

The luster of the Pearls

Investigation into the effectiveness of 'Pearls in Policing' and the connection with new policy

SUMMARY

Introduction

The first international 'Pearls in Policing' (PiP) conference was held in 2007. This conference, modelled on the Bilderberg conference, is intended for eminent international police leaders. The conference is associated with an academic forum and an international learning programme for emerging police leaders: the International Pearl Fishers Action Learning Group (IALG).

The reason for organizing the conference was the need to enhance the capacity of Dutch police leaders to venture into international arenas and to assume important positions there. This need was felt by several players within the Ministries of the Interior and of Justice, the Netherlands Police Agency, Police Academy, the Royal Netherlands Military Constabulary and the Public Prosecutor's Office. Drawing on this policy network, the Curatorium (Board) of International Police Leadership was set up in late 2005. The Curatorium asked the director of the School of Police Leadership (SPL) to organize the conference, the international learning programme and the academic forum. The organizations represented in the Curatorium all made substantive and/or financial contributions to the realization of this conference. The biggest financial contributions to PiP came from the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and later from the Ministry of Security and Justice.

Problem statement and research approach

Research agency Pro Facto is investigating the way in which PiP has been operationalized over the past seven years and the extent to which PiP's objectives have been achieved. The guiding questions for this investigation were as follows:

How has Pearls in Policing been operationalized over the past seven years, how have the resources been used, what has the organization achieved, how is it valued by those involved, what are the goals on which Pearls in Policing are based, are these goals consistent with those of the organizations which fund Pearls in Policing, and to what extent have the goals been attained?

Can the goals of Pearls in Policing also be achieved in a different way, what can Pearls in Policing learn from similar initiatives, and how can Pearls in Policing fit in with the (adapted) country policy relating to international police collaboration?

To answer these questions the following research activities were carried out:

- Interviews met 36 people
- Document and literature reviews
- Analysis of existing data
- Catalogue research
- A digital survey among conference attendants, participants in the international learning programme and top-ranking officers of the National Police.

Activities, organization and resources

PiP conferences were held seven times between 2007 and 2013. Representatives of police organizations, international organizations and academics from a total of 43 different countries attended these conferences. A report of each conference was prepared in the form of a conference publication. Between 2008 and 2013, 89 candidates from 24 participating countries and organizations took part in the IALG.

The conference has a specific structure. Attendance is by invitation only and the conference is small-scale, interactive and shielded from the media. The official language is English and a command of English is an important criterion in invitation policy. Participants in the IALG are nominated by the police leaders. The IALG is organized in close collaboration with two international partners and consists of a programme of three international seminars. During these seminars a learning and research assignment is carried out which is formulated by the conference attendants and which is presented by the IALG participants at the next conference.

The Curatorium of International Police Leadership operates as the general Board of Pearls in Policing. It is advised by an international Advisory Board. The organization of the conference is led by the conference director, who is accountable to the Curatorium. The conference director is supported in organizing the conference by the permanent secretariat of PiP. The total staffing level is about 2 FTE. The organization and management of the international learning programme IALG is the responsibility of the programme management, which consists of the conference director and representatives of the two partner countries.

To a significant extent Pearls in Policing has been funded by the Ministries of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (2006-2010) and Security and Justice (2011-2013). From 2006 to 2013 they contributed a total of EUR 1,730,000. Other organizations contributed a total of EUR 1,850,771. From 2006 to 2013 the costs incurred by Pearls in Policing for the conference and the learning programme amounted to a total of EUR 3,342,988. The sums given to PiP by the Ministries of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (2006-2010) and Security and Justice (2011-2013) were special contributions, enabling PiP to achieve its own goals. The provision of these funds can therefore be regarded as input financing. However, because of their involvement in the Curatorium, the providers of funding can exert some influence on the goals PiP sets for itself.

Objective: reconstruction of the policy theory

The origins of PiP's main objectives lie in a shared problem perception within the policy network, namely that there was no international security forum focusing on encounters, exchange and substantive debate for the benefit of international strategic police leadership. A reconstruction of the policy theory shows that PiP had three goals:

1. to strengthen the network of police leaders (the network function)

2. to strengthen the international competences of police leaders (the competence function)
3. to promote strategic thinking by police leaders (the thinktank function).

There is no hierarchy among these goals – they are of equal importance. The goals of the main funders and the initiators are in line with each other, but do not entirely match. Moreover, there are two secondary objectives: to accentuate the image of the Netherlands and The Hague as a country and city of peace and justice, and to create support for Dutch candidates for international positions.

Achievements, satisfaction and impact

PiP’s achievements relate to the three main objectives: the thinktank function, the competence function and the network function. There is a high degree of satisfaction among the individuals and parties involved in PiP as regards the conference and the learning programme. A sustainable and relevant international network has been created. Contacts made at the conference have an impact on the operation of the police leaders. At the personal level, the participating police leaders’ competences have increased. After some time, participants in the IALG see an effect on their careers. As a thinktank, PiP contributes to the strategic thinking of the participating police leaders. There is some impact in the form of policy programmes put forward at the request of participating police leaders in response to topics discussed at the conference. The impact of the thinktank in academic publications and the wider dissemination of this knowledge is limited. The effect of PiP at a broader level within the Dutch police force is also limited. No formal link has been made with formal police training. Within the Dutch police force, PiP seems to suffer from an image problem. It is plausible that to a modest degree PiP contributes to profiling The Hague as an international city of peace and justice. PiP has also helped to create the prerequisites for obtaining support for Dutch candidates for international positions.

Analysis of effectiveness

An assessment of PiP’s effectiveness depends on the level of ambition pursued in relation to the various objectives. This level of ambition can be considered at three levels. The first is the level of ambition in the narrower sense, as it has been formulated by the parties directly involved and as it explicitly emerges from the reconstruction of the policy theory. The second and third levels are the levels of ambition that can be expected from a national and an international perspective. Taking these three levels separately, in the narrower sense PiP is effective with regard to all three objectives. However, from the national and international perspectives, PiP’s impact with regard to the three objectives varies. The most salient difference is the limited impact within the police organization and the academic level of ambition. PiP’s highest degree of effectiveness is as a network; as a public thinktank it is moderately effective. The competence function is somewhere in between. PiP is a relevant forum for a significant portion of the top levels of police forces worldwide, as is demonstrated by the consistent participation and commitment at the highest level by international partners who are important to the Netherlands. This shows that PiP meets a demand which is broader than just the interests of the Netherlands.

Alternative achievement of goals

The second goal of the study is to answer questions about possible coordination with new policy, alternative achievement of goals for PiP and the lessons that can be learnt from similar initiatives. At present there is not a one-on-one match between the planning and implementation of PiP and the priorities of the country policy. To achieve this, several leading

aspects of PiP would have to be reviewed. However, this would not be conducive to achieving PiP’s three objectives. The example of IOSCO, an international organization of financial regulators, shows that PiP can learn from other international forums which have undergone successful transformations in a continuous process of repositioning and adaptation to changing national and international frameworks.

Conclusions

Because of the leading role played by the Netherlands in the Pearls initiative, potentially the National Police has a very valuable asset at its disposal. However, the present structure of PiP with its strong emphasis on personal perspective means that the impact of PiP very much depends on the personal objectives and priorities of the police leader. Some programme choices strongly favour the network function, but impede the public thinktank function. Seclusion and working methods focusing on the personal qualities of the police leader facilitate competency and networking, but are not very compatible with academic work, which basically requires openness and methods that focus on content. PiP aims to serve all three functions within one programme; however, within this coherent structure it is impossible to serve all three at the same ambitious level.

