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## **Chapter 6 – MILITARY-CIVILIAN PERSONNEL: NETHERLANDS COUNTRY REPORT**

**Manon Andres, PhD and Joseph Soeters, PhD**  
Netherlands Defence Academy – Faculty of Military Sciences  
NETHERLANDS

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

In today's world of globalisation, national borders have faded away, which poses new challenges and risks for national and international security. The ambition of the Netherlands Ministry of Defence is to share responsibility for the safety and stability of the international community. The three main tasks of the Defence organisation are formulated as follows:

- 1) Protecting the integrity of national and allied territory, including the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba.
- 2) Promoting stability and the international rule of law.
- 3) Supporting civil authorities in upholding the law, and providing disaster and humanitarian relief, both nationally and internationally [6].

In order to carry out these tasks, often in international alliances, and to successfully perform the requisite complex activities involved in these tasks, the Netherlands Defence organisation aspires to be professional, flexible, and multi-functional. This requires a well-balanced personnel structure of military and civilian personnel, working together effectively to accomplish the organisation's objectives. However, as far as we know, until now, civilian and military personnel work culture and relations in the Netherlands Defence organisation have not been subject to scientific study, in contrast with the extensive study of other forms of civil-military relations (e.g., the cooperation between the military and civilian actors and organisations in operational situations, such as between the military and national governments, local authorities and non-governmental organisations/NGOs).

The aim of this chapter is to provide insight into civilian and military personnel work relations in the Netherlands Defence organisation. First, we provide information about the size, structure, and workforce of the Netherlands Defence organisation. Then, we describe how the proportion of civilian and military personnel in the Netherlands Defence organisation originated and the rationale behind it. We subsequently address the work relations of civilian and military personnel, the management of these two groups of personnel (i.e., the policies and practices), and the issues and points of attention that can be identified.

The information we present and discuss in this chapter is based on (policy) documents, interviews, and secondary analyses of quantitative data collected periodically among Defence personnel by the Behavioral Sciences Services Centre. We conducted interviews with the following high-ranking personnel in charge of personnel affairs: the Head Director Personnel (responsible for all Defence personnel), the Director Personnel of the Navy, the Director Personnel of the Army, a staff member of the Army, the Commander of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee, the Commander of the Support Command, and the Director of the Defence Materiel Organisation (DMO). Additionally, we interviewed the Director of the Behavioral Sciences Services Centre and the head of one of the largest unions of Defence personnel. The country report template served as our interview guideline.

## 6.2 THE NETHERLANDS DEFENCE ORGANISATION: EXPENDITURES, SIZE AND STRUCTURE

In the last several decades, the Netherlands Defence organisation has undergone multiple organisational changes that involved restructuring and downsizing. In 1996, the Netherlands armed forces transformed into an all-volunteer force. Figure 6-1 displays the development of Netherlands Defence expenditures since 1990.

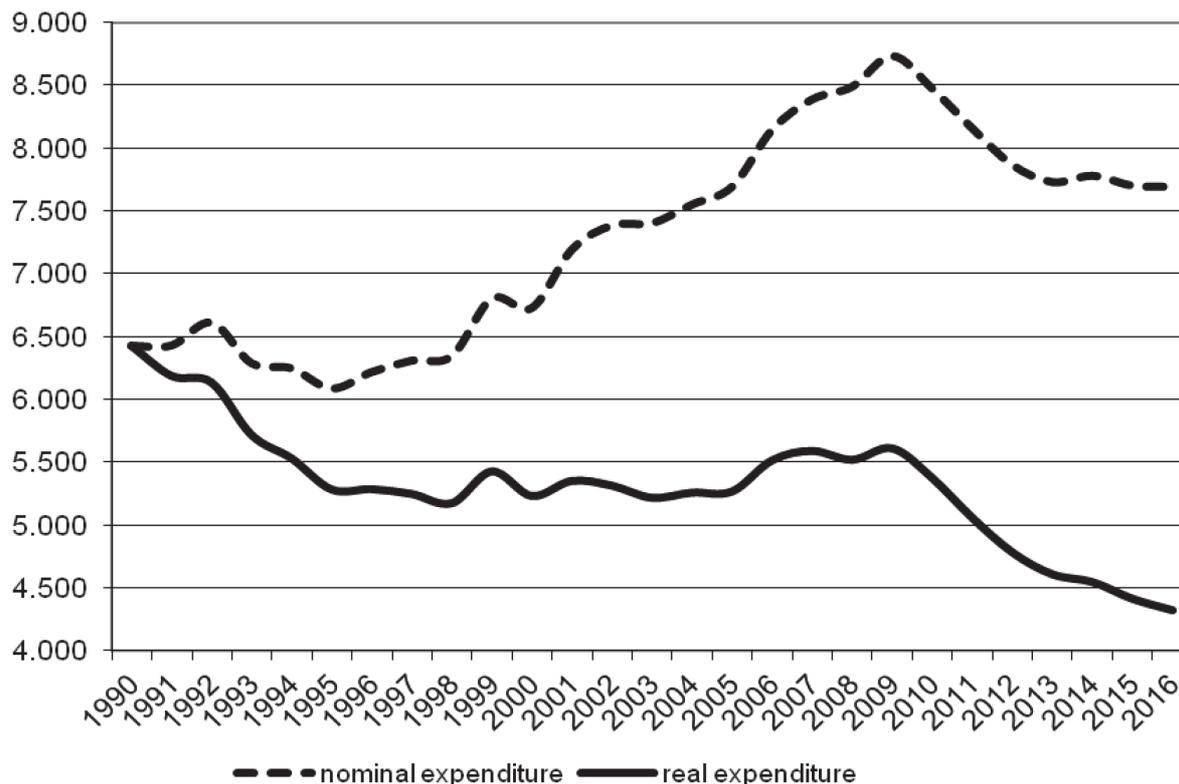


Figure 6-1: Development of Netherlands Defence Expenditures.

The figure shows that, although the nominal expenditures (i.e., the Defence budget in euros) increased, the real expenditures (i.e., adjusted for inflation) substantially decreased over time. Just recently, because of international developments, the Dutch government decided to allocate more to the Defence budget (i.e., €50 million in 2015, €150 million in 2016, and €100 million per year from 2017). With that, in the Netherlands, a country of 17 million citizens, the Defence budget is €7.3 billion of the total government budget of €259.6 billion. Figure 6-2 demonstrates the development of Defence expenditures in percentage of Gross National Product (GNP), in relation to the NATO norm of 2% (Ministry of Defence [4], p. 26). As shown in the figure, the percentage of Defence expenditures has been below the NATO norm of 2% since 1994.

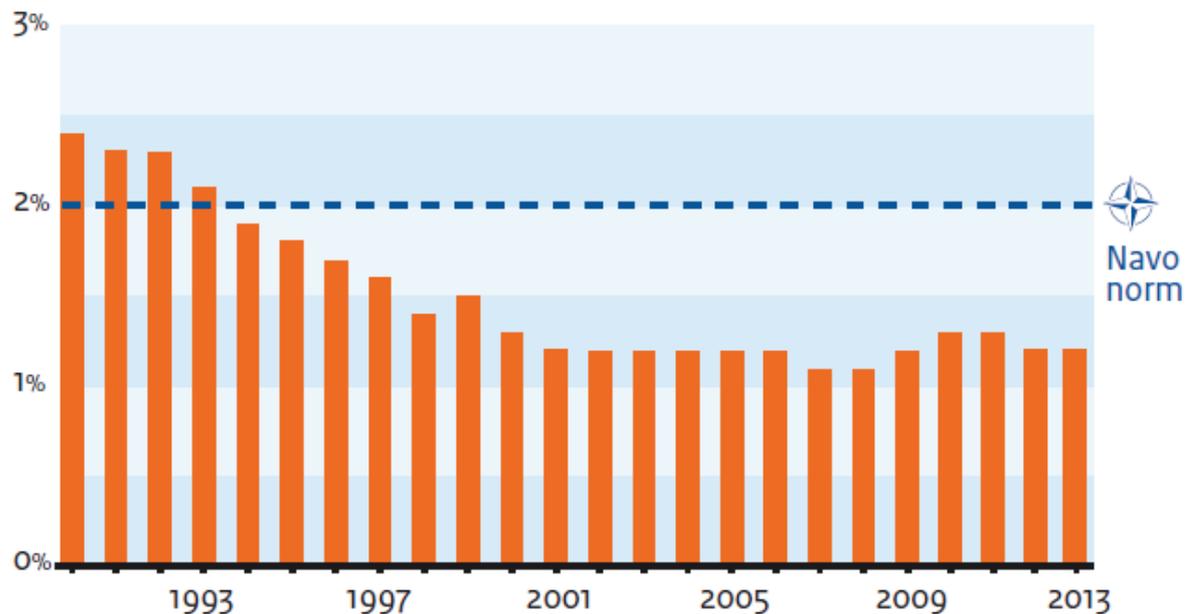


Figure 6-2: Development of Defence Expenditures (1990 – 2013) in % of GNP.

At the time of writing this chapter, the organisation has been in the midst of a process of downsizing and restructuring, which has involved a reduction in expenses of about €1 billion and a cut-back of 12,000 functions in the period 2011 – 2016 [3]. This reduction has impacted all aspects of the organisation.

The Netherlands Defence organisation consists of seven Defence units: the Central Staff, four Operational Commands (i.e., the Royal Netherlands Navy, the Royal Netherlands Army, the Royal Netherlands Air Force, and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee), and two support units (i.e., the Defence Materiel Organisation/DMO and the Support Command) (Figure 6-3). The Central Staff advises the Minister and formulates organisational policy. The Secretary-General is the official leader of the organisation, the highest civil servant, and is responsible for the translation of political decisions into organisational execution. The Chief of Defence is the highest military leader and is responsible for the execution of military operations in the Netherlands and abroad. The Operational Commands are responsible for the readiness and deployment of military units. The Support Units support the other organisational units by providing products and services.

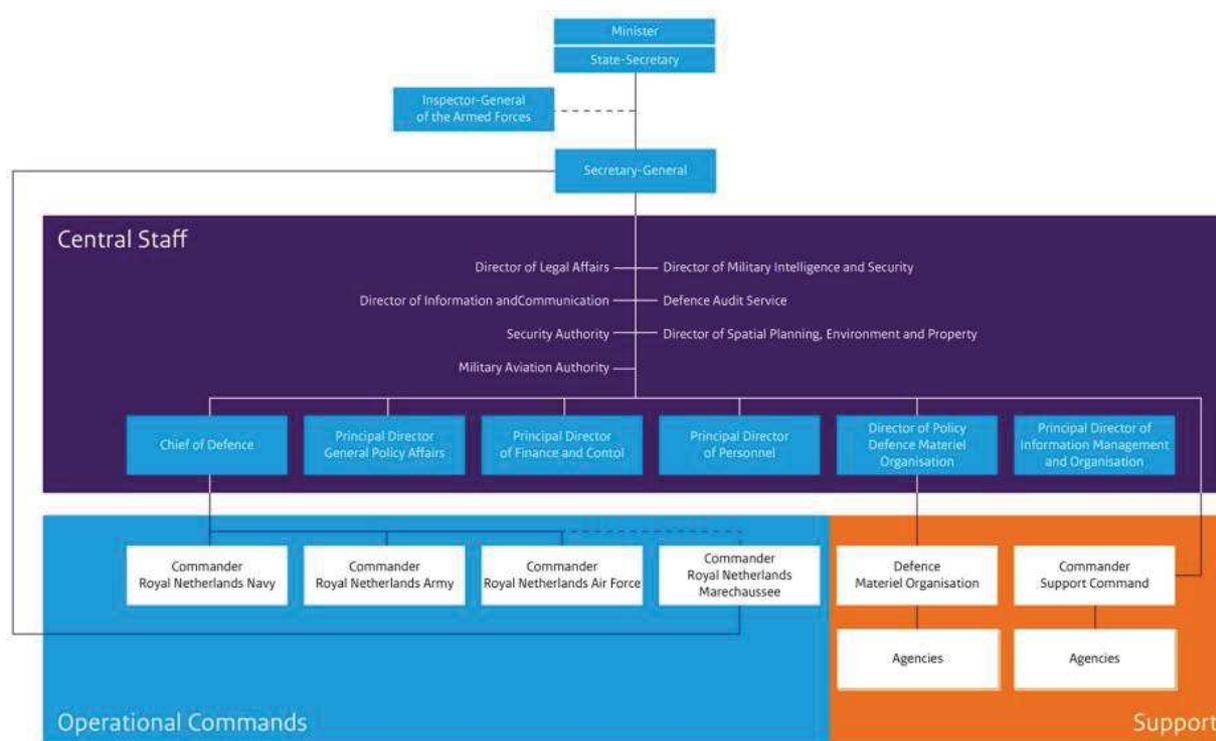


Figure 6-3: Organisation Chart.

### 6.3 THE WORKFORCE

Organisational changes have also involved changes in the workforce. In essence, the rationale guiding the proportion of civilian and military personnel in the Netherlands Defence organisation is simple: military personnel are required for military expertise. This means that all functions that are performed in special (war) circumstances, that involve handling a weapon (system), and/or that require military expertise, are to be fulfilled by military personnel [7]. All other functions can be performed by civilian personnel, who provide continuity and who bring in specific non-military (and often academic) expertise. However, as military personnel cannot perform operational functions continuously, they will also be assigned to non-operational functions, like staff functions. This creates a grey area of functions that can be performed by civilian or military personnel.

The considerations of expertise and continuity in developing a well-functioning organisation, and the developments over time, have led to a current ratio of civilian to military personnel of 27:73 (full-time equivalents/FTE; see Table 6-1; [5]). The proportion of civilian personnel (currently at 28%, based on actual numbers of civilian personnel) will decrease if outsourcing policies become more prominent. A development slightly in favour of civilian personnel is the identification of a number of military functions that can be changed into (less expensive) civilian functions. Military personnel clearly are more expensive because of:

- a) The higher rotation of jobs and lower level of specialisation (resulting in learning losses);
- b) The system of allowances in the military (e.g., for pilots or divers and during exercises and deployments);
- c) The availability of fully paid training and education in the military; and

- d) Better retirement schemes in the military, enabling military personnel to leave the organisation at a younger age compared to civilians.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 6-1: Proportion of Civilian Personnel (CP) and Military Personnel (MP) per Defence Unit.**

	# Personnel			FTE		
	CP	MP	Total	CP	MP	Total
<b>Navy</b>	2,244 (23%)	7,718 (77%)	9,962	2,184 (22%)	7,718 (78%)	9,902
<b>Army</b>	2,353 (12%)	17,069 (88%)	19,422	2,268 (12%)	17,069 (88%)	19,337
<b>Air Force</b>	983 (13%)	6,555 (87%)	7,538	902 (12%)	6,555 (88%)	7,457
<b>Marechaussee</b>	480 (8%)	5,761 (92%)	6,241	440 (7%)	5,761 (93%)	6,201
<b>DMO</b>	3,540 (82%)	753 (18%)	4,293	3,448 (82%)	753 (18%)	4,201
<b>Support Command</b>	5,291 (66%)	2,763 (34%)	8,054	4,948 (64%)	2,761 (36%)	7,709
<b>Central Staff</b>	925 (55%)	750 (45%)	1,675	900 (54%)	750 (46%)	1,650
<b>Total</b>	15,816 (28%)	41,369 <sup>2</sup> (72%)		15,090 (27%)	41,367 (73%)	
	57,185			56,458		

In addition to being more expensive than civilian personnel, military personnel also have to perform military-specific training and tests, such as shooting practice and sport programs.

Defence units are mixed to varying degrees; hence, the ratio of military to civilian personnel differs between the Defence units (Table 6-1) [5]. The more operational the Defence unit, the more military personnel there are in that unit. Not surprisingly, the Operational Commands are mainly staffed with military personnel. Of the four Operational Commands, the Royal Netherlands Navy has the highest (23%) and the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee the lowest (8%) proportion of civilian personnel. Civilian personnel are primarily represented in the Central Staff (55%) and the two support units: the DMO and the Support Command (82% and 66% civilian personnel, respectively).

<sup>1</sup> Military personnel may retire at age 60, as opposed to age 67 for civilians, and receive pensions the size of their last wage, as opposed to an average earned throughout the career received by civilians. Further, all financial increases over the last 10 years have gone to the military; and defence civilians are paid less than civil servants in other institutions. Civilians also have less job security, as the military can still search for new jobs in the internal military jobs market if their current position becomes redundant, which is not possible for civilians. The general tendency is that the military is better off financially than are civilians, even in the times of reductions and downsizing.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to 41,369 regular force military personnel, there are 5,249 reserve force military personnel, for a total of 46,618 military personnel when both forces are taken into account.

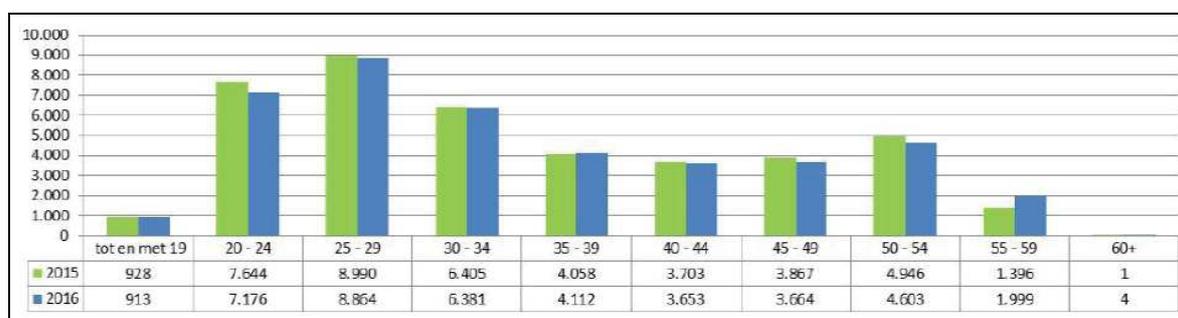
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The proportion of female personnel is substantially higher among civilian personnel (25%) compared with military personnel (9%) (Table 6-2; [5]). Since 1983, women have had access to all military services, with the exception of the submarine service [8]. Moreover, women are not represented in the operational functions of the Special Forces (i.e., the *Korps Commandotroepen* of the Army and the Marine Corps of the Navy). The percentage of female military personnel has been rising slowly from 5.2% in 1992 to 9% in 2006 [8] and has subsequently stagnated at 9% until the present.

**Table 6-2: Gender Distribution Among Military and Civilian Personnel.**

		Male	Female
MP	# Personnel	37,477 (91%)	3,892 (9%)
	FTE	37,476 (91%)	3,892 (9%)
CP	# Personnel	11,878 (75%)	3,938 (25%)
	FTE	11,715 (78%)	3,375 (22%)

With respect to the age distribution of civilian and military personnel, it is interesting to note that the military workforce is relatively young (the average age of military personnel is 34.9 years; the largest groups of military personnel fall into age groups under 35 years of age), whereas the civilian workforce is relatively older (the average age of civilian personnel is 48.0 years; the largest groups of civilian personnel fall into age groups over 50 years of age (Figure 6-4 and Figure 6-5; [5]).



**Figure 6-4: Age Distribution Among Military Personnel (2015 and 2016).**

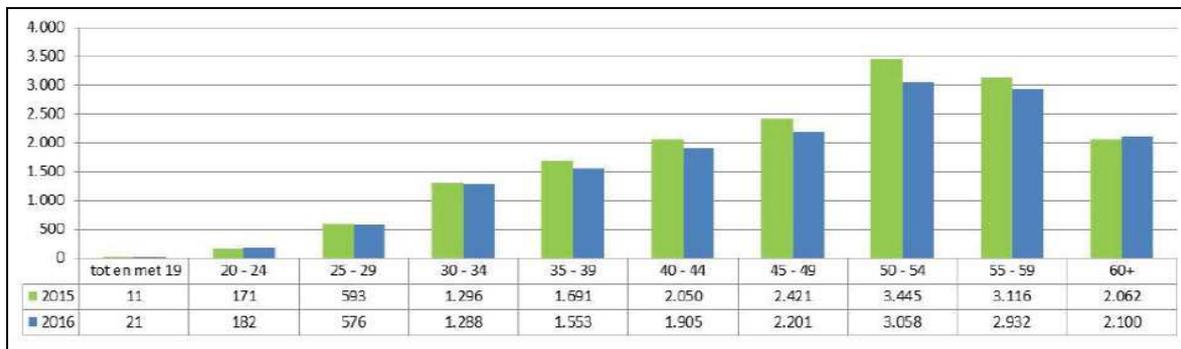


Figure 6-5: Age Distribution Among Civilian Personnel (2015 and 2016).

## 6.4 CIVILIAN AND MILITARY WORK RELATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

Georg Simmel and Rosabeth Moss Kanter described the significance of numerical distributions for social life [9] and behavior in organisations [2]. They argued that if proportions of significant types of individuals/employees are highly skewed, then this can produce different social experiences and interactions. Among other things, these social experiences and interactions can include performance pressure and the use of stereotypes.

Interestingly, despite the skewed numerical distribution of civilian and military personnel in the Netherlands Defence organisation, the high-ranking personnel we interviewed were of the opinion that no serious issues could be identified that affect civilian and military personnel work relations. However, they observed that the division of civilian and military personnel induces grouping, just as, for instance, the division of Army and Navy, or cavalry and infantry, produce group divisions. Interviewees acknowledged cultural differences between civilian and military personnel (one respondent described such differences as reflecting “two separate worlds”) and differences in work conditions and policies for both groups (which we will describe in the next section). When talking further, interesting differences between civilian and military personnel regarding work attitudes and experiences came to the fore.

Perhaps the most prominent difference in work attitudes and experiences is that civilian personnel join the organisation for a *function*, whereas military personnel enter the military for a *career* and perceive it more as a “calling.” This difference also reflects how the organisation is designed, in that there is no career planning for civilian personnel (in contrast with military personnel), civilian personnel are perceived by military personnel as immobile, and civilian personnel may experience performance pressure.

The organisation is designed for its core business: “*The organisation is organised to fight.*” The dominant view is that military personnel *are* the military: “*At the end, military personnel fight, civilian personnel not.*” From this view, one can conclude that the organisation needs military personnel and that the value of civilian personnel sometimes is not recognized. The director of the union argued that, although military personnel are the military, the organisation needs civilian personnel as well, “*even though they will never understand what it is to be military personnel.*” According to another respondent, military personnel often believe that: “*Someone who does not stand with his feet in the mud doesn’t understand, doesn’t know how it works.*” Various interviewees expressed the view that civilian personnel often have to prove their competence and make their skills known. It has been argued that what is most important is to be skillful and knowledgeable and to demonstrate the *relevance* of the expertise for the military organisation. Military personnel are likely to express more respect and understanding towards civilian personnel who have been deployed. Usually, civilian personnel in the

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Netherlands Defence organisation are not deployable. Sometimes, they go on voluntary short-term working visits. Civilians do have the opportunity to apply for the Reserve Force and to be deployed (e.g., in academic or specialist functions). In these cases they have the same training and length of deployment as their military colleagues. When they return from deployment, they continue performing a civilian function. Other civilians with deployment experiences are ex-military. According to one respondent: “*One has to have experienced something in order to gain appreciation and respect.*” Furthermore, when being deployed, personnel speak the same language, have seen and experienced the theatre, and share operational experience.

With respect to operational experience, there may be trust issues in theatre. Civilians (e.g., militarised<sup>3</sup> or Reservists) usually lack operational experience, whereas military personnel have been through multiple deployments. Do military personnel trust civilian personnel with their lives? One interviewee said that the difference between civilian and military personnel should be made clearer in the mission area. Then people would know how best to make a comment, what can be expected, and who to follow in case of an incident.

Another difference between civilian and military personnel is that civilian personnel are outside the military hierarchy. Furthermore, military personnel have extensive networks that consist of strong ties: they typically have known each other a long time and very well. These networks arise and develop by going through the same socialization processes, education, training programs, and operational experiences, and by performing different functions in different parts of the organisation during their careers. These networks are oriented internally, whereas civilian personnel usually have elaborate networks outside the Defence organisation.

In addition to conducting interviews, we performed secondary data analyses of quantitative data collected periodically among Defence personnel, by the Behavioral Sciences Services Centre (e.g., job satisfaction research). We analysed recent data (2011 – 2012), collected among a subsample of Defence personnel ( $N = 3,822$  civilian personnel and  $N = 12,587$  military personnel). The aim was to examine differences between civilian and military personnel with respect to, among other things: work climate, fairness and respect, satisfaction, commitment, cynicism, and turnover intentions.

Both civilian and military personnel evaluated the work climate<sup>4</sup> fairly positively. Military personnel scored a little, but statistically significantly higher, compared with their civilian colleagues ( $M_{Mil} = 3.9$ ,  $SD = 0.6$ ;  $M_{Civ} = 3.8$ ,  $SD = 0.7$ , on a scale from 1 to 5). Significant differences were particularly prevalent within the Maurechaussee and the DMO (although effect sizes were small:  $\eta^2 < .01$ ).

Overall, levels of respect and fairness<sup>5</sup> were high, that is, mean scores for respect varied between 4.23 and 4.69 on a scale from 1 to 5, and mean scores for fairness varied between 3.85 and 4.22 on a scale from 1 to 5. No significant differences in respect or fairness were found within the Navy and Maurechaussee. Interestingly, regarding respect, civilian personnel scored significantly higher, compared with their military colleagues, within the Army and Air Force (organisation units in which civilians are a minority), whereas military personnel scored significantly higher in the two support units. Similarly, regarding fairness, civilian personnel scored higher

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<sup>3</sup> In cases of longer deployments, civilian personnel can be militarised (i.e., put into uniform, but without carrying a weapon) in order to get the same insurance and other conditions as military personnel (disability benefits, compensation in case of death, application of Status of Forces Agreements / SOFA). The role of “militarised” civilian personnel is not very well defined, creating various issues of trust and jurisdiction (disciplinary, legal). If civilians were Reservists, in contrast, they would benefit from the same training and familiarity with operational terminology as the military.

<sup>4</sup> Items included: “We work well together to get the work done,” “We talk to each other about attitude and behaviour,” and “Where I work, the work climate is good.”

<sup>5</sup> Items: “My colleagues treat me with respect,” “My supervisor treats me with respect,” “In my unit, I am treated fairly,” and “In my unit, everyone can count on fair treatment.”

within the Army, while military personnel scored significantly higher within the DMO (no significant differences were found in the other organisation units). These findings suggest that even though employees are a minority in a Defence unit, they can feel respected and treated fairly.

Perceptions of (un)fairness in the workplace can affect employees' work attitudes (e.g., satisfaction and commitment) and behaviours (e.g., absenteeism) [1], [10]. Overall, levels of satisfaction (with the unit and with the organisation) and commitment (to the unit and to the organisation) were moderate to high (mean scores varied between 3.3 and 4.0 on a 5-point scale). When significant differences in satisfaction and commitment were found, civilian personnel scored significantly higher than their military colleagues. Interestingly, with respect to absenteeism, civilian personnel also scored higher (within the Air Force and DMO), meaning that civilians were absent more often than military personnel.

Furthermore, if employees feel that they are not treated fairly, they may develop a cynical mindset at work [11], which means that they will just do their jobs, nothing more (perhaps even a little less). "They simply 'get by', as reflected in their mediocre level of productivity and their ditto sense of work engagement" ([11], p. 80). Among the surveyed Defence personnel, levels of cynicism were low (mean scores varied between 1.17 and 1.84 on a 1–7 scale), which is in accordance with the high levels of perceived fairness. Significant differences between civilian and military personnel show that military personnel were more cynical within the Army, whereas civilian personnel were more cynical within the DMO.

Levels of exhaustion were also low (mean scores varied between 0.92 and 1.39 on a 1–7 scale). Civilian personnel scored significantly higher than military personnel on exhaustion within the Army and Navy. Levels of enthusiasm among civilian and military personnel were moderate: mean scores varied between 3.75 and 4.18 on a scale from 1 to 7. Civilian personnel were significantly more enthusiastic within the Army, whereas within the DMO, military personnel scored higher than their civilian colleagues. Levels of perseverance were also moderate: mean scores varied between 3.63 and 4.13 on a scale from 1 to 7. Significant differences between civilian and military personnel were only found in the DMO, where military personnel scored higher.

Furthermore, levels of career and development possibilities were moderate: mean scores varied between 2.92 and 3.34 on a scale from 1 to 5. Where significant differences were found between civilian and military personnel (i.e., within the Marechaussee and the two support units), civilian personnel scored significantly higher than military personnel. This is an interesting and unexpected finding, compared with what we learned from the interviews, in that there are no career plans for civilian personnel. On the other hand, levels of job insecurity were moderate to fairly high: mean scores varied between 2.97 and 3.92 on a scale from 1 to 5. In all Defence units, civilian personnel were significantly more insecure than military personnel (with a moderate effect size:  $\eta^2 = .06$ ). This is in line with what we learned from interviewing the director of a union. The director noted that civilian personnel are concerned about their position in the ongoing reorganisations and that they are afraid to lose their positions to military personnel, which is expressed in meetings with union members, where emotions can get high. Whereas the results regarding job insecurity displayed a moderate effect size, all other aforementioned effect sizes were small ( $\eta^2 < .01$ ).

Finally, with respect to turnover intentions, military personnel scored significantly higher than civilian personnel (within the Army, Air Force, Marechaussee and DMO). Fifty-seven percent of the surveyed military personnel and 46% of the civilian employees considered finding another job; 39% of the military employees and 29% of the civilian employees had undertaken action to find another job.

## **6.5 CIVILIAN AND MILITARY PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT**

Within the Netherlands Defence organisation, no particular policy exists regarding the management of civilian and military personnel. However, there are clear differences in Human Resources Management (HRM) policies and regulations that create differences between civilian and military personnel with respect to, among other things: salary, leave, career development, various facilities (e.g., overnight stay), and deployments.

One respondent explained to us: *“Attention of the top management is different for the one group of personnel than for the other group,”* by which he meant that more attention is paid to military personnel. The underlying conditions relate to: the larger population of military personnel and the nature of the organisation (i.e., a military organisation). This implies that attention is particularly focused on military personnel. Because of the magnitude of the military population, the attention of the union(s) is particularly focused on military personnel, too. They are in the majority, in the Defence organisation, but also in union memberships, which of course is voluntary. Whereas more than 80% of military personnel have a union membership, many civilian personnel do not. *“The power is where the people are.”* This power is reflected, for example, in the tendency that the scarce growth in financial capacity over the last period was virtually always and totally spent on military personnel, to the detriment of civilian personnel salary conditions. The salary conditions of Defence civilian personnel have even become less positive compared to those of civil servants elsewhere in the Netherlands.

On the other hand, there is a tendency to put civilian personnel in higher ranking jobs that were usually the domain of military personnel, particularly in the field of finance. This has sometimes led to tensions and formal complaints. If civilians are preferred over military personnel in leadership positions, it is because of continuity and specialized expertise.

## **6.6 POINTS OF ATTENTION FOR CIVIL-MILITARY WORK RELATIONS IN DEFENCE ORGANISATIONS**

The division of civilian and military personnel induces diversity issues that may be similar to those affecting other groups in organisations. Advantages of diversity relate, among other things, to civilian and military personnel bringing in different (complementary) expertise and competences to the workplace, which can promote overall performance. Disadvantages, on the other hand, relate, among other things, to the risk of grouping and mutual misunderstanding or disrespect, which can hinder successful cooperation and organisational effectiveness. The interviewees recognized the existence of *“two separate worlds,”* but did not identify serious issues or conflicts that affect civilian and military work relations.

However, various points of attention can be identified that should be taken into account when promoting (and maintaining) a healthy and well-functioning mixed work environment. First, differences in HRM policies and regulations affecting military and civilian personnel have the potential to become problematic. Among other things, such differences can create perceptions of unfairness, which may have negative effects on work relations and organisational performance and effectiveness. Moreover, in view of changes in society (e.g., developments in the labour market, changing labour relations), and in order to retain qualified and motivated personnel and to have a competitive position in the labour market, the organisation must offer its personnel challenging and motivating work and good work conditions, including attractive opportunities for career development.

Second, although it has been recognized that civilian and military personnel bring in different qualities and competencies, the question is: does the organisation exploit these diverse contributions sufficiently? Or does one set of competencies outweigh the other, in terms of being valued by the organisation? It is important to promote a culture in which civilian and military personnel value their complementary qualities. Likewise, managers'

values, decisions and behaviours can have an important influence on employees' work experiences and on building a positive work culture and climate. This influence, in turn, has been associated with, among other things, positive work attitudes, productivity, intentions to stay, and organisational performance [11]. Third, the mobility and continuity issue is one that requires attention as it has important implications for, among other things, organisational learning and memory. Fourth, instead of relying on past developments, it is important to consciously think about what the Defence organisation needs and what a healthy mix of civilian and military personnel might look like.

## **6.7 FINAL REMARKS**

Although the high-ranking personnel we interviewed did not identify serious issues with respect to civilian and military personnel work relations, interesting differences between civilian and military personnel regarding work attitudes and experiences came to the fore. It is important to note, however, that the content of this chapter was based on the study of relevant documents, interviews with a selected number of high-ranking personnel, and secondary data analyses. Although the generated data provide valuable insight into (the management of) civilian and military personnel work relations in the Netherlands Defence organisation, the data were not collected among representative samples of personnel. Moreover, the quantitative data that were available did not include specific measures of work culture and relations between civilian and military personnel. A survey that includes such specific measures, distributed among a large sample of Defence personnel in 2014, addresses this gap, and is discussed in Chapter 12.

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