, was now considered 'terrorism', and punished by immediate death sentences.⁴³ Until 1942, newspapers printed in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) were still able to vilify German acts of oppression as terrorism, but the printed press in the Netherlands had to obey the rules of the occupier (with the Japanese invasion of the Dutch Indies in 1942, freedom of the press was curtailed there as well).⁴⁴ After the liberation, a new framework was introduced in Dutch media: the antitotalitarian frame, branding both communist and fascist, national socialist rule as 'reigns of terror'. In 1945, a new security culture emerged, with the Netherlands abandoning pre-war neutrality and being a far more active partner in European and transatlantic partnerships. A domestic intelligence agency, the Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst (BVD), and a foreign one were created with the help of British and American partners, sharing information and threat assessments on communist targets. Left- and right-wing extremism were both considered a threat, but action repertoires were far more embedded and coordinated with partners in the international intelligence and military NATO community, which gave them a distinctly anti-communist emphasis.

Colonial and Decolonisation Terrorism

Parallel to the rise of political ideologies and extremisms from the left and the right in the 1920s and 1930s, another major global development affected the trajectory of terrorism and counterterrorism in the Netherlands: the onset of decolonisation movements in the non-Western world. For the Netherlands, this meant that their presence in the colonies of the East, most notably the Dutch East Indies, was forcibly contested by a rising class of nationalist activists and student protesters.⁴⁵ Others chose to follow the official line of anti-communist, colonial interpretation and saw the Komintern lurking behind the uprisings in the Indies, defaming the protesters as 'communist terrorists'.⁴⁶

With the Japanese surrender in the Pacific in August 1945, the Japanese occupation of Indonesia ended. Two days later, on 17 August, Sukarno, the

43 *Nederlandsch Dagblad: orgaan van het Nationaal Front*, 20 January 1941.

44 See for example *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad, Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 21 March 1941, reporting on 'terrorism by the Gestapo' versus the *Arnhemse Courant*, 25 October 1943, writing about a 'terror group' of resistance fighters being executed.

45 *Indische Courant*, 5 September 1923.

46 *Delftsche Courant, Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 22 November 1926; *Sumatra Post*, 25 March 1927.

leader of the national movement, declared Indonesian independence, becoming the first Indonesian president himself. Yet, Indonesian forces would spend the next four years fighting the Dutch for independence, since the Netherlands did not acknowledge Sukarno's claim, and condemned the declaration of independence as an act of 'terrorism' by Sukarno's 'dictatorial republic'. 'It is hard to tell where nationalism stops and terrorism begins', the Catholic journal *De Tijd* lamented.⁴⁷ Indeed, tens of thousands of Indo-European civilians and internees were killed by radical republican youth groups, the *pemuda*, throughout the months of 1945 and 1946, a period called the Bersiap (which translates as 'get ready'). The son of the well-known historian Johan Huizinga, Leonhard Huizinga, ran an 'Indian diary' in the *Leeuwarder koerier*, in which he called for 'English and Dutch' presence 'to clear up the mess', and 'wipe out terrorism and banditism'.⁴⁸ Dutch Foreign Minister Van Kleffens presented similar arguments before the UN Security Council in blaming the UN for enabling the continuation of terrorism and violence by not assisting and supporting the Dutch forces in suppressing Indonesian independence. 'It is regrettable how the cliché of the poor Indonesian fighting for his freedom prevails', whereas these freedom fighters, according to Van Kleffens, were waging a campaign of terrorism and anarchy.⁴⁹ Consequently, the Dutch government launched two major military offensives in 1947 and 1948, euphemistically called 'police actions', to restore a Dutch civil government. Upon great international outrage and a resolution by the UN in January 1949, The Hague had to abandon its resistance against the Indonesian Republic. Under pressure at the prospect of losing its Marshall Plan funds, the Dutch government consented to the formal transfer of sovereignty in December 1949.

The end of the Dutch Empire in Indonesia ignited – with some delay – a new wave of anti-colonial terrorism. South Moluccans, from the Indonesian isle of Ambon, had fought on behalf of the Dutch colonial army until 1945 and, after the formal recognition of the Indonesian Republic, refused to be annexed, and proclaimed their own independent Republic of the South Moluccas (Republik Maluku Selatan) on 24 April 1950. The RMS government and its sympathisers fled to Ceram and continued their fight from the jungle; through New Guinea, which remained under Dutch control until 1962, weapons and commodities were

47 See *Amigoe di Curacao*, 4 October 1945; *Het Dagblad*, 17 November 1945; *De Tijd*, 10 November 1945.

48 *Leeuwarder Koerier*, 2 February 1946.

49 *Het Parool*, 15 February 1946; citations in *Friesch Dagblad*, 16 August 1947.

supplied.⁵⁰ Of the 8,000 Moluccan KNIL (Koninklijk – Royal Netherlands East Indies Army) soldiers, 4,000 did not want to demobilise in Indonesia, and in 1951, the soldiers and their families, over 12,500 people in all, arrived in the Netherlands as temporary refugees. The idea was that their stay would be temporary, and that after a ‘cooling-down’ period they would return. For the Moluccan KNIL soldiers and their wives, the damaged pride resulted in disappointment and depression. For the children who grew up in the new, cold country, their grudges against the Dutch government and the mirage of an independent RMS grew stronger by the year.⁵¹

When General Soeharto, the anti-communist Indonesian leader, executed the arrested RMS President Chris Soumokil, protests erupted in the Netherlands. The Indonesian embassy was set on fire, and raided by a group of young Moluccan radicals. As soldiers’ children, they found a new Moluccan identity in guarding their respective leaders, practising with their weapons, and preparing for a future RMS army on their own terms. In the early seventies, criminality rates amongst South Moluccan male youths (up to twenty years of age) amounted to 8.4 per cent, against 4.7 per cent for the Dutch control group.⁵² Militant young Moluccan men sought and found new role models in the Black Panthers, Che Guevara, the Palestinian Liberation Front and the Indian Movement in the United States.⁵³ ‘The Ambonese are gambling away our sympathy with their terrorism’, the *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* protested.⁵⁴ RMS radicals occupied the residence of the Indonesian ambassador in Wassenaar and shot a police officer in 1970 – with the intent of forcing the hapless Dutch government to negotiate an independent Moluccan republic in Ambon on their behalf. In 1972, the Pemuda Masjarakat (Free South Moluccan Youth) carried out several violent actions, and in 1975 they tried to abduct Queen Juliana (the attempt failed, as they were arrested on their drive to the palace). Yet, another action drew worldwide attention to their cause. In December 1975, Free South Moluccan Youths hijacked a train and simultaneously occupied the Indonesian

50 H. Smeets and F. Steijlen, *In Nederland gebleven: De geschiedenis van Molukkers 1951–2006* (Amsterdam, Bert Bakker, 2006), pp. 36–72.

51 Smeets and Steijlen, *In Nederland gebleven*, pp. 73–207; P. Bootsma, *De Molukse acties: Treinkapingen en gijzelingen, 1970–1978* (Amsterdam, Boom, 2000), pp. 15–29.

52 Smeets and Steijlen, *In Nederland gebleven*, pp. 213–21; C. S. van Praag, ‘Molukse jongeren in botsing met de Nederlandse maatschappij: De gevolgen van een beleid’, *Beleid en Maatschappij* 2/12 (1975).

53 *De Tijd*, 2 September 1959, 27 September 1963; *De Volkskrant, Het Parool*, 7 June 1968; See also J. S. Wijne, *Terreur in de politiek: Politieke geheime genootschappen in deze tijd* (The Hague, Kruseman, 1967).

54 *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 9 September 1970; *De Volkskrant*, 17 September 1970.

consulate in Amsterdam. Two passengers and the train machinist were executed before they surrendered. Two years later, out of frustration over the 'defeat' and imprisonment of their comrades in 1975, a group of fourteen Moluccans again staged an attack: a train was hijacked anew, but this time they also took 105 schoolchildren and five teachers hostage by occupying a primary school in Bovensmilde. After the train was raided by special forces and three out of nine hijackers were killed (including two passengers by accident), the school hijackers let the children go and surrendered. The last action took place in 1978, when a self-proclaimed Moluccan Suicide Squad raided the offices of the provincial authority in Assen, and killed two employees. This action ended the series of Moluccan atrocities. Although the three groups had claimed to be retaliating on behalf of the whole community, the Moluccans almost univocally condemned the action. Their leader Manusama called it out for what it was, despicable terrorism.⁵⁵ Moluccan spokesmen denounced the Free Moluccans' legitimacy and called out their youngsters to cease all violence and enter into negotiations with the Dutch government about socio-economic measures to facilitate their integration in the Netherlands.⁵⁶

The Dutch Terror Letter of 1973

This wave of dramatically mediatised and televised anti-colonial, Moluccan terrorism was part of a global radical decade, that started around the end of the 1960s, lasted until the early 1980s and did spill over into the Netherlands as well.⁵⁷ Compared to West Germany with its 60 million inhabitants (see Table 14.1), the Netherlands with 14 million witnessed a relatively high number of terrorist actions. The mid-sixties had already seen a wave of student protests, but after 1966, radical 'Red Youth' groups took over, starting in 1967 in Amsterdam, and spreading out to other cities, such as Eindhoven, where the Philips industrial plant attracted violent anti-capitalist protests.⁵⁸ This Maoist urban guerrilla movement initiated several violent episodes, causing major material damage, but no deaths. Around that time, international

55 *Het Parool*, 16 June 1977.

56 A. P. Schmid, J. de Graaf and G. Teeling, *Zuidmoluks terrorisme, de media en de publieke opinie: Twee studies van het Centrum voor Onderzoek van Maatschappelijke Tegenstellingen* (Leiden, Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, 1982), p. 56.

57 See for a description of Dutch (counter)terrorism in comparison to revolutionary terrorism in the US, Italy and the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1970s B. A. de Graaf, *Evaluating Counterterrorism Performance: A Comparative Approach* (London and New York, Routledge, 2011).

58 See the first appeals for more measures in *De Tijd*, 12 September 1969; *Trouw*, 26 September 1969.

Table 14.1 Terrorist actions and fatalities in Germany and the Netherlands

	Germany (left-revolutionary)		The Netherlands (left-revolutionary + Moluccan)	
	<i>Terrorist actions</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>	<i>Terrorist actions</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>
1968	1	0	0	0
1969	0	0	2	0
1970	4	0	2	1
1971	12	2	2	0
1972	19	7	7	0
1973	7	0	0	0
1974	12	2	2	0
1975	23	10	4	4
1976	17	3	1	0
1977	33	10	4	9
1978	23	3	3	2
1979	13	2 ^a	2	0
1980	10	0	2	0
1981	5	2	0	0
1982	3	0	0 ^b	0
1983	2	0	0	0
Total	184	41	31	16

^a These were the two RVF (Racial Volunteer Force) terrorist actions. In the same year, three terrorist incidents occurred for which the IRA and an Armenian terrorist group were responsible, as a result of which three people were killed. These actions were not included in these readings.

^b This year featured ten terrorist actions organised by the newly formed Militant Autonomous Front, but they were part of a new protest cycle (squatters, environmental protests, anti-nuclear movement) and it is doubtful whether they can genuinely be labelled a terrorist organisation. Their actions are therefore not taken into account.

revolutionary, anti-colonial and anti-Zionist groups made themselves heard in the Netherlands as well. Palestinian commandos conducted operations in the Netherlands, as indeed they were doing in the rest of Western Europe.⁵⁹ Palestine el-Fatah commandos blew up a Gulf oil reservoir in Rotterdam, attacked gas piping in Ravenstein and Ommen in 1972 and attempted to hijack a train they presumed transported migrant Jews from Russia.

Initially, terrorism was not high on the political agenda. Within the intelligence service, for example, only five people were added to organise the new antiterrorism activities within the service. The hostage crisis during

59 'Arabische kinderen wierpen granaten', *De Telegraaf*, 9 September 1969.

the Munich Olympic Games on the night of 4–5 September 1972, broadcast nationwide, changed this abstinence from a counterterrorism approach.⁶⁰ The Minister of Justice promptly announced that ‘at airports, security measures serving to prevent skyjacks and attacks on aeroplanes’ would be implemented, and that ‘the surveillance of objects such as embassies’ would be coordinated as well.⁶¹ Furthermore, the police force was expanded with three antiterrorism units, so-called Special Assistance Units (Bijzondere Bijstands Eenheden, BBES).⁶² In February 1973, Prime Minister Biesheuvel presented the first Dutch national strategy for ‘combating terror’ to parliament: ‘The government would be forsaking its duty, if it were not to take into account the possibility that phenomena of a terrorist nature, such as those that have already occurred in this nation, were to repeat themselves. It finds that it is necessary to combat such phenomena vigorously.’⁶³ In this ‘Terror Letter’, as the note was referred to, the prime minister did reveal the creation of the antiterrorism units, but at the same time articulated a classical, liberal approach to public order and democracy: ‘In accordance with the government’s decision, counterterrorism will not be shaped in a way that will harm the open nature of our society.’⁶⁴ This implied that no additional laws would be adopted and no infringements of the existing security infrastructure would be made.

After 1973, this attitude of reserve persisted. Details on thwarted terrorist actions of Palestinian commandos in the 1970s were but sparsely disclosed to the press or the public. This reserve could only subsist on a public refraining from protest or demanding to have a say in the matter. Indeed, taciturn consent, indifference and the absence of public outrage concerning the new measures became the rule. Incidents were broadcasted, obviously, but discussions seldom ventured deep into the ‘root causes’ of the political violence; moreover, they were hardly defined as being terrorist at all. Criticisms were mainly vented at perceived intelligence failures.⁶⁵ When parliamentary

60 ‘Vragen van de leden Geurtsen, Berkhouwer en Portheine’, 8 September 1972, *Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (HTK)*, period 1972–3, Appendix, no. 705, p. 1415.

61 ‘Politie bewapend op Schiphol’, *Trouw*, 12 September 1972.

62 ‘Conclusies van de bespreking over overheidsmaatregelen tegen terreuracties, gehouden in het ministerie van Algemene Zaken op dinsdag 26 september 1972 van 14.00 tot 16.00 uur’, RA 1972/001, Archive Ministry of Justice, The Hague/National Archives.

63 HTK, Letter of the Prime Minister, Minister of General Affairs, 22 February 1973, 1973 National Budget, 12.000, No. 11.

64 Letter of the Minister-President to Parliament, 22 February 1973.

65 ‘Beveiliging van residentie onvoldoende geacht’, *De Volkskrant*, 2 September 1970; ‘BVD wist van exercities in kampen van Ambonnezen’, *De Telegraaf*, 2 September 1970.

leaders asked to be informed of the reasons the BVD had repeatedly been surprised by South Moluccan hostage-taking actions, Head of the BVD Kuipers explained to them that this was due to the service being unable to set up a web of informants equal to that of the KGB in the Soviet Union and the Stasi in East Germany. Kuipers could not imagine that anyone in the Committee wished to transform the country into a comparable police state. Neither did the representatives – ‘state terror’ was a larger looming threat than non-state terrorism was.⁶⁶

The lack of public debate on terrorism and its countermeasures changed temporarily with the occurrence of the two above-mentioned and eventful train hijackings, in December 1975 and May–June 1977. The ministerial antiterrorist committee called for ‘increased vigilance for the country’.⁶⁷ Yet, after the surrender of the hijackers, the commotion subsided, and later that month, 41 per cent of the population was still sympathetic to the Moluccan cause.⁶⁸ Not terrorism, but the fear of governmental ‘terror’ prevailed: for Dutch leftist circles, counterterrorist policies in West Germany and the transition towards a police state there became the subject of their moral and activist outrage. During the Stammheim trial against the first-generation Red Army Faction (RAF) terrorists, Dutch radicals founded a solidarity network, Red Help (named after the Red Help organisation connected to the Communist International during the interwar period) and supported the fugitive German RAF members who had been apprehended and jailed in the Netherlands. Demonstrations were organised against the alleged rise of a police state ‘next door’.⁶⁹ Only when shoot-outs in 1977 and 1978 with other fugitive German RAF terrorists resulted in the deaths of one police officer and two customs officers, with some more severely injured, did support for the RAF diminish.⁷⁰

Substantial amendments to the liberal approach of the Terror Letter were, however, made during the second hijacking, in 1977. With special forces, military jets and help from the CIA the siege was ended, killing six out of nine hijackers and two hostages. Justice Minister Van Agt appeared on stage, arriving in a police Porsche and sporting a white police jacket, making

66 See for example D. Engelen, *Frontdienst* (Amsterdam, Boom, 2007), pp. 166–7, 181–2.

67 Which, in the end, was not passed. ‘Kabinet bespreekt instelling “verhoogde waakzaamheid”’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 5 December 1975.

68 NIPO Bericht, No. 1852; see Schmid et al., *Zuidmoluks terrorisme*, p. 61.

69 J. Pekelder, *Sympathie voor de RAF: De Rote Armee Fraktion in Nederland, 1970–1980* (Amsterdam, Mets & Schilt, 2007), pp. 81–101, 317–19.

70 And on 1 November 1978, on the Kerkrade border, two fugitive RAF members opened fire on customs officers Johannes Goemans and Dionysius de Jong. Both were killed.

national headlines.⁷¹ These visible interventions notwithstanding, Van Agt still continued the line of pragmatic solutions and behind-the-scenes operations. To prevent prison radicalisation by second- or third-generation radicals, incarcerated and convicted perpetrators (German RAF fugitives, Palestinian plane-hijackers caught at Schiphol) were released or extradited as soon as possible. At the same time the departments of Culture and Welfare, Domestic Affairs and Foreign Affairs reached out to representatives of the unsettled Moluccan communities. Housing and schooling programmes were initiated to integrate Moluccan youngsters, while Red Youth and violent Palestine activist groups were monitored by means of secret intelligence measures. A last wave of left-wing, non-lethal, political violent activism resurfaced around 1985, but again, no new laws were deployed and the movement (named RaRa, Revolutionary Anti-Racist Action) was 'neutralised' by means of the intelligence services. In line with Kurth Cronin's thinking, patterns of very subtle, varied and nuanced repression went hand in glove with the transition of the groups themselves into legitimate patterns of political action and loss of support amongst the larger constituencies (Cronin's 'explaining factors' nos. 4, 5 and 6).⁷²

To sum up the net result of the radical decade for the Dutch 'security culture': incidents of terrorist violence were not linked together into a homogeneously framed threat of global terrorism. Only in instances of major foreign attacks (Munich) or shocking domestic atrocities (the hijackings) were new policy measures adopted.⁷³ Not without some right, Member of Parliament Aad Kosto (PvdA – Labour Party) argued, rather indignantly, that the whole matter of the new antiterrorism units had been brought to light by accident.⁷⁴ With the German situation as the antithesis to the Dutch approach, this political culture drew from two ideological sources: on the one hand, conservative, liberal concepts of the democracy as an open marketplace of ideas, kept in rein by police and judicial forces, and on the other hand, new, progressive ideas about participatory democracy and civil action, resulting in an aversion to granting more power to the intelligence and police

71 See Bootsma, *De Molukse acties*, pp. 286–95.

72 See: B. A. de Graaf and L. Malkki, 'Killing It Softly? Explaining the Early Demise of Left-Wing Terrorism in the Netherlands', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22/4 (2010); A. K. Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 8.

73 'Bijzondere commissie voor de brief van de Minister-President inzake bestrijding van terreuracties', 29 March 1973, HTK, period 1972–3, AA 18, 22.

74 'Bijzondere commissie voor de brief van de Minister-President inzake bestrijding van terreuracties', vergadering van 29 March 1973, HTK, period 1972–3, AA3.

services. Yet, internationally, this reluctant approach on the domestic political stage went hand in glove with close cooperation between Dutch and Western intelligence and police agencies behind the scenes. The Netherlands ratified all treaties and participated in all bodies on all levels. In the Club de Berne, the Dutch were particularly active. The Dutch head of the BVD participated as early as 1971 in exchanging information with other security officials on espionage and terrorism. The TREVI (the informal conference of European Community ministers in charge of police, justice and security) began in 1975 as a Dutch initiative to exchange information about terrorism.⁷⁵

The Netherlands and the 'War on Terror'

Violent protests and demonstrations persisted throughout the 1980s, as elsewhere in affluent, post-industrialising societies. Squatters, radical anti-militarists, anti-apartheid and anti-nuclear activists joined forces, or quarrelled, with anti-racist, anti-fascist and radical feminist groupings. The 'movement', as it was called, consisted of several thousands of activists, and was closely monitored by Dutch security services, but was never identified as terrorist.⁷⁶ Not even the spectacular and successful actions of the anti-imperialist-inspired group RaRa were considered terrorist, although they included a series of (purposeful) non-lethal arson attacks against the multinationals Makro and Shell for their activities in South Africa, and (after the apartheid regime had collapsed) bomb attacks against governmental agencies and officials responsible for asylum policies and deportation of illegal aliens.⁷⁷ The frame of 'terrorism' was strictly separated from domestic political activism,⁷⁸ and remained reserved for well-known international terrorist organisations, such as the IRA, the Tamil Tigers, the Sandinistas (depending on the political leaning of the newspaper), the Indian Sikhs, Abu Nidal, the Red Brigades and the Red Army Factions. As a Dutch newspaper quite laconically stated, 'Terrorism' is a fruit of the 'wonders of modern life'; it is intrinsically tied to 'television and planes'.⁷⁹ Even with IRA attacks against

75 A. Daun, 'Intelligence – Strukturen für die multilaterale Kooperation europäischer Staaten', *Integration* 2 (April 2005).

76 Kwartaalbericht BVD 1987, 2e kwartaal 1987 Nr. 2056.843; Kwartaaloverzicht BVD 1980, 2e kwartaal 1980 – Nr. 1495.359.

77 E. R. Muller, *Terrorisme en Politieke verantwoordelijkheid: Gijzelingen, aanslagen en ontvoeringen in Nederland* (Arnhem, Gouda Quint, 1994), pp. 378–80.

78 See *Het Parool*, 23 August 1986, quoting Police Commissioner Martens on the Dutch 'reluctance' and 'soberness' in characterising something as terrorist.

79 *De Volkskrant*, 12 July 1985.

American GIs on Dutch soil, the IRA assassination of the British ambassador (1979) or the Armenian killing of the Turkish ambassador's son (1979), terrorism remained confined to the frame of 'foreign affairs', with 'Rambo Reagan' as an American anti-hero in whose footsteps Dutch authorities had best not follow.⁸⁰

Indeed, as with the wave of anarchist and revolutionary terrorism, the Netherlands were a net receiver of international terrorism rather than being anywhere near the source. As the BVD already made clear in 1991, wars in Afghanistan and the Middle East (in Iraq for example) could trigger terrorist attacks in the West.⁸¹ Undeniably, a new political religion was gaining footholds in the Netherlands from abroad. In 1986, the Saudi charity Al Haramain had founded the El Tawheed Foundation Amsterdam, thereby laying the groundwork for a Dutch Salafist infrastructure that would expand in the 1990s with three more Salafist mosques. These religious sites drew approximately 1,500 (As-Soennah) or 2,000 visitors (Al Fourqaan) a week from a Muslim population of around 850,000,⁸² a relatively large support base in comparison to Germany, France or Belgium, where other movements, such as the radical Islamist Hizb al-Tahrir (Hizb ut-Tahrir) or Tablighi Jamaat enjoyed more popularity. Most visitors had a North African, Pakistani, Afghan, Turkish or Arab background, but Dutch citizens of Moroccan descent (or with a Moroccan passport) stood out. Only an obscure minority within these Salafist circles could be considered jihadi/*takfiri*, although their fundamentalist attitudes towards non-Muslims etc. overlap with mainstream or apolitical Salafis.⁸³ In 1998 the BVD issued a public warning against recruitment and financing attempts of Saudi, Libyan or Arab origin.⁸⁴ In April 2001, the intelligence service dedicated a whole report to the threat of radical Islam and identified the network around Osama bin Laden as the largest terrorist threat towards the West.⁸⁵

80 *Het Vrije Volk*, 29 January 1986.

81 'BVD Alert on Terrorism', *Het Vrije Volk* and *Limburgs Dagblad*, 25 January 1991.

82 National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb), *Salafisme in Nederland* (The Hague, 2008), p. 65; M. de Koning, *Zoeken naar een 'zuivere' islam: Geloofsbeleving en identiteitsvorming van jonge Marokkaans-Nederlandse moslims* (Amsterdam, Bakker, 2008), pp. 373–7.

83 P. H. A. M. Abels and R. Willemsse, 'Veiligheidsdienst in verandering: De BVD-AIVD sinds het einde van de Koude Oorlog', in *Justitiële Verkenningen* 30/3 (2004), p. 91; BVD, *Ontwikkelingen op het gebied van de binnenlandse veiligheid: Taakstelling en werkwijze van de BVD* (The Hague, 1992), p. 25.

84 BVD, *Jaarverslag 1999* (The Hague, 1999/2000), p. 15; BVD, *De politieke islam in Nederland* (The Hague, 1998).

85 BVD, *Terrorisme aan het begin van de 21e eeuw: Dreigingsbeeld en positionering BVD* (The Hague, 2001).

The events of '9/11' catapulted simmering fears regarding political Islam and terrorism high on the Dutch agenda and abruptly ended the previous 'reluctant' public and political approach. Tensions regarding immigration and national security had already heightened during the second social-liberal Kok administration (1998–2002).⁸⁶ A new populist movement, headed by professor in sociology Pim Fortuyn, declared Dutch multicultural society bankrupt.⁸⁷ With his provocative behaviour and sweeping statements against Islam and the 'leftist elites', Fortuyn's party was expected to achieve an unprecedented electoral victory in the coming general elections in May 2002. On 6 May 2002, Fortuyn (who had already been compared by political opponents and pundits to Hitler and Stalin) was murdered by Volkert van der Graaf, an environmental rights activist who justified his act in court by pointing to Fortuyn's attitude towards Muslims and 'vulnerable groups' in society.⁸⁸ This political assassination (the first high-profile political assassination since the seventeenth century) and Fortuyn's ensuing posthumous electoral success (17.5 per cent of the vote on 15 May 2002) further polarised the Dutch debate, turning 'Islam', immigrants and Turkish and Moroccan minorities into objects of public securitisation.

In 2001 and 2002 the first jihadist terrorist plots were uncovered in the Netherlands, with French and North African suspects apprehended for preparing attacks in France and Afghanistan (in the absence of terrorism laws, they could not be indicted for preparation of terrorist attacks or membership in a terrorist organisation). In 2002, two Dutch Moroccans were killed in Kashmir, both supposedly recruited in the Al Fourqaan Mosque in Eindhoven;⁸⁹ thirteen more individuals were arrested for terrorist activities, some of whom were regular visitors of the Al Fourqaan mosque as well.⁹⁰ In the summer of 2002, the service identified a group of Muslim youth, who met in and around the radical Salafist El Tawheed mosque in the north of Amsterdam and gathered around Redouan al-Issar (also named 'Abu Khaled' or 'the Shaykh'), an illegal immigrant from Syria, a former member

86 'Meer racistisch geweld in Nederland', *Trouw*, 6 September 2000.

87 P. Scheffer, 'Het multiculturele drama', *NRC Handelsblad*, 27 January 2000.

88 LJN: AF7291, District Court of Amsterdam, 13/123078–02.

89 This paragraph is partly based on B. A. de Graaf, 'The Van Gogh Murder and Beyond', in B. Hoffman and F. Reinares (eds.), *The Evolution of the Global Terrorist Threat: From 9/11 to Osama Bin Laden's Death* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2014); 'OM: moskee Eindhoven werft strijders', *NRC Handelsblad*, 3 May 2003.

90 S. Eikelenboom, *Jihad in de polder: De radicale islam in Nederland* (Amsterdam, Veen, 2004), p. 63; AIVD, *Annual Report 2002* (The Hague, 2003); AIVD, *Saoedische invloeden in Nederland: Verbanden tussen salafistische missie. Radicaliseringsprocessen en islamistisch terrorisme* (The Hague, June 2004).

of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and an al-Takfir wa al-Hijra adherent who came to the Netherlands in 1995, and who became a mentor for young radical Muslims.⁹¹ He inspired some of them to try to join foreign jihadist groups in Chechnya and Pakistan. Other members of this group, later dubbed the 'Hofstad Group', travelled to Barcelona to meet with a jihadist Moroccan suspected of involvement in the Casablanca attacks of March 2003.⁹²

Then, in the early morning of 2 November 2004, Mohammed Bouyeri, a 26-year-old Dutch Moroccan, born and raised in Amsterdam, awaited publicist and film-maker Theo van Gogh in an Amsterdam street, shot him off his bicycle and slaughtered him with a ritual knife in the street in front of many witnesses. This was the watershed event that converged the already existing fears and resentments on one focal point: the threat of jihadist terrorism. Moreover, it demonstrated a lack of preparedness on the part of the authorities. Bouyeri's action had taken the security services completely by surprise.⁹³ When Bouyeri's jihadist proclamation became public (in which he condemned the whole Dutch society, government and, amongst others, singled out Ayaan Hirsi Ali), the whole Salafist movement was put on trial in the eyes of the Dutch population.⁹⁴ In the perception of large parts of the Dutch population, the November attack showed that every orthodox Muslim could be a potential terrorist, and opinion polls showed that 80 per cent of the population wanted 'tougher policies against immigrants'.⁹⁵ In 2005, the Dutch population listed it as the most important issue facing the country.⁹⁶

Yet, the Dutch Salafist movement immediately distanced itself from the attacks. Various Salafist leaders warned their followers against interpreting radical texts without consulting clerics.⁹⁷ No more attacks took place, and in its 2008 annual report, the Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst (AIVD – General Intelligence and Security Service) concluded that 'the

91 'Feitenrelaas', attachment to the Letter to Parliament (ministers of the Interior and Justice), 10 November 2004, *Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer*, no. 29854.

92 Court of Rotterdam (location, The Hague), verdict in the Hofstad Group case, 10 March 2006; see also E. Vermaat, *De Hofstadgroep: Portret van een radicaal-islamitisch netwerk* (Soesterberg, Aspekt, 2005), pp. 55–77.

93 National Prosecutor's Office, 'Requisitoir van de officier van Justitie', part I, 23 January 2006 and part II, 25 January 2006; District Court of Rotterdam, verdict in the Hofstad Group case, 10 March 2006.

94 BVD, *Terrorisme aan het begin van de 21e eeuw. Dreigingsbeeld en positionering BVD* (The Hague, 2001).

95 J. Sparks, 'Muslim Mole Panics Dutch Secret Service', *The Times*, 14 November 2004.

96 NCTb/RVD, *Kwantitatief onderzoek risicobeleving terrorisme 2008*, p. 5.

97 'Folderen in strijd tegen aanslagen', *Brabants Dagblad*, 10 June 2006; AIVD, *De radicale da'wa: De opkomst van het neo-radicalisme in Nederland* (The Hague, 2007); AIVD, *Annual Report 2006* (The Hague, 2007), p. 33 (in Dutch).

terrorist threat increasingly emanates from transnational and local networks with an international orientation, but less from local-autonomous networks'. Activities of 'home-grown' radicals and their networks had been effectively disrupted.⁹⁸ In December 2009, the level of security alertness regarding terrorism was therefore lowered from 'substantial' to 'restricted', since terrorist attacks against the Netherlands no longer seemed to be imminent.⁹⁹ The newfound balance of security provisions and societal resilience was, however, a fickle one.

Arriving in a Terrorist-Risk Society

After 2004, the security culture in the Netherlands changed fundamentally. Since 2001, the worldwide adoption of new laws and corresponding jurisprudence had ushered in a profound transformation in criminal law and risk assessment in formerly open, liberal societies. Substantial legal changes were initiated to enable the successful prosecution of terrorism suspects in the initial stages of planning and to reduce the risk of acquittals of terrorist suspects. In Europe, the cornerstone of the new legal edifice of precautionary criminal law was the 2002 EU Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism, which obliges member states to render punishable a broadly defined set of facilitating actions, including 'participating in the activities of a terrorist group by supplying information or material resources'.¹⁰⁰ Consequently – since a Framework Decision is binding EU law – the Dutch parliament was obliged (and willing) to adopt its first antiterrorism laws in 2004, criminalising various types and sorts of terrorist crimes and preparatory acts. Thus, under the new Dutch antiterrorism laws that passed on 10 August 2004, Bouyeri was arrested and tried for murder with 'terrorist intent'.¹⁰¹ On 26 July 2005, he received a life sentence, without parole – unusually harsh in Dutch judicial history.

The AIVD tripled its staff, added a new directorate, 'Foreign Intelligence', and after the attacks in Madrid on 11 March 2004 a National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (now National Coordinator for Terrorism and Security) was established to oversee and streamline the still fragmented Dutch

98 AIVD, *Annual Report 2008* (The Hague, April 2009), pp. 20–2.

99 National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb), Letter to Parliament with the Eleventh Counterterrorism Progress Report, 15 December 2009.

100 The Council of the European Union, 'Council Framework Decision of 13 June 2002 on Combating Terrorism, (2002/475/JHA)', *Official Journal of the European Communities* (22 June 2002).

101 See the verdict against Bouyeri, Court of Amsterdam, 26 July 2005.

counterterrorism efforts.¹⁰² The Interior Ministry introduced all kinds of programmes to neutralise the dangers of ‘radicalisation and polarisation’ and large-scale interventions on the local community level were initiated. Immigration and integration policies were also sucked into the vortex of counterterrorism efforts when conservative and populist parties demanded the constriction of dual nationality rights for immigrants (triggered by the fact that the Van Gogh murderer Bouyeri had two passports). Some Salafist imams were declared unwanted aliens and expelled from the country.¹⁰³

Between 2009 and 2013 a spell of quiet and a decrease in terrorist incidents and reporting prevailed, while the new system of threat levels maintained a subdued ‘restricted’ stage. Yet, everything changed with the rise of IS and the proclamation of the ‘Caliphate’ in Syria and Iraq. The war in Syria and Iraq motivated thousands of young men and some women to join jihadi organisations in their struggle. Estimates suggest that around 30,000 foreign fighters joined terrorist organisations in Syria and Iraq, among them an estimated 4,000 fighters from Europe.

In the Netherlands, around three hundred Muslims left the country to join IS abroad, most of them radicalised via online forums, social media and virtual advertisement campaigns staged by IS. Consequently, new laws were adopted in the Netherlands to trace and prosecute such early, online trajectories of preparation, increasingly committed prior to or more detached from actual travel. Social media postings and other types of internet-based information were considered admissible evidence. Legal provisions were moreover introduced to enable the authorities to revoke the Dutch nationality of jihadists, or confiscate their passports. This transformation of criminal law in the wake of the fight against terrorism has shifted the burden of proof and evidence into the realm of virtual threats and possible violent futures that might be inaugurated by the defendants.¹⁰⁴ In this sense, the classical goals of criminal justice – retribution, deterrence, incapacitation and rehabilitation – have given way to the executive-oriented goal of security and risk management. This trend has, however, augmented the problem of having to deal with a growing number of young Muslim radicals (and some right-wing extremists) sentenced with relatively short prison times (for preparatory acts only) who will need to reintegrate into society again.¹⁰⁵

102 AIVD, *Jaarverslag 2004* (The Hague, 2005), p. 15.

103 National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb), *Salafisme in Nederland*, p. 43; ‘Ook tweede Eindhovense imam terecht uitgezet’, ANP, 10 October 2007.

104 L. Amoore, ‘Risk Before Justice: When the Law Contests Its Own Suspension’, *Leiden Journal of International Law* 21/4 (2008), esp. p. 850.

105 S. Krasmann, ‘Law’s Knowledge: On the Susceptibility and Resistance of Legal Practices to Security Matters’, *Theoretical Criminology* 16/4 (2012), esp. p. 381.

While jihadist suspects still figure most prominently in terrorism trials, after 2016, the security services also (or again) felt the need to monitor developments amongst right-wing extremists, animal rights activists and other left-wing militants. Yet, apart from jihadist terrorism convicts (over 300 since 2004), only five terrorism suspects have been condemned and sentenced for right-wing-inspired acts of terrorism, with no casualties involved.

Conclusions

Two centuries after the first involvement of the Netherlands in an act of international terrorism (if we may consider the 1818 attack on the Duke of Wellington in this way), vast transformations have affected the Dutch security landscape. It has transpired that, first of all, the semantic container of 'terrorism' was introduced into the Dutch language, political vocabulary and public debate after the French Revolution. From the onset, it has always been considered in close connection and association with that other part of the public scare, *terreur* ('terror'), in the sense of a state-led 'reign of terror'. Throughout the nineteenth century, the First and Second World War and into the anti-totalitarian 1950s and the decolonisation wave, 'terror' was always the twin risk of anti-state terrorism and state-led terror. Combating non-state terrorists, politically or religiously inspired, should never give way to strategies of blanket police surveillance or state repression – as various ministers of Justice from Van Maanen in the first half of the nineteenth century, via Van der Kaay at the end of the nineteenth century to Prime Minister Den Uyl compounded and defended. Keeping too tight a leash on political activism would merely promote it on to the stage of national attention (or, create a national public panic). Within the Dutch context of neutrality (until 1940), security served a depoliticised order, even throughout the radical decade and the many fatalities of the 1970s.

The largest landslide in the Dutch security landscape is still so recent that it is hazardous to historicise this transformation too unequivocally and emphatically. Yet, it does seem likely that the revolution in online communication in the 1990s may have fundamentally heightened Dutch vulnerability to trends and developments in terrorism from abroad. Throughout the nineteenth and largely the twentieth century as well, border controls, passports and special units were able to stem the tide of radicalism from abroad – arresting Russian agents provocateurs, fugitive RAF members, Palestinian plane-hijackers and rogue IRA killers in the Dutch border regions or at Schiphol. With access to the Internet and social media, the scale, speed and intensity of contacts and

connections between Dutch citizens and radicals abroad underwent a shocking escalation. More foiled plots, arrested terrorist suspects, identified foreign fighters (and returnees) and vastly quicker patterns of radicalisation have been registered after 2004's fault line than ever before. *Terreur* as a political and discursive frame referring to 'state terror' has almost disappeared, whereas within the context of the twenty-first-century risk society the amorphous and morphing threat of non-state, transnational terrorism has captivated our digital imaginations and communications. While Dutch society is more secure than ever, in a physical sense that is (with decreasing homicide rates since the 1990s), it can be considered more vulnerable, in its immediate openness to international developments. It remains to be seen how the online power of nightmares, the lure of conspiracy theories and extremist ideas from left to right, from political to religious provenance, will further affect the historical traditions of the Dutch open and liberal approach to terrorism in the decades to come.

Further Reading

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- R. Schechter, *A Genealogy of Terror in Eighteenth-Century France* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2018)