Violent Jihad in the Netherlands

Current trends in the Islamist terrorist threat

Ministry of the **Interior** *and* **Kingdom Relations**

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Foreword

Since the 11 September 2001 attacks, the threat posed by Islamist terrorism has dominated the national and international security agenda. The AIVD has published several reports on various aspects of this threat. This paper should be read in the context of these earlier AIVD publications. It is an elaboration of the publication *From Dawa To Jihad*, which came out in 2004, but focuses exclusively on violent jihadist movements within radical Islam.

Violent Jihad in the Netherlands charts the phenomenon of Dutch-based jihadist networks which represent the terrorist threat currently confronting us. The paper provides insight into the emergence of these networks and their development over the past few years. The most important trend observed by the AIVD is the fact that the jihadist threat is increasingly rooted in our own society. The principal causes are the processes of radicalisation and recruitment among young Muslims. In addition to peer pressure, the internet plays an increasingly important role..

In this paper the perception of Al-Qaeda as a strategic mastermind controlling jihadist networks and plotting attacks worldwide is put into perspective. It happens frequently that decentralised networks act on their own initiative, often spurred on by local circumstances. At present the most serious threat to the Netherlands appears to emanate from these local jihadist networks rooted in their own breeding ground. National government bodies and local authorities should adapt their policies accordingly. The principles of a broad approach focused on failing integration, radicalism, recruitment and terrorism as interlinked elements of the aforementioned phenomenon - as set out in the paper *From Dawa to Jihad* - remain the guiding principles for this policy. It has led to a broad, wide-ranging approach to counter-terrorism in the Netherlands, in which various government bodies are involved. Their efforts focus on both measures to prevent radicalisation and on repression of terrorist networks and individuals. At national level, the National Co-ordinator for Counter-terrorism plays an initiating and co-ordinating role with respect to these efforts. At local level, several major city councils have now begun to implement this broad approach.

The recent international furore over the Prophet Mohammed cartoons published in a Danish newspaper has shown that the threat assessment in the Netherlands is determined partly by current international issues. The fact that there are also contacts between local and international jihadist networks and that new contacts continue to be

established makes the world of violent jihad a complex and dynamic phenomenon. It illustrates that the threat to Europe, including the Netherlands, from abroad is real and ongoing. In order to counter this threat, effective international co-operation is vital.

Radicalisation processes do not merely exacerbate the jihadist threat in the short term, they also jeopardise social cohesion and solidarity and in the long term threaten the democratic order. A firm counter-terrorism policy should therefore be concomitant with stimulation of integration processes and mobilisation among the Islamic community to resist radicalisation.

It will, however, require a considerable length of time before the collective efforts of government and society are able to prove an effective counterbalance to the lure of the extremist utopian creed to which a growing number of young Muslims in our society have proven themselves susceptible. This creed is incompatible with the desired democratic order in the Netherlands..

S.J. van Hulst

Introduction

The murder of Theo van Gogh: consequences and effects

The murder of film maker Theo van Gogh in 2004 deeply shocked Dutch society. People began to realise that the ideology of violent jihad against the West, which explicitly manifested itself in the attacks on the Twin Towers on 11 September 2001, had also established a foothold in the Netherlands. Since the bomb attacks in Madrid on 11 March 2004, the threat of a terrorist attack on European soil had loomed over a number of European countries. The murder of Van Gogh on 2 November 2004 proved that the Netherlands as well had become a scene of terrorist violence. Although it was an individual assassination rather than the large-scale attack feared in the aftermath of the Madrid bombings, its background, motives and justification suggested a type of religious- inspired terrorism as propounded by Al-Qaeda since the late 20th century.

It ensued that the murderer, and most other members of the extremist network to which he belonged, were young Muslims born and bred in the Netherlands. While on 11 September 2001 New York was hit by an enemy from abroad and the Madrid attacks were perpetrated by a group of North African migrants, the Netherlands had to face the fact that a group of indigenous Muslims had metamorphosed into (potential) terrorists within a short period of time. At an international level, the murder of Van Gogh thrust the Netherlands into the limelight as a country which had now - after years of ethnic and religious tolerance - produced its own jihadists. The attacks on public transport in London in July 2005 by British-Pakistani Muslims, however, have shown that the Dutch situation is by no means unique and that a new phase in the threat from Islamist terrorism appears to have set in. This phase, in which the threat emanates principally from extremist European Muslims who are prepared to commit attacks in their own country, is hereinafter referred to as *European jihad*.

This new phase is in line with developments in Islamist terrorism during recent years. In December 2002 the AIVD pointed out that the future threat would manifest itself in and emanate from the West, and that it would possess a more endogenous character. There were indications that radical Muslims brought up in Europe were beginning to regard Europe as a frontline for jihad and that they might proceed to perpetrating localised terrorist attacks.[1] The attacks in Madrid, London and Amsterdam confirmed these fears. Increasing numbers of migrants' children with an Islamic background are

1 See *Recruitment in the Netherlands for jihad, from incident to trend*, AIVD, December 2002.

going through a radicalisation process in Europe, which in some cases leads them to use violence. Young jihadists justify this violence by referring to the Koran - often on the basis of interpretations by radical ideologists - and view themselves as prospective martyrs.

In addition to the *acute threat* of possible terrorist attacks, the problems involved in Islamist radicalism and terrorism also represent a *long-term threat*, as a polarisation between various ethnic-religious population groups may undermine social cohesion. In the long term this may have an undesirable effect on the democratic order in the Netherlands. The murder of Van Gogh inflamed certain interethnic and social issues in the Netherlands. The murder set in motion processes involving both positive and negative aspects as regards the threat assessment in the immediate future, the consequences of which are as yet unpredictable.

One negative development is the intensification of radicalisation tendencies among sections of ethnic minorities and the indigenous population, which poses an increasing risk that groups or individuals will resort to violence. It is alarming that certain youth groups among the younger generation of Muslims in the Netherlands not only appear receptive to radicalisation, but perceive violent jihad as positive and 'cool'.[2]

A positive aspect, however, is the fact that a process of political and social consciousness-raising has set in, involving a cautious mobilisation of moderate forces in society - also among ethnic minorities - who are prepared to counteract radical and extremist tendencies. The complexity of the problem as well as the lack of organization within certain communities account partly for this initial reluctance. The shortcomings of certain spokespersons also play a part. Furthermore, fear for lack of support from the rest of Dutch society as well as uncertainty about possible repercussions which might ensue as a result of clearly establishing their position within their ethnic group, as well as in regard to their supporters, can delay or impede such initiatives.

This paper describes how the threat from Islamist terrorism currently manifests itself in the Netherlands. It attempts, for instance, to answer the question of why young people born and bred in the Netherlands turn their backs on society to propagate and commit acts of violence in the name of Islam. Another question is, to what extent the situation in the Netherlands differs from that in neighbouring countries.

2 This fascination with violence may be analogous to the culture of violence among apolitical youth gangs in the major cities.

General trends in the development of jihadism

This analysis is based on information about Islamist terrorism gathered by the AIVD. Over the past few years the AIVD has investigated hundreds of individuals associated with dozens of international and local jihadist groups and networks. The knowledge gathered in these investigations has been made largely anonymous in this analysis. We have been more explicit with regard to persons and networks that attracted public attention, such as the Hofstad group.
The structure of the analysis is based upon four trends which have manifested themselves in the development of Islamist terrorism in Europe during recent years. These trends began to reveal themselves around 2002 and gained momentum in 2004, after being spurred on by the murder of Theo van Gogh. The four trends differ in character but are closely interrelated, sometimes overlapping or complimenting and reinforcing one another.

The first trend is the aforementioned evolvement from exogenous foreign terrorist threat to indigenous *home-grown* terrorism, which we refer to in this paper as *European jihad*. Chapter One describes this trend on the basis of the recent development of jihadist networks in Europe and the Netherlands. As Islamist terrorism manifests itself worldwide in the form of networks, in Chapter One we will first define the term *jihadist network*.

The second and third trends are two opposing but complementary developments which still determine (the threat from) Islamist terrorism in its current form. Chapter Two describes the top-down process of decentralisation and local transplantation of international jihadist networks, in which aspects such as migration of jihad veterans and recruitment play a crucial role. This process, begun in the 1990s, is continuing. Chapter Three focuses on the grass roots process of radicalisation and jihadisation, which manifested itself sharply after 2003. It leads to the emergence of local networks of jihadists inspired by the ideology of violent jihad, who operate more or less independently of international networks. The Hofstad group is the best example of a network with a predominantly *local* character. This grass roots radicalisation, enabled partially by *peer pressure*[3], has replaced top-down recruitment as the principal source of the growth of jihad networks in Europe.

The fourth trend, the so-called *virtualisation* of the jihad under influence of the Internet, will be described in Chapter Four. The Internet plays an essential role in dissemination of extremist ideology and in network formation. It enables a weakened

3 Peer pressure refers to the socio-psychological phenomenon that the ideas of particularly young people are influenced largely by behaviour patterns and ideas disseminated among peer groups.

and isolated organisation such as Al-Qaeda to inspire and mobilise people worldwide and to spread the ideology of violent jihad amongst a wider audience. It also creates a virtual environment within which abstract and radical theories are able to thrive undisturbed, and which enables local groups and individuals to link up with this international extremist movement.

Chapter Five summarizes the current manifestation of the threat and possible developments in the near future in relation to each of the aforementioned trends.

Framework of terms and definitions

This paper follows on from a number of earlier AIVD publications. It is an update of the paper *Terrorism in the 21st Century*, published in December 2000 - when Al-Qaeda was still virtually unknown - and also elaborates on the theme of *Recruitment in the Netherlands for jihad, from incident to trend*, published in December 2002. In this so-called recruitment paper, five historical development stages were described in relation to the jihadist threat from the Islamic world to the West over the past few decades. The present analysis only briefly touches upon this historical framework and focuses mainly on the current jihadist threat in Europe and the Netherlands.

Our theoretical starting point is the paper *From Dawa to Jihad*, published in 2004, which described the wide-ranging threat from radical Islam to the democratic order. The present paper focuses only on the violent variant of radical Islam. This *violent jihadism*, i.e. the readiness to participate in armed struggle against the West and other perceived enemies of Islam, constitutes just a small part of radical Islam. Since that is, however, the most destructive variant, which has great impact on national and international security, it merits closer examination.

The definitions of *radicalisation, terrorism, Islamism* and *jihadism* are in line with those employed in earlier AIVD papers. Terrorism is the *commission of violence or the threat to commit violence aimed at human life and/or the infliction of serious material damage disrupting social processes with a view to effecting changes in society and/or influencing political decision making*. Terrorism differs from violent activism with respect to the extent of violence that is used with a view to realising political or religious ideals. Politically motivated violent activists do not threaten human life, they mostly aim their violence at property and organisations, thereby causing limited material damage. Violent activist campaigns do not disrupt an entire society.

Islamism refers to a radical movement within Islam which pursues the realisation of a society that reflects their perception of the original sources of Islam, the Koran and Sunnah (words and actions of the Prophet). Islamism has a markedly political agenda, which - in principle - permits a violent, non-violent or even a democratic option. Related terms are Salafism and Wahhabsim, which also usually refer to a return to the roots of Islam, but place the emphasis on social and ethical issues rather than on political aspects.

Extremist Islamists who propagate violence against perceived *enemies of Islam* in order to effect social and political change which accords with their radical religious (jihadist) ideals are referred to as *jihadists*. Jihad[4] - in the sense of holy war - is their principal focal point. If they truly support or commit acts of violence, we label them jihadist terrorists (violence against unarmed citizens) or jihadist fighters/mujahedeen (violence against military or paramilitary units in war zones).

In the paper *From Dawa to Jihad* radicalisation was defined as *the growing readiness to pursue and/or support - if necessary by undemocratic means - far-reaching changes in society that conflict with, or pose a threat to, the democratic order*. This paper described the entire spectrum of radical Islam in the Netherlands: from peaceful *dawa* (preaching) to overt jihad in the West. Within this context, radicalisation processes are understood to mean increasing readiness among Muslims in the Netherlands to join the various movements within radical Islam. Most of these movements are non-violent dawa-oriented movements.

Only a limited number of radicalised individuals make the leap from radicalism to extremism. In the past this *mobilisation to violence* was mainly the result of recruitment by so-called recruiters, but initiative these days is frequently taken by the new radicals themselves. Radicalised individuals and groups of young Muslims 'mobilise' themselves, relatives and peers for jihad. Hereinafter, we will refer to this process as *jihadisation*. It is a grass roots, largely unstructured process, principally propelled by interaction between (for the most part) young Muslims themselves. The role of the Internet in radicalisation and jihadisation processes is becoming increasingly important.

At present this grass roots jihadisation is the principal driving force behind the threat emanating from Islamist terrorism in western Europe. Many publications on the terrorist threat are still focused on Al-Qaeda, thereby creating the impression that the

4 In Islam the term 'jihad' has a dual meaning. The 'big jihad' refers to the continuous inner struggle to live as a good Muslim; the 'small jihad' refers to the armed struggle in defence of Islam (and the country of Islam). In this paper we use the term jihad purely in the latter meaning: *violent* jihad.

threat is largely internationally controlled by this movement. Investigations by European intelligence and security services, however, reveal a somewhat chaotic, unstructured international phenomenon, which manifests itself principally in local initiatives worldwide. The seeds of the extremist Al-Qaeda ideology have been sown all over the world to germinate in specific national contexts adapted to local circumstances.

1 From exogenous threat to home-grown terrorism

1.1 What is a jihadist network?

The threat from Islamist terrorism manifests itself worldwide in locally and internationally operating network structures. Before focusing on the development and composition of these networks, we will initially attempt to answer the question: what exactly is a jihadist network?

Persons involved in support, preparation or commission of terrorist attacks almost never operate alone, but as members of - sometimes overlapping - network structures. Within these networks they co-operate with individual members or small groups of members (operational cells). A *jihadist network* differs from other terrorist groups and organisations in that it lacks a formal (hierarchical) structure, and has an informal, flexible membership and fluctuating leadership. It is incorrect, however, to conclude that such a network possesses no structure whatsoever. There is always a pattern of connections between individuals who communicate with one another with a view to achieving a common goal. In some cases these communication lines converge in one or more core groups, which thus play a co-ordinating and controlling role. In other cases there are random communication patterns between all members while the network functions practically without any leadership or central control. It is also possible for several groups to be active within one network.

The flexible and informal character of such a network makes it easy for individual members to establish temporary ad-hoc contacts, in addition to more permanent relations. It also leaves room for personal initiative. The relations within a network are constantly changing in character and duration. In most cases we can distinguish a core group surrounded by a diffuse network of individuals, with central control usually restricted to a minimum. Personal ties between members bind the network together. These relationships are usually based on a shared political-religious ideology, mutual trust, family or friendship ties, shared origin and/or shared experiences in training camps or jihad areas. The notion of a common *enemy* also stimulates bonding among network members.

The difference between members of jihadist networks and other radical Muslims is the fact that the former propagate violence in speech and action. In addition to real

jihadists and terrorists, this category also encompasses a wider range of extremists who support and propagate violent jihad, but who have not (yet) engaged in violence. They are, however, prepared to do so in future. This notion of a jihadist network fits into the context of the AIVD's broad approach to Islamist terrorism, in which radicalisation, recruitment and terrorism are seen as interrelated elements of one dynamical continuum within which radical networks may - sometimes suddenly - evolve into terrorist cells.

The above characteristics lead to the following definition:
A jihadist network is a fluid, dynamic, vaguely delineated structure comprising a number of interrelated persons (radical Muslims) who are linked both individually and on an aggregate level (cells/groups). They have at least a temporary common interest, i.e. the pursuit of a jihadism-related goal (including terrorism).

Persons within such a network are referred to as members. A member is a person who contributes actively and consciously to the realisation of the aforementioned goal within the bounds of the network.

This definition is in line with the definition of criminal networks used in Criminology, which does not refer to permanent structures, but to 'temporary, flexible co-operative structures between individuals, based on kinship, friendship, business opportunism, coincidence, necessity, temptation and force, or to the fact that members are colleagues, neighbours or fellow convicts'. This co-operation gradually evolves into certain customs and traditions which lead to 'habituation, mutual interdependence and trust, and hierarchical relations'.[5] This assessment of fluid and dynamic criminal networks was described in an extensive study into organised crime in the Netherlands.[6]

The AIVD employs a broad definition of 'network', in accordance with the broad interpretation of the term 'organisation' in the Intelligence and Security Services Act. This provides the best possible description and clarification of the Islamist terrorist reality. In law enforcement the common notion of a 'network' is more in line with the practice and administration of criminal law, which requires evidence of organised actions as referred to in the Penal Code. This accounts for the fact that the AIVD sometimes uses the term 'jihadist' or 'terrorist' network in a different context to that of the police and judicial authorities.[7]

5 Criminele samenwerking, by Dr P.P.H.M. Klerks. In: Hans Moerland & Ben Rovers (ed.): Criminaliteitsanalyse in Nederland, The Hague 2000.
6 Organized crime in the Netherlands, by C.J.F.C. Fijnaut, F. Bovenkerk, G.J.N. Bruinsma and H.G. van de Bunt. The Hague, Kluwer Law International, 1998.
7 Within an intelligence context, terms like 'organisation' and 'network' are interpreted in a broader sense than in the judicial context. The court eventually decides in which cases networks investigated by the AIVD conform to the criteria of criminal law.

The definition deals exclusively with membership of a jihadist network. The fluid, dynamic nature of network structures, with their obscure demarcation lines, means that it is often quite difficult to distinguish members from non-members. There is a blurred borderline along which an initial casual contact or radical sympathizer gradually becomes part of a network. Persons regarded as members of a network are those who actively, willingly and knowingly participate in that network's activities.

The fact that Islamist terrorism manifests itself principally in networks does not exclude the possibility that individuals can also engage in violence on their own initiative. These individual terrorists will be described in Chapter Four.

1.2 Historical development of network formation

The development of jihadist networks in the Netherlands can be divided into three historical phases; a so-called *traditional phase*, a *proliferation phase and a home-grown phase*. The three phases are in line with the theory of the various stages during which the terrorist threat in Europe has evolved from an exogenous into an endogenous threat.[8] Each historical development phase is dominated by one of the processes in which network formation has its roots, i.e. migration from abroad, recruitment and grass roots radicalisation.

During each phase we see the emergence of one type of network. This leads to a model of three network types. The world of jihadist networks is, however, in a state of flux; there are both separate and interlinked networks of individual jihadists which influence each other and maintain changing cross-network relations. It is not therefore always easy to distinguish the different types of networks and the relevance of endogenous and exogenous factors.

1.2.1 The traditional phase: migration of jihadists

Just as in other western European countries, the Netherlands has been confronted with active jihadist networks and individuals since the 1990s. Migration processes played a central role in the emergence of these networks. Persons affiliated with extremist Islamist organisations and networks from North Africa and the Middle East, as well as jihad veterans from Afghanistan, Chechnya and Bosnia arrived in the Netherlands as

8 For a detailed description of this theory see the AIVD publication *Recruitment in the Netherlands for the jihad, from incident to trend*, December 2002. This theory distinguished five stages. As only the last three stages concern the threat in and emanating from the West, these last three development stages only are relevant to the development of jihadist networks in the Netherlands.

asylum seekers or illegal aliens at the time. Many of these individuals were already known to one another from training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan. In this way (underground) structures of jihad veterans and extremist ideologists emerged in a number of European cities. The members of these structures devoted themselves to propagating and supporting international jihad in notorious conflict zones.

This concerns so-called *transnational networks*. Members of them maintained relations across European borders, and many were in direct or indirect contact with Al-Qaeda or with terrorist networks affiliated to Al-Qaeda, such as the Algerian Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (GSPC), the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) or the Egyptian terrorist organisation Al Jama'a Al Islamia (AJAI). Sections of these networks were involved in the preparation of attacks against Western countries, such as the first attack on the WTC in New York in 1993, committed by persons associated with the Egyptian AJAI, and the Paris metro attacks, committed by Algerian terrorists in 1995. By the end of the 1990s the threat emanated principally from Al-Qaeda-controlled cells in Europe, such as the networks around Abu Zubaida and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. The latter network was responsible for the 11 September attacks.

This *traditional phase* in network development, during which the transnational veterans networks emerged, ended somewhat abruptly by the end of 2001. The American invasion of Afghanistan marked the beginning of a worldwide campaign against terrorism, which placed these networks and their members under severe pressure. This has led to large-scale decentralisation and disintegration. Individual jihadists and small cells scattered all over the world and began to shift their focus to local activities.

1.2.2 The proliferation phase: recruitment

By the end of the 1990s some of the migrant jihad veterans and radical ideologists began to approach members of the local Muslim communities in Europe. Recent migrants and young second and third-generation Muslims proved particularly receptive to the extremist ideas of these jihadists. In the Netherlands the first recruitment attempts for violent jihad were also made around the year 2000. These activities were initially mainly centred in and around a number of radical Salafi mosques. At a later stage the recruiters shifted their activities to other places, such as living rooms, prisons, and the Internet.

New recruits from Europe were often sent to Pakistan to be trained for jihad or for committing attacks in the West. Radical ideologists or jihad veterans usually recruited potential jihadists in groups. A charismatic recruiter, often a member of a transnational

network, gathered around him a local group of radicals who focused principally on the international struggle against the West. This led to the emergence of a second type of network in Europe, which combined endogenous and exogenous elements. Hereinafter we will refer to this type of network as an *internationally oriented local network*.

1.2.3 The home-grown phase: radicalisation and jihadisation

Since 2003 the AIVD has observed that local networks not only emerged as a result of top-down recruitment by jihadists from abroad, but that so-called grass roots radicalisation, eventually leading to home-grown terrorism, was gaining ground. These spontaneous processes of grass roots radicalisation and jihadisation among mainly young Muslims in Europe were triggered by extremist ideology disseminated by itinerant preachers and via radical websites. Sections of young Muslims had become receptive to these ideas as a consequence of a complex of socio-cultural, psychological, political and religious factors. This increasing radicalisation among North African or Pakistani migrants' children born and bred in Europe fuelled the emergence of local networks and individuals who wished to join the global jihad.

The growth of these so-called *local autonomous networks* was stimulated by trigger events such as the war in Iraq and the murder of Van Gogh, both of which attracted considerable media attention. The activities of members of the Hofstad network demonstrated that it was relatively simple to wage violent jihad in the Netherlands. The attacks in London and the arrests of groups of young jihadists in other western European countries illustrated the fact that radicalisation of young Muslims and the emergence of often autonomously operating networks is a problem which these days confronts all neighbouring countries.

1.3 Three types of jihadist networks

The division into three historical phases leads to a model of three types of jihadist networks: *1) transnational networks, 2) internationally oriented local networks, 3) local autonomous networks*. These three types of networks differ in member profile, strategy and mode of operation. In the following chapters they will be discussed in relation to the current threat. Chapter Two, which is focused mainly on the international aspects, describes the first two types of networks, focusing principally on travel movements of jihad veterans and on local recruitment. The principal subject of Chapter Three is grass roots radicalisation, narrowed down to local autonomous networks.

The above categorisation is simply a model for describing the situation. It does, however, involve the risk that things will be frozen in time so that insuffcent attention will be bestowed on the dynamics of the development process and the continuous interaction between individuals involved in the networks. An individual jihadist can be a member of several networks simultaneously A certain network, or parts of it, can also in the fullness of time evolve into one or more other types of network. In that way, sections of transnational networks have formed local cells due to recruiting activities, which continue to exist even after dismantling of the transnational network.

We also see how in Europe members of local autonomous networks conclude that they lack the necessary organisational facilities or expertise to realise their jihad plans, seek to approach international elements and thereby wholly or partly lose their autonomous character. Investigations into the attacks in Madrid and London have shown that it is often difficult to establish to what extent local perpetrators were assisted or managed by international elements in the preparation and carrying out of their activities.

2 Decentralisation and local implantation of international jihad

2.1 Al-Qaeda: from 'network of networks' to trademark and ideology

The name of Al-Qaeda is still used as a collective term for the global threat from Islamist terrorism. Although by now this has become such an established term that it leaves no doubts as to the nature and seriousness of the threat, its use is problematic. Primarily, it leads to a simplification of this complex phenomenon. Despite the existence of a shared ideology and overlapping international network structures, within a national or local context the threat often manifests itself in a specific form. The problems relating to Islamist terrorism in Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the Russian Federation are not only different in each of these countries, they also differ from the threat and its backgrounds in western Europe. Secondly, frequent references to Al-Qaeda create the image of an omnipresent and practically unassailable adversary as the mastermind behind attacks worldwide. This image suits Al-Qaeda's propaganda strategy perfectly, but does not reflect reality.

Many still consider the Al-Qaeda network around Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri as the *mother network* which united a number of existing - mainly nationally focused - jihadist organisations under one ideological and partly operational umbrella by the end of the 20th century. After 2000, a wide range of new terrorist networks and cells arose from this mother network. For this reason people often refer to Al-Qaeda as the *network of networks*, a global co-ordinating centre for global violent jihad against the West. The announcement of the *International Islamic Front for the Holy War against Jews and Crusaders* in 1998 marked the beginning of this network's heyday.

The question is, however, whether there has in fact ever been a centrally controlled umbrella organisation with an unequivocal global strategy. Even at Al-Qaeda's height as a *jihad organisation*, there were different networks and groups worldwide which adhered to the ideology of violent jihad. Although some of them were in close contact with each other, used the same training facilities and in some cases even received financial and material support from Al-Qaeda, they often operated autonomously and were independent of each other. Only a part of these structures actually belonged to the Al-Qaeda network. In addition to the core group around Bin Laden - *so-called core Al-Qaeda* - the network consisted of clusters in the Middle East, Pakistan, Central Asia,

East Africa and South-East Asia, supplemented by a heterogeneous network of North African groups which were operating partly underground in Europe (and other countries) and partly in North Africa.

Since 2002 the *war on terror* has considerably weakened Al-Qaeda and the networks around it. Prominent leaders and planners were killed or arrested, and Bin Laden's core group has ended up in an isolated position, separated from a globally scattered network of mujahedeen. Although this network consists of a substantial number of well trained jihad veterans, it is unclear to what extent its individual members are still able to co-ordinate operations, or whether these operations are still controlled by the aforementioned core group. The attacks and attempted attacks in Europe since 2003 were to a very limited extent only controlled - directly or indirectly - or supported by networks affiliated to core Al-Qaeda. It seems therefore that the blow that dealt to core Al-Qaeda has not just temporarily disrupted the network, but paralysed it on a more permanent basis. After the arrest of the Pakistani computer expert Mohammed Noor Khan in Lahore in summer 2004, however, followed by the arrest of Abu Issa al Hindi in the United Kingdom, it turned out that certain individuals or fragments of the former Al-Qaeda network still possess the intention and capability to plot and carry out attacks in the West. With the help of locally recruited cells or individuals these elements could possibly carry out their attack plans in Europe also.

At present the most serious jihadist threat is posed by networks which previously operated more or less autonomously, but then joined Al-Qaeda in name only for propagandist or opportunist reasons, such as Al-Zarqawi's network in Iraq and the violent opposition in Saudi Arabia.[9] Their actions so far have been restricted to local or regional struggle against rulers in the Middle East and their Western allies, but in the long term they might well expand to the West. The fact that a number of former Al-Qaeda fighters have joined these networks has led to a partial regeneration of the old network. The difference, however, is that it is principally al-Zarqawi who is in charge and therefore now to some extent determines international strategy. This has considerably strengthened the anti-Shiite element in Al-Qaeda's ideology, and resulted in a stronger focus on jihad in and around Iraq.

Al-Qaeda's power currently lies chiefly in its role as a worldwide symbol and source of inspiration for radicalised groups and individuals who wish to participate in global jihad. Al-Qaeda has thus become a trademark and ideology of this international

9 In October 2004 Al-Zarqawi openly linked up with Bin Laden and renamed his organisation *Al-Qaeda organisation for the holy war in the country of the two rivers*. In Saudi Arabia the jihadist movement now operates under the name of *Al-Qaeda of the Arab Peninsula*.

movement, which is still growing. It consists of numerous, often locally emerging groups, networks, cells and individuals who try to wage jihad after their own fashion, usually without any external control or support.[10] The following paragraph briefly describes the ideology and strategic objectives propounded by Al-Qaeda.

2.2 Ideology of global violent jihad

One of Al-Qaeda's founders, the Palestinian ideologist Abdullah Azzam, already defined the strategy of global violent jihad against the West. Both Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri referred to Azzam in their speeches and publications, and expanded his political ideology. The strategy is aimed principally at putting an end to Western influence in the Islamic world, recapturing the country of Islam and establishing a global Caliphate. It is, in fact, an amalgam of *violent Islamism (jihadism)* which has its roots mainly in Egypt and is focused on violent political struggle against rulers in the Islamic world who are supported by the West. This violent movement in the Muslim Brotherhood was principally propounded by the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb in the 1960s. Another component of the ideology is a *Salafist* creed, which has its roots in Saudi Arabia and pursues a puritanical revolution of culture and society through introduction of the Sharia.

Where Salafism offers a philosophical orientation, Al-Qaeda's political views offer an explanation for abuses in the Islamic world as well as a prop for political activism. The essence of Al-Qaeda's ideology is that the Islamic world finds itself in a crisis caused by corrupt regimes kept in power by the West. The international community of Muslims (the *umma*) has slipped into lethargic ignorance and no longer have any power to improve the situation. A political breakthrough can only be enforced by ending Western influence in Islamic countries by means of violent jihad. By employing a combination of attacks and political propaganda, Al-Qaeda hopes to shake the *umma* out of its lethargy and inspire Muslims to return to pure Islam as preached by Salafism. It is therefore the duty of every Muslim to wage and support the offensive jihad.

An essential characteristic of violent jihad ideology and one of the principal causes of extremism is the *conspiracy concept*. It is the central position of this conspiracy concept in the ideology which distinguishes the jihad movement from other ultra-orthodox or Salafi movements in Islam. In the perception of those who believe in violent jihad, Islam is constantly threatened by external hostile forces that seek to destroy it. These

10 Al-Zarqawi's statement after the London attacks should also be viewed against the background of Al-Qaeda's communication strategy. The movement claims responsibility for terrorist attacks in which it has not been involved at all, in order to create the illusion of a global fight, which maximises the deterrent effect on adversaries.

hostile forces include not only Israel and the West (usually referred to by jihadists as Jews and Crusaders), but also renegade Muslims and corrupted Islamic regimes. According to jihadist ideology, the presence of these hostile forces obliges every 'good' Muslim to fight continuously in defence of Islam. It is an apocalyptic fight between good and evil, in which any form of violence is permitted, anywhere in the world.

Driven by the perception that the world of Islam is constantly threatened from outside, and prompted by harsh government repression in Islamic countries, the fight was often concentrated on areas on the periphery of Islam, such as Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya. By means of the attacks on American embassies in East Africa in 1998 and on the World Trade Center in New York though, Al-Qaeda demonstrated that the *powerful Western enemy* could also be hit on its own territory. This opened up the entire world as a potential jihad area. These attacks and their ideological justification were, in fact, Bin Laden's declaration of war on the West and his designation of all citizens in Western countries as justified jihad targets. It marked the point from where he explicitly set out on the path of international terrorism.

The war in Iraq at last presented the advocates of violent jihad with an excellent opportunity to move jihad from the periphery of the Islamic world to its Arab heart. Following the war against the Russians in Afghanistan, it enabled them to create a new *great cause* as a focal point for all anti-Western jihadist groups.

2.3 Decentralisation of international jihad

The decentralisation of international jihad encompasses both the shift from central operational control to local autonomy and a further expansion of the operating area. It has led to the emergence of an increasing number of local and regional *command centres,* from which operational and organisational initiatives are taken. This development can be illustrated on the basis of successful and thwarted terrorist attacks in Europe during the past few years.

Around 2000, networks of veterans affiliated to Al-Qaeda played a central role in initiating and controlling terrorist cells that prepared and carried out attacks. All attacks and attempted attacks perpetrated in the period 2000-2002 were supervised by command-and-control centres in transnational networks, the members of which had spent time in training camps in Pakistan or Afghanistan.[11] Although these transnational elements were also involved in a number of attempted attacks after this

11 Examples are the attempted attacks on the Christmas Fair in Strasbourg (December 2000), the American embassy in Paris (September 2001) and the British warships in the Strait of Gibraltar (May 2002), as well as the attacks in the US on 11 September 2001 and those in Bali in October 2002.

period, their role has become less prominent, especially if we leave aside the situation in Iraq.

The attacks in Casablanca (May 2003) and Istanbul (November 2003) already involved local elements, although investigations also revealed (indirect) links with transnational networks or Al-Qaeda. The local element was even more obvious in the Madrid attacks, where a group of migrants resident in Spain proved to be responsible for planning and carrying out the attacks. The murder of Theo van Gogh and the acts of violence perpetrated by the Hofstad group in the Netherlands were purely local actions without operational control from international networks. Local elements also dominated the suicide attacks in London in July 2005. But the British attacks also showed that the role of international elements in relation to the terrorist threat in Europe should not be underestimated, particularly if these elements forge links with local groups.

Transnational networks

The organisational and operational decentralisation of the global jihad is concomitant with the globalisation of extremist ideology, and manifests itself in the worldwide presence of *transnational veterans networks*. These transnational networks have their roots in organisations that focused initially on overthrowing the regime in their own country but, under the influence of the war in Afghanistan, adopted Al-Qaeda ideology. This led to the emergence of an international movement of global jihad against the West. Arab, Asian and North African mujahedeen came to know one another and forged bonds of mutual trust in Pakistani and Afghan training camps, or on the battlefields of Afghanistan, Chechnya and Bosnia. The experiences and friendships formed there bind these networks together even more closely than their shared ideology and perception of a common enemy. For North African networks in particular, the wars in Bosnia and Chechnya proved a major spur for them to settle in Europe.[12]

On the basis of shared ideology and forged bonds of friendship, more and more co-operation developed among individual jihadists in various countries. In Europe particularly, this resulted in a new generation of transnational networks with a more fluid and autonomous character, frequently formed with one another on an ad-hoc, opportunistic basis. These networks, often representing various ethnic origins, lack a formal leadership structure. The size of these transnational networks ranges from some dozens of core members to hundreds or thousands of jihadists, but the fluid character makes it difficult to pinpoint the exact size. Within these structures we see

12 The various phases in the development of Islamist terrorism from source countries in the Middle East, North Africa and Asia to its emergence in Europe were described in detail in the paper *Recruitment in the Netherlands for the jihad; from incident to trend*, AIVD, December 2002.

various individually operating mujahedeen, but also LIFG-affiliated Libyans, Algerians with a GSPC link and Moroccan jihadists associated with the Groupe Islamique Combattant Marocain (GICM).

The growth of transnational networks in Europe in the 1990s was principally a result of migration movements from Islamic countries and jihad battlefields. As a consequence of tighter migration laws, intensified border controls, a stricter deportation policy and more legal options for prosecuting extremists, however, this growth has been gradually checked in Europe during recent years. In addition to this considerably successful policy, circumstances such as the end of the war in Bosnia, the closure of training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan and the scaling down of jihad activities in Chechnya have also led to a declining growth in the number of potential new jihadists.

The continuous pressure exerted on transnational networks by national counter-terrorism bodies in Europe appears to have reduced the threat of violence these networks represented. The war in Iraq, however, has given existing networks new impetus and sparked an intensification of their activities. Consequently, the major security risks for the future stem from the effects of the Iraq war and the possible overspill of the conflict to neighbouring countries in the region such as Jordan and Syria. Other factors which may have an adverse influence on the threat assessment are the continuing instability in parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan and the development of areas in African countries like Somalia, Ethiopia and the Sahel region, where government authority as well as law and order is either inadequate or lacking. These regions provide terrorist networks with an opportunity to base themselves there and set up training camps. The Iranian government's more radical political attitude towards the West may also cause extra problems in future.

Strategy and mode of operation

Transnational networks traditionally occupy themselves principally with supportive activities, such as recruitment and training of new recruits, helping them join classic jihad hotspots, and disseminating radical ideology. In some cases they help facilitate attacks, for example, in the case of the planned attack on the Christmas Fair in Strasbourg in 2000 by the *Meliani cell*, which was linked with jihadist individuals and networks in Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom. By the end of 2001, the Netherlands was confronted with a terrorist cell that was closely linked to a transnational network. This cell in Rotterdam consisted of North African migrants and a French convert. The cell was involved in the preparation of an attack on the American embassy in Paris, which was to be carried out by a Tunisian migrant resident in

Belgium. Both these attacks were able to be prevented, partly as a result of good international co-operation between police and intelligence services.

The modus operandi of transnational networks is often professional. It involves planning and operating on a need-to-know basis and a high level of operational security. This requires some central control and training. It is estimated that hundreds of veterans who are to some degree involved in one or more networks have settled in Europe. Several dozen of them live in the Netherlands - sometimes temporarily - from where they are in regular contact with jihadists in other European countries. The open inter-European borders make frequent travel easy for them. There are also lines snaking from these jihadists to networks in the Islamic world.

At various times in the past decade jihadist ideologists have publicly expressed the desirability of obtaining and using CBRN weapons against the perceived *enemies of Islam*. In an interview in 1998, Osama bin Laden himself was said to regard the procurement and deployment of CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear) weapons as a 'religious duty'. Nevertheless, attacks so far have involved mainly the use of conventional weapons such as explosives, in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and in the West. The fragmentation of international networks and the disintegration of the Al-Qaeda network have reduced the technical and organisational capability of Islamist terrorists to produce heavyduty non-conventional weapons.

The AIVD believes that sooner or later we will be confronted with a successful attack carried out with a CBRN weapon. This will most likely be a small-scale, technically simple CBRN attack which causes a limited number of victims but possibly widespread social upheaval. In other words: the effect will be disruptive rather than destructive. Raw materials for such an attack are relatively easy to obtain, and it is a simple matter to find formulas on the Internet. In the long term - after more than a decade - a successful terrorist attack employing larger scale and more advanced CBRN weapons would very likely be possible, partly as a result of developments in biotechnology and in the chemical industry. At the moment, however, the AIVD considers the risk of such a large-scale attack to be extremely low.

At present transnational networks in Europe are focusing mainly on (support to and recruitment for) participation in jihad in Iraq and Chechnya. Planning attacks in Europe seems to have faded into the background for now. If the occasion presents itself though, these professional jihadists will not hesitate to help prepare such attacks. They obviously regard themselves as leaders and organisers of jihad, not as operatives or

potential suicide attackers. For that purpose - even in Iraq - they prefer to use young, enthusiastic recruits from all over the world (including Europe) who are prepared to sacrifice their lives in defence of Islam against the 'hostile' West.

2.4 Local implantation of international jihad

In Europe by the end of the 20th century, local groups of new recruits emerged as a result of recruitment activities by radical ideologists and jihad veterans resident in the West on a temporary or permanent basis. These local networks clustered around one or more recruiters. They had an international orientation, and recruits were often sent to a training camp in Pakistan for a certain period of time, to undergo further ideological and military training. In these camps a selection was also made of potential attackers to be deployed in the West. The fact that Al-Qaeda had a preference for local recruits as attackers was already apparent in the case of the aforementioned Rotterdam cell in 2001.

Early in 2002, the Netherlands was confronted with recruitment activities by foreign recruiters. Two youths from Eindhoven with a Moroccan background proved to have been recruited for jihad by a network of recruiters from North Africa operating in and around the Al Fourqaan mosque in Eindhoven. Once prepared for violent jihad - for example, by means of various videos about Chechnya and Afghanistan - they travelled to the Kashmir conflict area, where they were shot by Indian border troops. In the aftermath of this incident, in 2002 twelve radical Muslims were arrested on suspicion of recruitment for jihad.

Tighter control by the Dutch authorities and the penalisation of recruitment for jihad, as well as the fact that training facilities in Pakistan and Afghanistan were closed down, have made the activities of recruiters more difficult. This does not alter the fact that the AIVD still observes recruitment activities in the Netherlands.

In December 2005 the Dutch media reported that three young Dutch Muslims from The Hague had travelled to the Caucasus. Their parents feared they would be wanted there to participate in jihad activities. In the period before their departure, they were in regular contact with an individual who had earlier attracted the AIVD's attention in relation to recruitment in the Netherlands. An investigation by the Dutch police in Azerbaijan, where the youths were arrested by local authorities, did not produce any evidence. After the incident, however, a spokesman from the Salafite As-Soennah

mosque in The Hague told the media that they were concerned about recruiters visiting mosques and scouting for 'angry young brothers with identity problems looking for the right faith'.[13]

Internationally oriented local networks

The recruitment practices of local groups and individuals in Europe led to the emergence of so-called *internationally oriented local networks*. In these networks national and international elements are combined when jihad veterans meet locals in Europe whom they recruit for international jihad. The initiative for recruitment, as well as the further ideological and physical training of the recruits, therefore originates from existing transnational networks. Local recruits not only adopt the objectives and strategy of the network in question, but are also controlled by that network. This is the principal difference to *autonomous* local networks, which operate much more independently and on their own initiative, essentially without international control.

An internationally oriented local network may function as a *branch* of a transnational network, to be deployed for the facilitation, preparation or commission of an attack. Ties between the networks may, however, also be very loose, while local cells largely retain their autonomy. As a result of the fact that the large transnational networks have lost much of their operational power, as well as increasing decentralisation, the latter variant is becoming increasingly popular. It also frequently happens that autonomous local networks of independently radicalised Muslims attempt to establish relations with international elements in order to reinforce their own power to strike. This has gradually blurred the line between these two network types. The principal difference between the two local network types remains, however - in addition to their focus on local or international jihad - the question of how initiatives and decisions are taken: top-down, as in internationally oriented groups, or at grass roots, as in local autonomous networks.

It is remarkable that in the Netherlands the international aspect appears to play a less prominent role in jihadism than it does in neighbouring countries. Local networks in the Netherlands prefer to focus on the domestic struggle and jihad trips are rare, whereas in 2005 considerably more recruits from countries such as France, the UK and Germany travelled to Iraq, both on their own initiative and with the help of local facilitation networks. The next chapter will provide more details about specifically Dutch aspects of local networks in the Netherlands.

13 Newspaper NRC Handelsblad, 27 December 2005

3 Radicalisation and the emergence of local networks

3.1 Radicalisation, recruitment and jihadisation

Since the attacks in Madrid and London and the murder of Theo van Gogh, we have known that there is a *European jihad*. This phenomenon is characterised by the emergence of local autonomous jihadist networks of persons with an Islamic background who were born and bred in Europe. They familiarise themselves with extremist ideology through the Internet and local ideologists, after which they adapt it to the European context. Although there are contacts with other local and internationally operating networks and individuals, there is hardly any external control. In the Netherlands the most prominent example of such a local autonomous network is the Hofstad group. This chapter examines the processes that lie at the root of this *home-grown terrorism* in the Netherlands. The key question is why young Dutch Muslims are receptive to jihadist ideology, and how this receptiveness leads to the emergence of local networks.

Local autonomous networks have their roots in a process of radicalisation. With respect to this radicalisation there has so far been a considerable amount of attention - also in public debate - devoted to the role played by mosques, Imams and Islamic organisations, as well as the influence of jihadist networks which recruit young Muslims for the jihad. Since 2001, however, the AIVD has seen - in addition to this top-down recruitment - a growing tendency among young Muslims to go through a radicalisation process on their own initiative. Typical of this grass roots radicalisation is the fact that it is a spontaneous, interactive and largely autonomous process. This process will hereinafter be referred to as *autonomous radicalisation*.[14]

Autonomous radicalisation is spurred on principally by the Internet, where Muslims are encouraged to focus on what is called ‘true’ Islam. Religious authorities play only a limited role on the Internet, which leaves room for personal interpretations of religious issues. As a consequence, a local Dutch variant of radical Islam seems to be evolving. This does not automatically lead to an orientation on religiously justified violence, but it lowers the threshold for propagating jihad. Within this context a process evolves at the extreme end of the radicalisation spectrum which we refer to as *jihadisation*. This is a process during which young Muslims are encouraged, particularly by their peers, to devote themselves to violent jihad, in both speech and action. Like autonomous

14 The process is also referred to as self-radicalisation or self-recruitment.

radicalisation, jihadisation is mainly an unstructured, interactive grass roots process. It is also an autonomous process, as it has, in principle, its own local dynamics, despite external influencing factors such as jihadist publications.

Although the process of jihadisation has several things in common with recruitment, there are also major differences. While recruitment usually involves a personal, asymmetric relationship between recruiter and recruit, the growth and development of local autonomous networks depend upon the contribution of all members. Although here, too, more experienced or fanatic individual members may play a prominent role, the group as an entity is much more important than in the case of recruitment. There is also a specific interaction: extremist groups are not only actively seeking new sympathisers, it also happens that young Muslims spontaneously choose certain radical examples and approach members of an existing network on their own initiative. Although self-recruitment for jihad is a key element in the emergence of local networks, top-down recruitment too still occurs. Internationally operating networks may well recruit members of a local autonomous network for operational purposes.

3.2 The religious context of radicalisation

Processes of (autonomous) radicalisation and jihadisation among young Muslims in Europe usually begin with a more intensive or renewed attention to Islam among these persons during their adolescence. The question is why this has driven a growing number of young Muslims towards radical Islam; a development which in some cases has even resulted in jihadisation.

A good part of the explanation lies in the specific circumstances of a modern and globalising society in which young Muslims find themselves, not only in the West, but in the Islamic world itself. While their parents often still practice Islam within the traditional cultural context, young Muslims are more often confronted with a rapidly modernising, more secularised culture which conflicts with local religious traditions. These young people have not fully been secularised themselves, and they continue to struggle with existential and religious questions, seeking answers in an Islam which is increasingly divergant from a local cultural context.[15] Although Muslims worldwide are faced with globalisation and modernisation, young Muslims growing up in secular Western societies, in which Islam is just one more religious and cultural movement, are much more acutely confronted with problems of existential and religious orientation.

15 This process of deculturation of Islam was described by the French sociologist Roy in his book *L'islam mondialisé*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 2002.

The Koran is the principal source for seeking answers to these existential and religious questions. To interpret Koran text though requires considerable linguistic and historical knowledge. Individual Muslims are consequently dependent on Imams and scholars to gain certainty, even about often very practical, basic rules of life. Islam though has neither a central educational authority nor any institutional implantation in a clerical organisation, which means that Muslims are confronted with a multitude of views and interpretations. This situation enables numerous exegetes and ideologists to give the faith a puritanical or political twist. Where Islam lacks a stable cultural anchor in more or less traditionally determined religious practices, the problem of existential and religious orientation becomes even more pressing. Exegetes and ideologists consequently have even more scope in the West than they do in Islamic countries.

When young European Muslims are going through the processes of radicalisation and jihadisation as previously described, Salafism is often their first and principal frame of reference. Salafism can be defined as an orientation in Sunni Islam in which the return of Muslims to the so-called pure Islam is the central focal point. According to Salafi Muslims, this is the religious practice of the salaf, which literally means ancestors. Salaf refers to the Prophet Mohammed, his companions and their direct successors. Most present-day Salafis interpret this return to pure Islam in an ultra-orthodox, puritanical sense. They believe that true Muslims should focus literally on the Koran and Sunnah in everything they do.[16] This creed often leads to intolerance towards other religious or ideological views.

On the face of it, the attraction of Salafism for young people in a modern Western society appears to conflict with the anti-modernist character of this creed. Lack of a local Islamic-cultural context in the West (and increasingly in the rapidly modernising cities in Islamic countries themselves), however, fits very well in Salafism, as it seeks to clear Islam of a historical-cultural context and local traditions. The strict and unambiguous rules of Salafism give wavering young people a prop to cling to to in a rapidly changing pluralist society, in which standards and values often seem to depend on individual choice. A considerable number of young radicalising Muslims in the Netherlands come from high-crime inner city areas, or have a criminal record themselves. The strict rules of radical Islam give them an opportunity to escape from crime and become a 'good Muslim'.

In the Netherlands Salafism is spread principally by means of the traditional top-down method, in which Salafi mosques and itinerant preachers play an essential role. We

16 The example of the Prophet Mohammed as described in the traditional stories about how the Prophet Mohammed practiced the rules of Islam.

also see an increasing number of autonomous radicalisation cases, especially on the Internet. Local networks resulting from this type of radicalisation do not usually have a jihadist character. Their members seem to be attracted to Salafism predominantly because it provides them with an unambiguous creed and a set of clear rules of life for young people in search of a philosophical orientation. We see this clearly in, for example, news groups frequented by young Muslims with a Moroccan background who e-mail many questions regarding the correct Islamic rules for various, often practical matters (ie. personal relationships or Ramadan).

It is remarkable that in addition to Salafism, the ideology of Takfir Wal Hijra also appears to take root among young Dutch Muslims. Takfir Wal Hijra was originally an extremist group that emerged in Egypt in the 1960s. Like the Salafis, the group focused on the 'pure' interpretation of Islam. Different, however, was the fact that, on their own authority, they declared Muslims who failed to convert to this 'pure' Islam to be 'unbelievers' (Takfir = excommunication). At the same time the group reacted to the perceived non-Islamic character of society by turning their back on this society (Hijra = emigration). By the end of the 1970s the Egyptian group disintegrated, but its creed spread throughout the Arab world and North Africa in particular. In recent years, through radical preachers and jihad veterans, the ideology established a foothold in Europe, especially among young Muslims.

Like certain radical Salafis, Takfiri regard jihad as a personal duty for every Muslim. Among local networks in the Netherlands dominated by the Takfir ideology, the idea that jihad should take place in the West itself is increasingly taking hold In addition to this, the ideology permits - within the limits of its intolerant ideas - relative freedom with respect to traditional interpretation of the Koran and the choice of a spiritual leader. This individualist, anarchistic aspect of the Takfir ideology seems to appeal to young 'emancipated' Muslims in Europe. They have been brought up in the individualist Western culture, which is much more focused on moulding one's own life and identity (as a Muslim) than was the collectivist culture of their parents and grandparents.

The scope for an individual interpretation of Islam, combined with religious ignorance among young European Muslims and their insufficient command of Arabic, leads to a relatively simple, often non-coherent ideology which justifies the use of violence against people with different ideas. With the help of radical websites and chat sessions they compile a radical 'cut-and-paste' version of Islam from Koran quotations which they reshape into a revolutionary pamphlet of global violent jihad. In this way Takfir

ideology is adapted to the Western context. Because it differs markedly from the original creed of the Egyptian group, the young adherents to this extremist and very dynamic ideology can more accurately be referred to as *neo-Takfiri*.

3.3 The socio-political context of radicalisation

Apart from religious motives, local jihadist networks are also driven by political and social issues. In practice we can barely distinguish the religious motives from these issues. A typical characteristic of local autonomous networks in the Netherlands is their strong focus on the Dutch socio-political context, in addition to international issues. A number of recent international and national events have had great impact on this context. The 11 September attacks, the influence of the assassinated politician Pim Fortuyn and the murder of Theo van Gogh have triggered a polarisation in society which manifests itself in, for example, fierce debate about integration or the position of Islam. The attacks in New York, Madrid and London as well as the murder of Van Gogh were *trigger events* that directly influenced radicalisation and jihadisation among young Muslims, because they channelled latent feelings of political and social discontent and frustration in a specific direction.

The influence of international political Islam on young Muslims is evident. They closely follow international developments in the Islamic world via frequently viewed Arab satellite TV stations and Dutch websites. Even the regular media are often (very) critical in their coverage of political developments that affect Muslims worldwide: the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the conflicts in Chechnya and Kashmir and the American intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq. In addition to this, the Internet provides a constant flow of unevaluated and often very emotive reports and assessments of alleged oppression and abuse of Muslims in many countries. From Iraq alone, numerous stories and videos about atrocities find their way to young Muslims in the West.

As a consequence of this, (young) Muslims in the West believe that the Muslim community worldwide (the umma) is being placed under severe pressure by oppression and persecution. This situation fuels feelings of anger, powerlessness and humiliation among Muslims who feel a strong emotional solidarity with the umma. In their view, the position of the West with respect to the fate of Muslims is at best hypocritical. Where the United States claim to have liberated Iraq, many Muslims lay great emphasis on the abuse of prisoners in the Abu Graib prison. Many Muslims cite the support of Western governments for dictatorial and corrupt regimes in the Middle East and North Africa - despite continuous Western rhetoric about the primary importance

of democracy - and their support to Israel in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as confirmation that the West applies double standards. This is a major shared emotion among both moderate and radical Muslims in the Netherlands.

According to many young Muslims, domestic culture in the Netherlands is also negatively disposed towards Islam. In their perception, prejudices against minorities are quite common among politicians, opinion formers (cognoscenti) and the general public. This idea is increasingly being narrowed down to a perceived negative attitude towards Muslims in particular. Young Muslims see these prejudices as being frequently confirmed in a biased position adopted in the political arena in matters concerning Muslims, and in perceived offensive remarks by opinion formers. Young Muslims in the Netherlands thereby see some of the West's double standards reflected in Dutch society.

In addition, a substantial number of young Muslims are dissatisfied with their own position in society: they have difficulties in finding a trainee post or a job. This is not merely a perception, it is true that unemployment, particularly among young people with a Moroccan background, and discrimination are problems in Dutch society. The causes are complex, and include both the low educational level among Muslims and discrimination in the labour market. Many young people from ethnic minorities also live in deprived urban areas, which brings them more easily into contact with criminal activity and consequent trouble with the authorities. Unemployment interferes with their integration process and fuels dissatisfaction. Young Muslims may isolate themselves from society as a result of all this, develop a certain social nihilism or even resort to violence in order to vent their discontent. A number of them will become receptive to ideas of radical Islam.

Social dissatisfaction, however, is not restricted to young Muslims who find themselves in a deprived social position. Even young Muslims with an average to high educational level may be dissatisfied with their status in society. This phenomenon is referred to as 'relative deprivation': these people are unable to fulfil their higher ambitions as a consequence of worsening (economic) prospects. If these worsening prospects are combined with experiences of discrimination on the job market, in places of entertainment and recreation or in these people's direct environment, it is not surprising that they conclude that Muslims in the Netherlands are discriminated against. This also fuels dissatisfaction and frustration, and can make them susceptible to radicalisation processes.

Receptiveness to processes of radicalisation and jihadisation is caused largely by a combination of a fixation on 'pure' Islam with local and international political issues and perceptions. Depending on the nature of this combination, it may lead to various reactions. If solidarity with the international Muslims community is fuelled by anger, humiliation and a feeling of powerlessness, it may induce people to support militant brothers elsewhere in the world, or even to join mujahedeen in Iraq or Chechnya. They often derive their ideological inspiration from jihadist Salafism and from Al-Qaeda's strategic notions. A projection of the situation in, for example, Iraq or Palestine, on to the Dutch context may give rise to the perception that the Islamic minority in the Netherlands is surrounded and oppressed by a hostile, secularised society. Taking this reasoning one step further, it leads to the perception that the West is not only waging a war against Muslims in Iraq, but also against Islam in the West itself. It is then only a small step towards the perception that there is also a war going on in the Netherlands,, and that the use of violence by Muslims is therefore justified as a form of self-defence. It is in this way that jihad in the West is legitimised, both in political and religious terms.

Neo-Takfir ideology plays an increasingly important role in this legitimising of violence. We could very well track this process on the basis of Mohammed B.'s publications. He regards the Dutch government not only as an indirect enemy of Islam (as a consequence of its support for Israel and the American intervention in Iraq), but also as a direct enemy because of, for example, its measures against radical Imams and individuals, as well as its strict immigration policy. We discovered a similar line of thinking in Samir A.'s video-taped will, in which he marked the entire Dutch population as a potential target, because it elected a (democratic) government that supported the American intervention in Iraq.

3.4 The cultural and socio-psychological context of radicalisation

In addition to religious and political motives, the receptiveness to radicalisation and mobilisation for violent jihad among young Muslims also involves many socio-psychological factors. Local radical networks in the Netherlands consist mainly of young Dutch Muslims with a Moroccan background who are - often triggered by personal circumstances, thwarted ambitions or peer pressure - in search of their identity and status in Dutch society. Among the second generation of other immigrant communities, such as the Turkish, Bosnian and Pakistanis, we see a similar process, but on a much smaller scale than among the Moroccan community.

The young Muslims feel neither an affiliation with the traditional Islamic culture of their parents - who maintain close ties with their country of origin - nor with secular Western culture in their (new) homeland. Their search for identity is dominated by feelings of resentment and wounded pride. These emotions are further fuelled by specific integration and discrimination-related problems. As a consequence, these young Muslims adopt an identity profile in which they react against their parents - whose attitude they consider too passive and submissive - and the dominant Dutch culture. Radical Islam fits this double purpose very well: religious activism not only contrasts sharply with the religious practice of their parents, it also directly provokes Dutch secular society. The fact that, ultimately, the crucial element is the desire to distinguish oneself by an assertive identity rather than a hopelessly passive social position, appears from the fact that it is especially average to well-educated young Muslims who go through radicalisation processes.

Influenced by these identity problems, a youth culture has developed - particularly among the second and third generation of Dutch Moroccans - in which militant ideas and examples hold great attraction. The fact that this does not automatically lead to an orientation on radical Islam was demonstrated by the brief success of the provocative and assertive message of the Arab European League (AEL), which captured the interest of young Muslims with a Moroccan background. After the murder of Van Gogh, however, the attraction of radical Islam for Muslim youth seems to have grown. This manifests itself in provocative behaviour and the way in which they applaud terrorist outrages and praise attackers as activists for Islam. Some of them even regard Samir A. and Mohammed B. as role models. This leads to the emergence of a radical Islamic counterculture among young Muslims. Within this counterculture a so-called *Umfeld* may eventually evolve around jihadist groups, from which they can expect mainly moral and ideological, but in some cases also tangible support.

In addition to an emerging militant counterculture, there is also a perception of 'victimisation' among young Muslims. This is a light form of conspiracy thinking, meaning that only external factors are blamed for having caused the factual and perceived problems with which Muslims are confronted. Their level of critical self-reflection is low, as is their ability to look for opportunities to improve their position independently. They blame others for having caused the deprivation certain ethnic or social population groups suffer by treating them with - often deliberate - unfairness. This perception of victimisation often results in a passive attitude and the inclination to turn one's back on society. This further increases susceptibility to radicalisation.

3.5 Emergence of local autonomous cells and networks

Local autonomous jihadist networks may emerge in various places. In some cases young Muslims meet at a mosque during regular religious instruction classes, long before they have come into contact with radicalisation. These classes do not necessarily have a radical character, they are principally meant to enable young Muslims to reacquaint themselves with their Islamic background.

The process of radicalisation usually starts when the young Muslims take classes at one of the Salafi centres. A small number of them gradually come to consider these lessons insufficient, and start looking for new teachers. They satisfy part of their need for deepening religious instruction by attending lectures delivered by various types of preachers, ranging from foreign preachers to Imams from the Netherlands. There are also more and more laymen who deliver lectures on a wide range of subjects. It is this group of preachers in particular who express more radical views about Islam and about politics, and who thus play an important role in autonomous radicalisation. The AIVD has no indications, however, that these lectures are systematically used for the propagation of a jihadist message or for directly inciting violence, although this may occasionally be the case.

Radicalisation often evolves into jihadisation during so-called living-room meetings. These meetings have a private charter, although potentially interested new persons can also join. In some cases a charismatic leader plays a central role, as in the case of the Hofstad network, where a Syrian preacher was the main inspiration. Investigations into this network have shown, however, that other members of the network also made an ideological contribution to the internal radicalisation process. Mohamed B., for example, translated religious texts and collated them into pamphlets. These pamphlets were distributed among the group members and further disseminated among potential sympathisers.

In recent years the Internet has become the major hotspot of autonomous radicalisation and jihadisation. Websites and news groups frequented by young Muslims provide an excellent platform for jihad propagators to spread their message. It enables them to reach a wide audience and to entice individuals to closed jihadist chat rooms and news groups. This may contribute to the emergence and growth of local networks in various ways: by means of the mobilisation and recruitment of young Muslims from other regions, the establishment of links between various networks and the emergence of purely virtual jihadist networks. More details about this are given in Chapter Four.

There are a lot of (mainly local) social relations that play a key role in the formation of local jihadist networks. The core of these networks often consists of groups of friends who grew up together and simultaneously went through the transition from a Western lifestyle to that of a pious Muslim. In addition to friendships, family ties are also important. In several cases young Muslims followed their brothers' example in a radicalisation process. Joint sports activities can also bond the members of local networks. This phenomenon was also identified in other countries, for instance, the group who carried out the London attacks on 7 July 2005 frequented fitness centres.

Among young people going through jihadisation we see certain group processes that have elements in common with processes within isolated religious sects: increasing isolation, loss of independence, fixation on cult figures and sometimes even intimidation. These social processes result in a collective ideology of personal violence focused on the apocalyptic struggle between good and evil and on martyrdom for jihad. Political goals are often vague or absent. Within the isolation of a jihadist cell, the members are obsessed by their repulsion for and fight against the hostile world surrounding them, for which they are even willing to die. This phenomenon manifests itself specifically in groups adhering to neo-Takfir ideology. It is one of the principal factors in the evolvement from a diffuse jihadist network into a more tightly organised terrorist cell.

3.6 Backgrounds and functioning of local autonomous networks

Looking at the composition of local networks identified in the Netherlands, we see that they consist mainly of young Muslims aged between 16 and 25. Most of them have a Moroccan background, but were born or raised in the Netherlands. The networks are dominated by young Dutch Moroccans with a Berber background, which reflects the composition of the Moroccan community in the Netherlands. The representation of other ethnic groups in the networks is diverse but relatively minor. In general, with respect to these population groups (North Africans, Turks, Bosnians, Pakistani) we can conclude that radical Muslims among the first generation of immigrants are more often connected with international networks, while the younger generation more with local networks. There is one other somewhat small but high-profile group represented: Dutch converts.

Most of the radicalising young Muslims adhere to a non-violent form of political Islam. Although jihad is a familiar religious notion to them, they do not place it in a political context or regard it as an individual duty for each Muslim. Only a minority of

radicalised young Muslims choose the path of violent jihad and join a jihadist network. This does not, however, lead to a homogenous group of jihadists.

Although some young jihadised Muslims endorse religiously inspired violence, they place it particularly in the context of conflict areas such as Chechnya and Iraq where - in their perception - Muslims are oppressed. Hence jihadists who share these strategic and ideological notions do indeed represent an international threat because, for example, some of them decide to join jihad in Iraq. There is more chance of such a decision when a local network maintains contacts with internationally operating networks. A second group of young jihadists, however, place violent jihad also directly in the West. These networks, in which Takfir ideology plays an important role, will be described in paragraph 3.7.

A relatively new and somewhat unique development in the Netherlands is the growing participation of young women in local jihadist networks. While in other European countries radical Muslim women keep a low profile and play at best a supportive role, their role in local networks in the Netherlands is becoming increasingly prominent. It is as yet unclear how we should explain this apparently unique situation in our own country. In discussions about Islam and politics on the Internet the Muslim women measure up to men. They also participate in the 'lecture scene', in which, for instance, Soumaya S., who was arrested in 2005, was a well-known figure. In addition, they occupy themselves with mobilising sisters for 'pure' Islam. Informal Islamic marriages play a relevant role in this respect: young women become involved in a local network by marrying a 'brother'.

It seems that it will be simply a matter of time before these women also become actively involved in violence. An extra reason for concern is the fact that it has become usual for both male and female adherents to neo-Takfir ideology to draw up a religiously inspired will. Although this cannot always be seen as preparation for a suicide attack, drawing up such a will is - emotionally - an important first step.

3.7 The significance of the Hofstad network

Local autonomous networks oriented on neo-Takfir ideology constitute a direct threat to the Netherlands. This aggressive variant of political Islam is characterised by the justification of violence against unbelievers *(kuffar)* in general, and against perceived renegade Muslims in particular. In the Netherlands the Hofstad network is the best known example of a network driven by this ideology, but the phenomenon has a

broader scope, given the fact that the structure of local autonomous networks is very diffuse. In practice, almost all neo-Takfiris in the Netherlands are somehow connected. We could in principle see it as one Takfir network. Given that the Hofstad name has become so familiar, people tend to refer to this complex as the Hofstad network. This notion should, however, be put into perspective.

The core of the Hofstad network emerged between 2002 and 2003. In the aftermath of the murder of Theo van Gogh, practically all prominent members of this group of friends were arrested. In the course of 2005 a new network subsequently emerged which could be regarded as a follow-up to the Hofstad network. Certain members of the original group who were not (or no longer) detained played a central role in the formation of this network. New members, practically all of whom came from the same social environment (neighbours, relatives), joined. The new Hofstad network operated along Mohamed B.'s and the Syrian Abu Khaled's lines. Samir A., who had been very active since 2003, occupied a prominent position in the network. In October 2005 he and some other members of the network were arrested on suspicion of preparing attacks on politicians and on the AIVD headquarters. During the various development stages of the Hofstad network several links to other networks and individuals were established. These included persons who had an ideological affinity with the network, but probably also provided more practical co-operation.

The profile of the Hofstad network has had considerable impact on both radicalisation processes and the forming of local jihadist networks in the Netherlands. What is remarkable in this respect is the radical character of the Hofstad network's ideology and their selection of targets: local politicians and opinion-formers. This profile differs from that in neighbouring countries. The murder of Van Gogh was deliberately aimed at one specific individual whom the perpetrator - but also his ideological friends - regarded as an 'enemy of Islam'. In this respect the murder or, in fact, execution, differs from the attacks in Madrid and London, where the victims were a random group of citizens. Evidence that the murder was not an isolated incident has become apparent from a stream of threats on the Internet to specific individuals with administrative or political responsibility, such as Geert Wilders and Ayaan Hirsi Ali (Members of Parliament) and to a specific government body, the AIVD.

Personal struggle against concrete political 'enemies of Islam' appears to play a more prominent role in the Netherlands than in Madrid and London, where the attackers hit the West as an abstract symbol of oppression. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact cause of this Dutch jihad variant in Europe, which differs mainly in its choice of individual

target and its emphasis on local political struggle. It seems likely that the social climate in the Netherlands, including the chorus of threat in the aftermath of the assassination of Pim Fortuyn and the sometimes fierce debate about the role of Islam in the Netherlands, has played a role. Decisive, however, were the specific dynamics that evolved within the Hofstad group itself. The murder committed by Mohammed B. and the political-religious justification of this act have contributed to a fixation on a number of specific 'enemies of Islam' in the Dutch political and social arena. It seems to illustrate that local manifestations and personal interpretations of violent jihad may be sui generis.

4 Virtualisation of jihad

4.1 The Internet as a propulsion of the jihad movement

Modern information and communication technologies (ICT) play a crucial role in the development of the threat which is currently represented by Islamist terrorism. The Internet is like a turbo propelling the global violent jihad movement. It is one of the principal boosters of the 'grass roots' processes of radicalisation and recruitment described in Chapter 3. The radical and extremist messages spread via the Internet both inspire and mobilise local jihadist networks and individuals in Europe. The Internet can also stimulate and accelerate the emergence of real and virtual networks, and serves as a source of information on terrorist means and methods, thus functioning as a 'virtual training camp'.

The Internet is cheap, fast, easily accessible and has a practically global reach. It can consequently be regarded as the largest platform for relatively anonymous public comments, where expression of radical opinions is unhampered by social control or risk of persecution. The Internet also provides an easy opportunity for meeting like-minded persons, as a result of which individuals soon feel accepted as members of a virtual community. The fact that the local jihad movement in the Netherlands is mainly relevant to the younger generation is one of the causes of the increasing importance of the Internet as a means of communication among and between jihadist networks and individuals.

At an early stage, Al-Qaeda and other internationally oriented radical groups and preachers rightly assessed the power and potential of this medium as a central basis for a global ideological struggle to win the hearts and minds of Muslims. The French Islam expert, Gilles Kepel, said that the Internet 'has been hijacked by the most extremist groups, who can thereby circumvent state censorship of publications. This has exponentially accelerated the dissemination of jihadist ideology, information and instruction.'[17]

As a consequence of the lack of control, final editing or source criticism, facts and fiction may easily be confused on the Web, while the line between real and virtual reality becomes blurred. This allows the proliferation of vague rumours, unreliable or incorrect reports, radical ideas and conspiracy theories. Studies have shown that communication on the Internet does not always stimulate objective exchange of ideas

17 Newspaper NRC Handelsblad, 5 August 2005.

and opinions between people with different views, but often involves the risk of ideological ghettoisation, i.e. exclusive interaction between like-minded persons who isolate themselves from others and do not break out from their small ideological circle. It is not open, free debate, but the (loudly) confirmed rightness of one's own point of view and the faulty ideas of others that sets the tone in many news and discussion groups. For a large proportion of young people logging on to radical sites, a cry for attention appears to be their principal motivation for participating in Web discussions. 'I chat, therefore I exist' seems to be the slogan. In some cases this leads to a self-created fantasy world completely grafted onto the ideology of violent jihad.

Given that this is a relatively recent phenomenon, the study of the influence of the Internet on the development of the jihadist movement and the role of this medium in individual radicalisation and jihadisation is still at an early stage. On the basis of a number of recent cases we can nevertheless draw some tentative conclusions on various aspects of the so-called *virtualisation* of violent jihad. *Virtualisation* means that the ideological and organisational development of jihadist networks and individuals is increasingly taking place on or with the help of the Internet. This obviously involves the risk that sooner or later virtual threat will turn into the specific threat of an actual attack. The AIVD expects that this virtualisation trend in particular will be essential in the future threat against Europe and the Netherlands. As in the general development process of networks, in virtualisation we can also distinguish a top-down and a grass roots element.

4.2 Al-Qaeda as a virtual database (top-down)

The crumbling core of Al-Qaeda's operational power (see Chapter 2) keeps pace with the increasing virtual character of this network. Bin Laden has featured in the media hardly at all recently; he lives on just through old publications and audiotapes. Al Zawahiri still regularly appears in video messages in order to claim responsibility for recent attacks and to clarify strategic aims. The question is, however, to what extent these claims are true and which threats are real. His appearances seem to be meant as merely a propaganda strategy to inspire and mobilise radical Muslims worldwide and to breed fear and panic in Western countries. Al-Zarqawi's messages appear to serve a similar purpose, but they are more narrowed down to jihad in and around Iraq and to perceived internal Islamic enemies such as the Shi'ites and Kurds.

The word Al Qaeda literally means '*The Basis*', a term which used to refer mainly to the organisational and strategic co-ordination between various terrorist networks, before

2001. But this notion is undergoing a similar process of *virtualisation*. The Basis has turned into largely a virtual database, from which each internationally or locally operating jihadist network or individual can draw a suitable ideological strategy or information on strategic combat methods and weapons. Instead of material, financial and personal support, publications by Al-Qaeda leaders such as Abdullah Azzam, Bin Laden and Zawahiri provide an ideological source of inspiration for jihadists worldwide. Along with other past and present jihadist preachers whose publications can be found on the Internet, they are the jihadist scholars who seek to impose their violent interpretation of the Koran upon potential recruits worldwide. They see themselves as a revolutionary Islamic vanguard that has to mobilise Muslims worldwide for the ultimate fight against the dominant West.

At a local level, people frequently draw from the various radical and extremist publications in order to compile their own ideological creation, adapted to local circumstances. The result is an explosive mix of radical Salafism and Takfir ideology, supplemented by Western revolutionary ideas derived from the movement of politically motivated violent activism, often literally cut from Internet publications and pasted together into a personal ideology of revenge against Western political, economic and cultural hegemony over a divided Islamic world.

4.3 The virtual umma (grass roots)

Developments such as globalisation and individualisation form a constant threat to social and cultural cohesion in the modern Western world. Within a short period of time, wide-ranging individual freedoms and the rapid stream of immigrants have drastically altered Dutch society and placed existing traditions and authorities under pressure. Individuals and communities looking for something to hold on to seem therefore increasingly to focus on seeking their own identity. Young people especially are often absorbed by this search, and find support among peers and local groups and subcultures which share common cultural, political or religious interests.

The Internet plays an important role in this process, particularly amongst young people. The medium succeeds not only in establishing links between local and international groups and individuals, but images on the Net - such as jihad videos - also have great emotional impact. An individual Web surfer in the Netherlands can directly share in the emotions of suffering and struggling Muslims all over the world. This leads to emotional involvement and identification with victims and mujahedeen on the other side of the world. If these emotions are strongly fuelled, it may inspire an urge to

actively do something to remove the perceived injustice. In addition to this, the Dutch surfer comes in contact with like-minded persons who are prepared to join this struggle for justice and whose radical ideologies not only justify the fight, but present a solution to the problem. The latter is often a comprehensive explanation of causes and identification of enemies to be fought against.[18]

On the Internet a *virtual umma* (Islamic community) has emerged, which is dominated by radical and extremist Islamist movements and preachers. This radical umma is a beacon for radicalising Muslims worldwide from which they can derive inspiration and motivation for their mobilisation for violent jihad. Bonding between them results from jointly discussing and working on an abstract religious-political ideology, as well as from putting this ideology into practice in their daily struggle for what they regard as *pure Islam*.

There is, however, no socio-political programme which has to be tested in practice and adapted to specific circumstances in society. The purely virtual world is replacing the real world, as a consequence of which individuals become isolated from the surrounding society and turn against it, initially ideologically, but at a later stage possibly violently. This affects social cohesion and enables radicalised persons to more easily make the leap to the use of violence.

Another major characteristic of radical Islam stimulated by the abstract, virtual world of the Internet is its disregard of the cultural-historical context. Events and customs from the days of the Prophet Mohammed are transposed to the present world without the relevant historical awareness.[19] This is also in line with the *deculturalisation process*, during which people become trapped between two cultures as a consequence of alienation from the traditional culture of their parents and grandparents and the failure to integrate into the culture of the country in which they live. According to experts, it is particularly this *deculturalisation* aspect which is typical of the situation in which groups of young Muslims in Europe find themselves. It also forms a basic element of their identity crisis and their susceptibility to radicalisation processes.[20]

The fact that among the *virtual umma* practically no importance is attached to the cultural-historical and social context stimulates the joint cross-ethnic, violent struggle

18 This Internet search and its role in the radicalisation process were described in detail in the autobiographical sketches written by Hofstad member Samir A., which were discovered on his PC by the National Criminal Investigation Department under the title of 'Deurwaarders' (Bailiffs).
19 An example is Jason W.'s statement during the Hofstad trial. He used the decapitation tradition from the Prophet's days as an argument for similar punishments today.
20 Olivier Roy also described the aspect of deculturalisation in his books about radical Islam.

for Islam. This accounts for the increasing multi-ethnicity among national and international jihadist networks and the easily established co-operative relations within the global movement of violent jihad.

4.4 The Internet as an instrument in network formation

In addition to the mobile phone, the Internet is the most suitable means of communication in a network structure. It enables a quick exchange of information and ideas, both top-down and grass roots. The information exchange may be both overt and anonymous or covert, it can take place between two or many more individuals, and it is characterised by a low level of hierarchy and authority. That the Internet is perfect for quickly mobilising and activating individuals was proved in the recent past by the prominent role of this medium in the emergence of the anti-globalisation movement and the communication between various ultra-right splinter groups in Europe.

4.4.1 Radicalisation and recruitment

The Internet plays an important role in the development of local jihadist networks in the Netherlands. Primarily, it is a significant factor in the growing radicalisation among young Muslims. Since 2003 especially, intensive debate about radical Islam and (violent) jihad has been going on between them. Radicalising young Muslims are using the Net as a source for ideological justification of the fight against the West in general and the use of violence against specific 'enemies of Islam' in particular. Existing networks are constantly growing, while new groups are emerging as a result of the fact that the ideology is rapidly spread via cyberspace. Even the participation of women in local extremist movements seems to have been stimulated by the Internet. It provided Muslim women with an unprecedented opportunity to participate in discussions that were formerly restricted to men. The accessibility of the Internet and the lack of hierarchy make it easy for new participants to build credit and a certain status among the radical scene, even at a young age and without a background of years of study.[21]

In relation to radicalisation and recruitment via the Internet we often see a change in the communication pattern as radicalisation progresses. Initially the communication is entirely open, then it acquires a more confidential character, confined to a limited circle of persons; during the final stage people behave in an overtly conspiratorial way. The process begins with a posting on a website or newsgroup and a reference to a certain site which has a chat program that enables debate with a larger group of like-minded

21 On the Internet we can find several examples of young, non-religiously trained Dutch Muslims who declare themselves emir or who are granted this authority by others. This is often based upon nothing more than their debating skills and their seemingly ready knowledge of historical quotations on religious issues and violent jihad, which they merely found on the Internet themselves.

persons or individual discussions about various (religious) issues. It is then suggested to some persons that they continue the discussions in one-to-one chat sessions. Such bilateral sessions are often specifically focused on recruitment. Persons who might prove susceptible to recruitment are introduced to certain charismatic or ideologically well-trained young Muslims. These self-proclaimed ideologists and recruiters often maintain bilateral contacts with a substantial number of potential recruits.

Members of local networks are increasingly professional in their use of the Internet. They make more and more use of passwords and encryption to protect their communication. While debate on radicalisation sites is usually publicly accessible, members of jihadist networks increasingly resort to protecting their communication. The Internet also plays an essential role in the continued existence of decentralised transnational networks. In the aftermath of arrests in Pakistan and the United Kingdom in summer 2004 it turned out, for example, that core Al-Qaeda - through computer experts - had succeeded in maintaining contacts with persons in the West for a long time. In this way they continued to attempt to deploy their limited operational power in activities in the West.

4.4.2 Virtual networks and platforms

The Internet enables individuals and local groups to make contact with ideological sympathisers all over the world. This leads to the emergence of various *virtual networks* - in addition to existing actual networks - in which individuals can participate relatively anonymously. As these networks only exist in virtual reality and their members are not necessarily in actual contact with one another, it is very difficult for police and intelligence services to identify these networks and the persons participating under sometimes frequently changing virtual nicknames.

Members of actual and virtual networks can meet up with one another at private Internet sites which serve as a global *virtual platform*, temporarily or permanently. This enables members of local networks to make ad-hoc contacts worldwide in order to arrange, for example, logistical support or weapons for the preparation of attacks. The virtualisation of jihad thereby affords enormous opportunities for international co-operation between networks and individuals, which enhances the power of the jihadist movement. This intensifies interaction between local and international elements and between grass roots and top-down processes, thereby enhancing the dynamics. The scope of the Internet and the easy accessibility of encryption technologies make it difficult for government bodies to identify such initiatives in time.

On the other hand, however, it should be mentioned that mutual distrust and a high level of security awareness among jihadists may also have a restraining effect on rapid virtual network formation. Only if there is real mutual trust can concrete joint operations be mounted via the Internet. This means that jihadists either already know one another from the actual world, or that they have common friends, clan members or relatives. They often test each other in detailed ideological discussions or make a careful selection before new participants are admitted to certain private websites which can usually only be accessed with certain - often frequently changing - passwords.

4.4.3 Self-radicalisation

In addition to the above-described jihadist networks, individual jihadists also play a role in the Islamist terrorist movement. There have been several recent examples of individually operating terrorists, most of whom can, however, be directly associated with extremist networks.[22] Some of them though may radicalise independently of existing networks and engage in violence on their own initiative. We refer to this phenomenon as *self-radicalisation*. *Virtual networks* often play a crucial role in the process of *self-radicalisation* and *self-recruitment*. This process does not take place in complete isolation, but is influenced by a virtual network of radical supporters. Social processes involved in the formation of real networks, such as peer pressure and inspiring strong solidarity among members of a group, can also take place via the Internet.

In the Netherlands in September 2004, Yahya K. an 18-year old youth from Sas van Gent who had threatened Ms Hirsi Ali, Member of Parliament, and the AIVD on the Internet was arrested. He turned out to be in possession of home-made explosives which he had assembled with the help of expertise found on the Internet. The youth had gone through the entire process of radicalisation and recruitment seated in front of the virtual world of his pc screen.

With the growing breeding ground for radicalisation among young Muslims, in combination with the increasing role of the Internet and the apparent ready access to expertise on home-made explosives provided by this medium, the risk that more self-radicalised individuals will materialise is growing. Radicalised individuals with sufficient technical skills should be considered capable of preparing and committing terrorist acts independently or with the help of a virtual network.

22 Examples are the shoe bomber Richard Reid, who attempted to blow up an American Airlines Boeing with explosives hidden in his shoe, and Nizar Ben Mohammed Naouar, who carried out an attack on a synagogue in Djerba, Tunisia, with a car bomb, in which 16 people were killed.

4.5 Virtual training camps

As the above example proves, the Internet is not only used as an ideological source of inspiration and a catalyst in network formation, but also serves as a source of information about jihadist combat methods and weapons. Handbooks on jihadist training and combat methods written by jihad veterans and training camp instructors have appeared on the Internet from Al-Qaeda's earliest days. These handbooks provide many details about the production of improvised explosives, arrangement and facilitation of travel movements and the surreptitious preparation of attacks abroad. The professional methods described in these handbooks were often copied from military handbooks or from guidelines for intelligence officers.

With the disappearance of training camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan in particular, and the emergence of untrained local recruits in Western countries the need for this expertise and the importance of such handbooks on the Internet grew. AIVD investigations showed that in the Netherlands a number of jihadists were also actively seeking this operational expertise on the Internet. House searches and arrests led in a number of cases to the discovery of home-made explosives that were possibly (partially) assembled on the basis of information obtained from the Internet. Videos circulate on the Internet with demonstrations of how to make weapons such as bomb belts and explosives. In view of the digital provision of this and other instruction material, we might speak of the situation as being practically a *virtual training camp*.

5 The current jihadist threat in the Netherlands

5.1 Unpredictability of the threat

Since the attacks on public transport in Madrid and London, a continuous threat of jihadist attacks on citizens has loomed over European countries. There is a real risk, also in the Netherlands, that such an attack will be carried out or prepared during the coming years. In recent years the AIVD received several indications, both from its own investigations and from national and international partners, that there were concrete plans for an attack to be carried out in or from this country.[23] Law enforcement agencies and intelligence services have meanwhile identified a large number of persons associated with terrorism. They will be dealt with where possible. There remains a risk, however, that unknown, so far unnoticed individuals and networks will suddenly engage in violence. New recruits constitute a particular security risk, simply because they have not previously attracted our attention, or because they cannot be dealt with since they have not (as yet) committed any offences.

It is difficult to prevent an attack on an easily accessible target (soft target), especially if an inspirational leading figure succeeds in attracting a sufficient number of motivated jihadists and - as a primus inter pares - in remoulding part of a loose-knit network into a terrorist hit cell. An example of such a soft target is the public transport system in a major city. The attacks in Madrid and London have demonstrated that it is possible to ensure a large number of victims by relatively simple means and methods, such as simultaneous (suicide) attacks with (home-made) explosives. In practice, successful attacks also prove to encourage other radicalised persons to engage in violence. The second attack in London in July 2005 was probably an example of such copycat behaviour.

In brief, the scope and diversity of the jihadist threat make it a highly unpredictable phenomenon. Hence it is difficult to assess the exact threat level and to prevent attacks.

5.2 Identified and unidentified threats

The efforts of the AIVD are primarily focused on identifying and interpreting unknown threats against state and society. To that end we are examining threat-related political and social processes at home and abroad (research of phenomena), as well as specific

23 It is sometimes difficult afterwards to reconstruct whether thwarding activities of intelligence and security services and/or measures taken by police and judicial authorities did in fact prevent an attack.

organisations and persons representing a threat (operational investigation). These two types of examination are closely interrelated. In this way the AIVD tries to identify, analyse and where possible prevent potential and concrete threats at the earliest possible stage

The trends described in this paper reflect the AIVD's views of the phenomenon of jihadism. Within this context it should be mentioned that operational investigations conducted by intelligence and security services always involve an identified aspect of the threat, so-called known networks and individuals, and an unidentified, unknown aspect. Both aspects are relevant to analysing the threat and assessing the threat level.

In an official publication of the Dutch Ministry of Justice 'Radicalisme en radicalisering' it is noted that the hard core of radical Islam is relatively small, encompassing several hundreds of people only. They are considered as a threat, because they are capable of developing activities that could disrupt society. This does not only apply to committing, threatening with, or porpagating and glorifying acts of violence, but also to the radicalisation of others. The AIVD deems it possible that these persons are prepared to use violence. Most of these extremists are members of networks that are identified and monitored by the police and/or the AIVD.

At present there are some ten to twenty loose-knit structures in the Netherlands that can be qualified as jihadist networks. A network may consist of a permanent core of one or two persons surrounded by a limited number of active supporters, but it can also consist of some dozens of persons around a changing core group. Most jihadist networks operating in the Netherlands are local autonomous networks such as (and after the example of) the Hofstad network. There are also a considerable number of locally embedded internationally oriented networks who are somehow controlled from abroad, or in which foreign recruiters living in the Netherlands play a key role. The number of transnational networks in the Netherlands is limited. There are some elements in this country who are members of European or global underground network structures of North African, Kurdish, Pakistani and Bosnian origin.

As described above, part of the threat has not been identified. This aspect encompasses unknown networks (or parts of networks) and unidentified individuals. The fact that they have not attracted attention results partially from the fact that jihadist networks are not stable, but fluid units. They are in a state of flux, constantly adapting themselves to changing circumstances. Arresting individual jihadists and dismantling networks can temporarily lower the threat level. Experience has shown, however, that arrests cannot prevent new recruitment, and in some cases even stimulate it. New networks are still

emerging, both locally and on an international level. The virtualisation trend described in Chapter 4 plays a crucial role in the rapid emergence of networks, as a consequence of which this unknown aspect of the threat is growing.

Recruitment and radicalisation play an important role in the forming of new networks and the growth of existing structures. Preventing these is therefore a key objective in counter-terrorism. At present the biggest problem is principally the rapidly growing radicalisation among young Muslims. It is not radicalisation as such though which represents the terrorist threat, but rather the willingness to engage in violence, which we refer to as jihadisation. How or when this *jihadisation* is triggered cannot always be detected in time. As a consequence, we are sometimes suddenly confronted by groups and individuals who engage in violence - for example under influence of the Internet - without any visible preceding recruitment process. It may also happen that jihadists from abroad unexpectedly become active in the Netherlands.

The above-described trends manifest themselves in a large number of western European countries, although the situation may differ per country as a consequence of the presence of certain networks and individuals who constitute a specific threat. In a number of countries in central and eastern Europe the threat has so far been less alarming, because these countries have no large Islamic migrant communities that might be receptive to radicalisation tendencies. Apart from the Balkans, there are relatively few jihad veterans or radical ideologies and mosques in these regions. European intelligence and security services are co-operating intensively in order to identify and gain insight into the threat from Islamic terrorism at the earliest possible stage. Among these services there is firm agreement about the current trends in the development of jihadism in Europe and the Islamic world.

5.3 Trends that determine the current jihadist threat in the Netherlands

The current threat in the Netherlands and its development in the next few years is therefore determined by the four trends in the development of Islamist terrorism in Europe as described in this paper. In general, it can be concluded that the components determining the threat possess a highly dynamic character. As a consequence of the fluidity of jihadist networks, the intensive interaction between local and international activists, as well as the scope and intensity of local radicalisation processes, threats of violence can develop within a somewhat short period of time, also in the Netherlands. We have summarised below the principal findings with regard to each trend.

From exogenous threat to home-grown terrorism

In the period preceding and following the 11 September attacks in the US the threat from Islamist terrorism to Europe emanated mainly from abroad. It resulted predominantly from the migration of jihad veterans to the West. Since then, the growth and the character of the threat has been fuelled mainly by local developments and initiatives. Western Europe (and the Netherlands) is confronted with a growing number of radicalised, potentially violent, indigenous Muslims. Their motives can be explained partly by growing dissatisfaction with the status of Islam and Muslims in Europe among Islamic population groups, and - among young Muslims especially - a need for religious depth, a modern, activist political ideology and for defining one's own identity. In many European countries this process has its own national dynamics, in which local factors as well as national policy with respect to the Middle East play a role. The presence of radical ideologists and Salafi mosques are also important factors. The seeds of violent jihadism, supported by the internet and other modern information and communication technology, have been sown in Europe.

Decentralisation and local implantation of international jihad

Elements from transnational veterans networks are active in Europe, including the Netherlands. At present they focus principally on jihad trips to Iraq, but their ambition also encompasses support for and preparation of attacks in Europe. Their internal co-ordination and operational power seem to have been reduced, at least for the time being. Fragmentation of these networks has led to a temporary reduction of the threat of internationally controlled attacks in the West. Due to continuous fighting in Iraq the transnational networks seem to have acquired a new zeal, and recruitment activities are again on the rise. It is remarkable that the international jihad movement appears to be less prominently represented in the Netherlands than in other European countries. There are relatively few transnational networks (or members of such networks) in this country, while fewer jihadists from local Dutch groups seem to set off for Iraq than from neighbouring countries. Local jihadists appear preoccupied with the situation in the Netherlands.

Grass roots radicalisation and jihadisation

The threat assessment in the Netherlands is coloured largely by local networks consisting of 'home-grown' jihadists and individually radicalised Muslims who have little or no contact with international terrorist groups. Young Dutch Muslims, children or grandchildren of migrants from Islamic countries, are increasingly susceptible to radicalisation and jihadisation. This susceptibility can be explained by a combination of religious, socio-political, cultural and socio-psychological factors. The principal elements are a fixation on puritanical Islam, anger and frustration about the status of

Muslims in the West and in the Islamic world itself, as well as the identity crisis in which young Muslims born or raised in Europe find themselves.

Virtualisation of international jihad

At global level, the Internet seems to play an increasingly prominent role in radicalisation and recruitment for jihad and in the ideological and organisational development of networks. Young jihadists haphazardly draw on jihadist ideas from the Internet to create their own personal version of political Islam. They adapt particularly extremist elements from Salafism and Takfir ideology to local circumstances, often in order to justify the use of violence against perceived 'enemies of Islam'. Since more and more network activities take place in the virtual world, police forces and security services have to step up their efforts and adapt their strategies accordingly in order to identify and examine the threat in time.

5.4 Jihadism in the Netherlands during the coming years

Islamist terrorism will continue to dominate the security agenda of the national and international political arena during the next few years. The complex causes and perceptions in which this threat has its roots cannot be tackled within a short period of time. It is uncertain how the threat will evolve, given the many variables involved. Unexpected events - such as the 11 September attacks and the murder of Van Gogh - may trigger an abrupt escalation of the problem. There are also various socio-cultural, psychological and social processes which can in fact be influenced by government. A growing resistance to extremist ideology among Islamic groups in the Netherlands is of great importance in countering processes of radicalisation among young Muslims.

We have sketched below some possible scenarios in the development of the jihadist threat, with respect to both the international and national context, as well as possible future risk factors.

International context

The international context remains of great importance to the development of jihadism in the Netherlands. The ongoing conflict in Iraq and the existence of areas in Africa and Asia which lack basic law and order and have little or no government control are fertile breeding grounds for recruitment by existing Islamist terrorist networks or for the emergence of new local or international networks. A case in point is the conflict in Iraq, which presented Abu Musab al Zarqawi with the opportunity to set up a new local jihadist

network which also attracts jihadists from surrounding countries and even from Europe. In addition, the fight in Chechnya and the Palestinian/Israeli conflict continuously fuel jihadist propaganda, which influences the development of Islamist terrorism worldwide.

Most of the conflicts which now influence jihadism are expected to carry on for the foreseeable future. This means that there will continue to be an international breeding ground for jihadism. This may have various consequences for internationally operating networks and for Europe. It seems likely that, as we saw in Iraq, new networks will emerge on a regional level, or old networks will revive. The bomb attacks in Amman have illustrated Al Zarqawi's intention to expand jihadist struggle in Iraq to the entire region. In the meantime he appears to focus principally on expanding the struggle to a number of countries in the Middle East: Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and possibly the Israeli-Palestinian territories. Due to the achievements of international counter-terrorism as well, however, it is most unlikely that these networks can be linked up with one another as Osama bin Laden facilitated in the 1990s.

Regarding Europe, ongoing struggle in the Islamic world means that perception of Western hostility towards Islam will continue to be fuelled among Muslims. It is not to be expected that the stream of jihadist propaganda from the Islamic world fuelling processes of radicalisation and jihadisation among European Muslims be reduced any time soon. The cartoon incident in Denmark shows that local networks and individuals in Europe can easily mobilise international public opinion for their local objectives, because of which the national threat picture can suddenly change considerably.

The ongoing conflicts in Asia and North Africa might also lead to a new growth of (existing) networks in Europe as a consequence of legal and illegal migration of extremists. As a result of stricter migration laws and border control worldwide (also in Europe), however, as well as intensive international co-operation on counter-terrorism, it has become more difficult for jihad veterans to travel to Europe and join jihadist structures there. There is still a risk, nevertheless, that individual elements with jihad experience or small operational cells will travel to Europe in order to prepare or carry out attacks. Certain other vulnerable regions, such as the Horn of Africa, may also become new sources of jihadist migration to Europe.

The Netherlands, as a member of Western and European alliances, does not occupy a special position in this respect. Our country's international profile, as perceived by the Muslim population in general and in particular by the radical jihadist faction, is partially dependent on the Netherlands' position in these alliances with respect to its

involvement in military operations in Islamic countries and its standpoint in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Influenced by the international context, it is possible that autonomous local networks in the Netherlands will increasingly link up with international jihadist elements. The initiative for this can both be taken by members of transnational networks, who are locally active as recruiters, or by local jihadists, who are using the internet for contacting and finding support with international jihadist structures to carry out their plans. There are several indications that in Europe there is a growing cross-fertilization between local and international elements. This would directly influence the threat assessment in this country, as the highest threat often results from a combination of international networks' jihad experience and methods with the rashness and youthful zest for martyrdom among local recruits in Europe. Hence, in the near future the arrival (or return) of veterans from Iraq in Europe may add to the Islamist terrorist threat in Europe, especially when they join local networks and jihadists.

National context

Risks of increasing radicalisation and polarisation

Within the national (and European) framework the key question is to what extent grass roots processes of radicalisation and jihadisation will progress in the near future. Although several initiatives have been taken at local level to identify and thwart these processes at an early stage, a turning point in the growth of the radicalist breeding ground does not yet appear to have been reached.

Some root factors cannot be easily reversed in the short term. The socio-economic deprivation of a substantial part of the Muslim community is a stubborn social problem, as well as cultural and identity-related problems connected to integration of Muslims in the Netherlands. The same applies to feelings of frustration and anger among young second and third-generation migrants - with or without good reason - because they feel unwelcome in Dutch society. At present radical Islamic movements are quicker and more skilful to take advantage of feelings of dissatisfaction and underdog perceptions than the more moderate groups. Radicals and extremists appear to have time on their side. There have nevertheless been indications that a countermovement is gradually emerging from moderate Islamic groups. A well-balanced and cautiously positive attitude on the part of non-Islamic communities may strengthen this countermovement and help reverse the tendency towards radicalisation.

The breeding ground for radicalisation and jihadisation is influenced partially by the economic situation and connected with the prevailing social, political and economic climate. The emphasis in public debate on the problematic aspects of Islam may stimulate Muslim minorities to accentuate their Islamic identity and seek confrontation with Western culture. We also note that some immerse themselves in underdog feelings, which may interfere with their emancipation and integration process. Such a polarisation in society involves the risk that people will have less confidence in political solutions and less attention for a more pragmatic approach to specific social problems, something for which the Netherlands has always been internationally renowned. Among certain population groups this polarisation may stimulate isolation from, or even hostility towards society. An ongoing threat from Islamist terrorism in Europe may ultimately lead to mounting distrust between Islamic and non-Islamic population groups and hence to an elevated national threat, thereby closing the wheel full circle.

It is conceivable that this would lead to a parallel society in the Netherlands along ethnic-religious lines, within which anti-democratic and possibly even violent forces might be mobilised. Such a parallel society might involve an increasing risk of cross-influence between anarchist movements - who express their dissatisfaction in spontaneous, usually random violence - and representatives of radical Islam. The latter will attempt to channel social dissatisfaction into a strategic undermining of the democratic order, and thereby pose a potential long term threat to national security. So far, however, support to radical Islam from a socio-economic underclass has appeared to pose more of a problem in North Africa and Asia rather than in European countries.

Development in the structure of jihadist networks

Even if the trend of increasing radicalisation does not persist and the growth of local networks stagnates, we still have to deal with the problem of existing jihadist networks and individuals in the Netherlands. The question is how these local networks will develop in future.

On the basis of current trends, more interaction is expected between members of the various jihadist networks. This will blur the line between the various networks and network types, while the structures and composition will become even more flexible. There seems to be more and more so-called multi- tasking within networks. Where we could distinguish specific support, recruitment and attack networks one or two years ago, small local networks have now emerged which consist of a limited number of individuals who share a jihad readiness, but otherwise choose their own path. Depending on opportunity and personal preference, they confine themselves to

supportive activities, choose to embrace jihad or focus on the preparation and commission of an attack in Europe.

In the long run, this might lead to an undifferentiated, informal pool of potential jihadists who perpetrate acts of violence either individually or together, in changing combinations. This involves an increasing risk of entwining of local and international elements. The Internet especially makes it easy to contact one another at short notice - both within and across national borders - and to create a temporary virtual network for the preparation of attacks. This prompts intelligence and security services and the police to swiftly anticipate changing options selected by networks, depending on specific circumstances. Individual jihadists may take several initiatives simultaneously, keeping all options open right up until the last minute. Chance meetings or opportunities may be decisive in the final analysis for or against a certain action. This makes it difficult to anticipate actions of individual jihadists and networks and to take effective preventive measures.

The development outlined above is the most likely scenario if aforementioned trends persist. We should realise, however, that at present we apparently find ourselves at a crucial point in the development of jihadism in Europe. The jihadist threat might diminish considerably if we succeed in reversing the trend of local radicalisation and jihadisation which causes the current growth in jihadist networks in Europe. To that end we should pursue an effective national counter-terrorism policy, based on a wide-ranging approach and involving various government bodies. The need for such an approach is also more and more recognised and put into practice in neighbouring countries. These policies also have to be developed further within the legal frame work of the European Union.

In the event of a successful local approach to grass roots radicalisation and jihadisation, it is not inconceivable that a considerable section of less fanatic potential jihadists will soon withdraw from the aforementioned unstructured jihad pool and abandon violence, especially when they have career prospects and can resist peer pressure within the movement. The creation of a legitimate political outlet for their feelings of dissatisfaction might also have a positive effect. In the past we also witnessed such a process among other left and right-wing radical movements with many young supporters. Nevertheless, even if this does happen, a number of small core groups of jihadist hardliners will still be left in the Netherlands in the next decade. These more professional jihadists, possibly toughened by jihad experience abroad, will try to carry

on their violent activities in the Netherlands in a more organised and structured way. The Internet enables them to quickly and without notice establish contacts with various international jihadist networks and individuals, so these small cells will continue to represent a substantial threat which should not be underestimated.

In view of the young age of a substantial number of members of local jihadist networks, the question is sometimes raised of how large the threat posed by these young people actually is? Could it not simply be 'normal' adolescent behaviour, motivated mainly by an inclination to create a distinctive profile and shock the older generation? Extreme actions and unruly, even violent behaviour often characterise this phase of development, but rarely lead to life-threatening violence or terrorism. In addition, the often amateurish modus operandi of these young people sometimes provokes a somewhat cynical attitude towards the terrorist threat in the Netherlands, or to the claim that these young people do not constitute a real danger. Some of the facts, however, appear to belie this claim.

Several times in recent years the Netherlands was confronted with adolescents who travelled to jihad areas abroad. In 2002 such a jihad journey cost two youths their lives. And in 2004 the murder of Van Gogh and the violent incident in the Antheunisstraat in The Hague, during which several police officers were seriously injured, showed that members of the Hofstad group did not shun life-threatening violence. Their statements afterwards did not suggest that they regretted the use of violence or intended to abandon it in future. Neighbouring countries were also confronted with adolescents in terrorist networks. Two British-Pakistani perpetrators of the London attacks turned out to be 18 and 19 years old respectively. A dozen teenagers were also involved in arrests in Scandinavia, the UK and Sarajevo in late 2005. They are suspected of plotting an attack somewhere in Europe. The claim that a person's youth makes involvement in violence or terrorist attacks unlikely seems therefore unsubstantiated

Changing modus operandi among jihadist networks

Even perceived amateurism in home-grown jihadism should be put into perspective. Local networks in the Netherlands are going through a continuous learning process, as a result of which their initial amateurism disappears, to be replaced by a more professional modus operandi. The various arrests have made members of local networks aware of police and AIVD strategy, after which they have displayed a higher level of security awareness. Local jihadists have also started to establish international contacts in order to obtain weapons and improve combat techniques. As a result of this growing professionalism, these local networks will continue to represent a substantial threat for the foreseeable future, even in the event of diminished radicalisation.

Another consequence of the arrests is the growing significance of prisons as places of radicalisation and recruitment. During their detention, persons such as Mohammed B. continued to write texts in order to influence ideological debate about violent jihad in the Netherlands. It is also possible that jihadists serving long prison sentences become symbols and inspirers of national jihad. Such a process occurred in Germany in the 1970s, where detained RAF members succeeded in inspiring and recruiting new supporters for their terrorist ideas. Another risk involved in the detention of jihadists is the possible interaction between jihadist and criminal networks. This might make it easier for jihadists to obtain weapons and explosives and enable them to benefit from criminal experience and expertise in future.

It is expected that members of jihadist networks will become more skilful and creative in employing new communication technologies, especially since many of the new members are relatively skillful, well-educated, young ICT users. There are also indications that, as a result of virtualisation of jihad, communication between national and international jihadist individuals and networks is accelerating rapidly. Virtual platforms enable quick and easy contact between various local and international elements in order to facilitate matters such as logistical or personal support. This increases the threat of attacks in Europe. Monitoring processes of radicalisation, recruitment and network formation on the Internet has become increasingly important in order to gain insight into new threats and to thwart preparatory activities for possible attacks at the earliest possible stage.

From local to international threat?

It is unclear as to what impact the example of the Hofstad network's role and its members will have in the Netherlands in future. It may have consequences for local orientation of Dutch networks and their target selection (politicians, opinion-formers and AIVD). As we pointed out, not only ideological motives, but also certain trigger events and copycat motives may inspire networks and individuals to engage in violence. Despite their jihad readiness, it is difficult for them to find a strategic or tactical line of action, so they often allow themselves to be influenced simply by whatever opportunities present themselves. Certain local or international incidents might inspire them to focus more specifically on participating in jihad abroad or on committing large-scale attacks which generate civilian victims.

So far, however, jihadist networks in the Nethelands appear to prefer armed struggle against specific 'enemies of Islam' - both in the Netherlands and abroad - to attacks on soft targets, such as those carried out in Madrid and London. The AIVD also has

evidence to suggest, however, that individual members of local jihad networks intend to join jihad in Iraq and Chechnya. This could be a sign that in the Netherlands, too, more emphasis will be placed on participation in international jihad, which might divert attention from the Dutch situation. It is still also possible that members of transnational networks from North Africa, Europe, Pakistan or the Middle East (whether affiliated with Al-Qaeda or not) will recruit locally radicalised individuals and networks for preparing or carrying out local attacks, or for participation in jihad abroad.

5.5 Risks and opportunities in counter-terrorism

The increased complexity of the threat from Islamist terrorism still requires a broad approach. This involves primarily a detailed and wide-ranging assessment of the threat from Islamist terrorism, considering individual and social processes such as non-integration, radicalisation, recruitment and jihadisation as inextricable elements of this phenomenon. The broad approach also concerns the anti-terrorism policy and its implementation, involving deployment of various preventive and repressive measures by a wide range of government bodies in order to curtail the growth of jihadist networks and prevent terrorist attacks and jihad participation. For a detailed description of possible countermeasures in the fight against terrorism, we refer to the AIVD publication *From Dawa to Jihad*.

In addition to an effective broad approach, it is also important to achieve the correct policy balance. While before 11 September 2001 it was difficult to draw public attention to problems such as radicalisation and recruitment for violent jihad, huge media attention these days sometimes involves a risk of overreaction on the part of the public. This does not mean, however, that the jihadist threat with respect to the Netherlands should be in any way trivialised. The analysis at hand, in combination with earlier AIVD publications and reports by other national and international terrorism experts, substantiates the seriousness of this threat. It gives us no reason to conclude that the threat will diminish any time soon. Governments are taking measures to protect citizens from the threat of terrorist attacks, but at the same time attempting to prevent unjustified anxiety or a fuelling of polarisation in society. That would actually stimulate processes of radicalisation. The point, therefore, is to achieve the correct balance.

We should also be well aware of possible side-effects of counter-terrorism measures. As a consequence of such measures, certain population groups might feel discriminated against and turn their backs on society, which can be an initial step towards (violent) resistance against constitutional democracy. The AIVD therefore wishes to draw

attention not only to the current urgent threat of terrorist violence, but also to the long-term threat represented by processes of radicalisation and social polarisation. They involve the risk of insidious segregation between various ethnic or religious groups and the emergence of parallel societies which undermine social cohesion and hence - in the long run - constitutional democracy. The Netherlands, too, has been confronted with interethnic tensions and forms of ethnically motivated violence. Terrorist attacks and the emotions they provoke not only undermine long term solidarity between population groups, they, can also be a catalyst for possible outbreaks of violence, especially if latent dissatisfaction is already simmering beneath the surface of society.

The power of terrorism lies largely in inspiring fear among the population. This puts societies under great pressure and undermines self-confidence among politicians and citizens. Perpetrating attacks inspires fear, but so does the threat of attacks, for instance via the Internet, where responsibility is claimed for attacks carried out and new attacks are announced. Speculative media reports on terrorist attacks prove grist to the mill of the jihadist movement - specialists in fear - because these reports disproportionately exacerbate the true threat.

In order to strengthen society's resistance to Islamist terrorism, therefore, more attention needs to be bestowed on the psychological aspect. In a country such as the Netherlands, which possesses limited historical experience of indigenous terrorism compared with other countries, it is essential to provide a clear and balanced insight into the scope and nature of the threat in order to make people more alert and psychologically stronger, and to gain sufficient support in society for an effective counter-terrorism policy. The AIVD hopes that this paper will contribute to the achievement of such an objective.

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