# Global Jihadism:
## *Analysis of the Phenomenon and Reflections on Radicalisation*

NCTV

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# PREFACE

One of the tasks of the Office of the National Coordinator for Security and Counter-terrorism (NCTV) is to perform analyses. In this connection, it produces a wide range of products that are strategically important in combating terrorism. One is the Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands (Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland; DTN), a national analysis published three or four times a year. Like the DTN, the present report - comprising an analysis of the phenomenon of jihadism and reflections on radicalisation - is an independent analysis performed by the NCTV. It is based on the expertise of professionals who work at the NCTV, and is intended to supplement the reports and analyses published over the past few years that have examined the phenomenon of jihadism and radicalisation, and that form the basis of Dutch counterterrorism policy, particularly the most recent report by the General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD), *'The Transformation of Jihadism in the Netherlands'*.[1]

1. 'The Transformation of Jihadism in the Netherlands: Swarm Dynamics and New Strength',
   AIVD, October 2014.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

In March 2013 the terrorist threat level in the Netherlands was raised from limited to substantial, largely in response to the significant increase in Dutch jihadists leaving the country and heading for conflict zones in Syria. The Dutch media initially responded with scepticism, asking why travelling to these areas should increase the threat in the Netherlands. Those leaving the country were doing so with the understandable, and presumably exclusive, aim of helping the civilian population in Syria in its legitimate resistance to the Assad regime. Little thought was given to the ideological motivation of the individuals travelling to Syria, and the risks and threat it might signify.

It has gradually become clear that chaos and extreme violence - including by opposition groups - are engulfing Syria and Iraq. Extremist forces - ISIS in particular - have gained ground. The rise of ISIS poses an acute existential threat to ethnic and religious minorities in the region. This has led both to expressions of solidarity and to growing tensions between related ethnic and religious groups in the West, highlighting once more the fact that political and religious extremism can have destabilising effects not only in the region, but also at global level.

In the Netherlands we have recently seen ISIS sympathisers openly professing their allegiance to the movement, and social tensions have arisen as a result. Although their numbers are small in the Netherlands, the disruptive effect jihadists have on Dutch society is disproportionately large. This is partly because jihadists present themselves as the only legitimate representatives of the Muslim faith. This has a negative impact on the image of the entire Muslim population, despite the fact that the vast majority of Muslims in the Netherlands do not support extremism in the name of Islam in any way. Muslims realise that they themselves are often the main victims of this extremism. Nevertheless, the public have many questions about jihadism, the threat it poses, what form it takes in the Netherlands and how it relates to broader Muslim communities.

This report looks in greater depth at the phenomenon of global jihadism and how it manifests itself in the Netherlands. It addresses the question of what global jihadism actually involves and what factors have led to its current revival. We must try to understand jihadism and the form it takes in the Netherlands: an understanding of this phenomenon, and of its underlying processes and motives, is a vital prerequisite for devising an appropriate approach. This analysis therefore starts with the ideology behind jihadism. It will also reflect on the

process of radicalisation that occurs before a person embraces extremist views. After all, in order to intervene effectively to halt radicalisation it is important to understand the potential appeal of extremist ideas and why some people are susceptible to them.

# 2 ANALYSIS

## What is global jihadism?

Global jihadism can be defined as a worldwide violent ideological cult-like movement. Although global jihadism is often linked to political Islam (Islamism), and indeed to some extent relies on the same sources, it in fact represents a radical break with Islamism as a political movement.[2] Jihadists often strongly criticise Islamist movements, reproaching them for recognising democratic parliamentary systems and participating in elections. They believe that in doing so Islamists have renounced divine law - *sharia* - and are engaging in a form of *shirk* (idolatry). To jihadists this is a deadly sin and a justification for their condemnation of Islamists.

Jihadists see Muslims as a community of believers that is suffering repression all over the world. They argue that in many countries with a Muslim majority citizens are oppressed by tyrannical governments which are supported by Western governments. They regard the West and corrupt regimes as two sides of the same coin. Furthermore, Western authorities are said to actively seek to repress or curb Muslims' religious identity. With its talk of democracy and human rights, the West is merely attempting to 'throw sand in the eyes' of Muslims, according to the jihadists.

Jihadists reject modern nation states on the grounds that they are not sufficiently based on religion, and are in fact artificial constructs inherited from Western colonialism. By extension, they regard all international institutions (such as the United Nations), which to them represent the repressive established order, as illegitimate.

Jihadists pose a risk because they seek to promote political awareness among Muslims while *at the same time* conveying the message that participating in the existing political system will not help in any way to address the grievances of Muslims. Jihadists want to make Muslims aware of their 'vulnerability', characterised by victimhood and a sense of (perceived) injustice, while rejecting any

2. Osama bin Laden developed the idea of global jihadism in the mid-1990s, building on the doctrine expounded by the man who was his inspiration, Abdullah Azzam (1941-1989), who believed that Muslims all over the world had an *individual* obligation to liberate Muslim territories occupied by non-Muslims. However, while Azzam believed the struggle should be territorial and paramilitary, Bin Laden rejected the territorial and paramilitary limitations of the doctrine. See: *Ideologie en strategie van het Jihadisme* [Ideology and Strategy of Jihadism], NCTb, December 2009.

opportunity to address this in political terms. This potentially hampers the political integration of Muslims and may drive susceptible members of the Muslim community into the arms of 'supra-political' radical and/or extremist groups.

## Utopian doctrine

Jihadists want to establish an 'authentic' Muslim caliphate because they are convinced that only by total submission to God's laws will injustice be eliminated, allowing everyone to become equal and justice to be achieved. They believe that only the introduction of a state structure based purely on Islam (or their interpretation of it) will bring to an end the crises that currently plague Muslim societies.

## Armed struggle only effective means

The jihadists' raison d'être lies not only in taking a stand but also *fighting*, both for their repressed brothers and sisters, and against injustice. Jihadists regard armed struggle as *the only way* to bring about real change in Muslims' political and social circumstances. The rhetoric of global jihadists is designed both to raise awareness of identity and to make clear their political and ideological (anti-democratic) stance. To their way of thinking, the faithful must allow their Muslim identity to take precedence over all other aspects of their identity. Not only must Muslims declare their exclusive loyalty to the *ummah* (the universal religious community), they must also be prepared to 'defend' it without compromise, the jihadists believe.

The problem is that modern jihadist ideologues and their sympathisers interpret the principle of religious solidarity (the doctrine of al *wala' wal bara*, which means 'love and enmity' or 'loyalty and disavowal') in the most absolute terms. They attempt to silence any dissent and to maximise their supporters' distance from and enmity towards anyone who thinks differently. This can put family relations under strain and even cause them to be 'sacrificed' to the new faith. 'Brothers' may never betray each other, and this can, over time, suppress inhibitions or prevent corrective action.

Violence and the willingness to commit it, and the associated willingness to sacrifice are the only potentially liberating power jihadists believe in. The words, images and writings of 'scholars' are used not only to underpin the

legitimacy of the struggle, but also to emphasise the need for individual moral decisions and action based on those decisions. Because they do not recognise the authority of Muslim institutions and national authorities, jihadists do not require their approval. In jihadist circles, titles such as 'scholar' or 'preacher' are awarded on the basis of different criteria, not solely on the basis of theological knowledge or official authority, but more likely on the basis of how 'steadfast' (uncompromising) an individual has proved himself and/or whether he has withstood 'tests' (suffered under some form of state repression). This stems from the jihadist belief that 'true Islam' and 'persecution' are a single inseparable entity.

## Individualistic approach

While Islamists regard religious education as a *prerequisite* for building a superior and just Islamic order, jihadists offer the individual a 'short cut'. To them, religious *zeal*, in the form of a willingness to fight (and die) for Islam, is much more valuable than the possession of religious *knowledge*.

Paradoxically, while jihadists claim to act in the name of the *ummah*, in reality they break with existing communities out of concern that they might restrict their activities. Jihadists focus on the power of the individual, rather than the community, to act. They not only accord individuals (lay people) the right to decide whether violence is permissible and legitimate, but also supply the arguments that justify the individual's taking this right into his own hands. This individualistic approach, the 'privatisation' or 'fragmentation' of the monopoly on the use of force, is an essential element of the threat posed by jihadism.

With its emphasis on individualism, jihadism - which itself relies partly on religious ideology - has in fact reversed a number of key elements of normal religious practice. Religion gives strength and can provide support and justification for action against perceived injustice. For people in a vulnerable position, who believe they are treated unjustly, religion can also have a specific function, which jihadism exploits in reverse. In appealing to the individual in 'splendid isolation', jihadism is no different from a more general religious concern for vulnerable fellow humans. Religion offers people a way of coping, and support and consolation at times of difficulty and frustration. It essentially helps them to find meaning and achieve *self-realisation*.[3] Jihadist ideology offers an opportunity to 'escape' the

self by completely disregarding one's own life and placing it at the disposal of 'a higher purpose'. It is not self-realisation but *self-renunciation* that jihadists regard as the true measure of piety and conviction. In its most extreme form, this leads to suicide attacks, in which the *individual* completely destroys himself in the belief that he is sacrificing himself for the sake of the global *community*.

### Militarised form of aid

Although outsiders' image of jihadists is that of a terrorist group, jihadists themselves see this entirely differently. Those who travel to jihadist battlegrounds see their contribution to the fight as a militarised form of humanitarian aid. Jihadists have the highest regard for Muslim fighters who sacrifice everything 'for the sake of Allah' and the establishment of a purified Islamic empire. To convince Muslims, jihadists hold out the prospect of innumerable blessings heaped upon any individual who becomes a martyr. An individual seeking divine reward and redemption has no regard for the specific historical and cultural past or the political future of the regions in which he is fighting. He is driven mainly by Utopian ideas and assurances of salvation.

### Virtual *ummah*

The language favoured by supporters of global jihadism, and the 'community' they aspire to, manifest themselves above all online. Transnationalism is both a cause and an effect of the radical views that jihadists hold. The break with the communities from which they have come pushes jihadists into a search for like-minded individuals at a virtual and transnational level. This is the only way they can preserve a sense of belonging to a group; of being part of a global movement. It also keeps the movement's universal claims intact. In others words, solidarity - which does not arise at local level - can remain intact only if the absence of local contact is compensated for by a 'supranational' unity that maintains the illusion of a religious community. Symbolism (certain flags, for example) also gives this virtual *ummah* the appearance of a '*state*' entity.[4] The law that keeps this

3.  See for example the report *Radicaal (On)zichtbaar, Verkennend onderzoek naar omvang, kenmerken en oorzaken van mogelijke radicalisering onder Amsterdamse moslima's* [Radically (In)Visible. Survey of the Scale, Character and Causes of Potential Radicalisation among Female Muslims in Amsterdam], June 2012. This exploratory study reveals how women derive tremendous strength from their intense Muslim faith, and how it brings them support and consolation, thus helping them cope with the difficulties they encounter in life.
4.  Jihadists use common religious texts and symbols. The context in which they place these symbols and the way they use them determines the meaning attributed to them.

'community' together is constructed by individual jihadists themselves, determined by the contextual situation and the 'scholars' whose teachings they have heard at a particular moment in time

### Syria as a catalyst for revival of jihadism

No Islamists, let alone jihadists, initially played a dominant role in the popular uprisings that erupted in several Arab countries in 2011. Jihadists who saw themselves as a 'vanguard' of the Muslim 'awakening' were marginalised by the uprisings. They were forced to exchange the role of instigator for that of spectator as the leaders of several Arab regimes fell. Ironically enough, it was not the call to 'jihad' that brought the regimes down, but the mass, peaceful call for freedom and democracy that drove out the Arab dictators.

In Syria the mass mobilisation of the population in 2011 and the violent repression of the uprising by the regime led to a descent into bloody civil war. The specifically *Syrian* character of the popular uprising rapidly turned into a sectarian conflict with transnational dimensions. Sunni Muslims increasingly came to see the Assad regime as representing an infidel sect; a 'faithless' minority that brutally repressed the majority Sunni population. The overt involvement of foreign Shiite fighters in the defence of the regime (including Hezbollah, widely regarded as 'Hezb al Shaytan', or the devil's party) prompted a wave of emotional declarations of solidarity across the international spectrum of Sunni clergy (official and otherwise). They called for a mass mobilisation in support of their Syrian coreligionists, to avenge the injustice being perpetrated in Syria. The continuous stream of reports, accompanied by images of excessive violence by the regime, helped reinforce this process.

There are also other reasons why Syria has, in such a short time, become a magnet for foreign fighters.[5] There is the obvious reason that the battlefields of Syria are relatively easy to reach compared with other jihadist battlegrounds like Afghanistan, Somalia and Chechnya. This has given foreign fighters the ultimate 'opportunity' to join the charismatic jihadists of al Qa'ida and ISIS. The successful departure of the first recruits attracted more followers. Maintaining contact via

5.  The proximity of Israel and the apocalyptic vision that the Syrian conflict heralds the end of the world also plays a role in the jihadists' motives. See: Bob de Graaff, 'De Grote Slachting; Derde Wereldoorlog of Apocalyps in Syrië' [The Great Slaughter: Third World War or Apocalypse in Syria], *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 4 December 2013.

the internet and social media, the fighters reassure their sympathisers back home and send detailed reports of their real-life and real-time experiences, showing that away from the front lines there are plenty of areas where life carries on as normal, and when battle subsides they can live what the jihadists regard as a 'genuinely' Muslim life. This makes the decision to travel to the region not only a theoretical option, but also a realistic one, including for women and even children. The declaration of the 'Islamic State' initially reinforced this impression. It remains to be seen whether this will continue to be the case now that ISIS is under fire from an international coalition.

### Fragmentation of opposition under influence of private funding

As noted above, the call for assistance in Syria gradually spread throughout the Sunni world (and beyond). However, no international political consensus was reached as to how and to what extent assistance should be provided. This opened the way for all kinds of influential private actors to step into the breach and publicly proclaim their political and religious views on the situation in Syria. In recent years, several public and private parties in the Gulf region have played a key role in recruiting support for groups fighting in Syria. Independent activist Salafist (orthodox) preachers and Islamists, in particular, have increasingly coupled their calls for humanitarian aid with calls for support for the armed opposition. Salafist clerics in countries like Kuwait and Qatar make effective use of the physical and virtual space available in these countries to preach their message. Qatar, in particular, is known to be a haven in the Gulf region for Islamist activists of all types.[6] Outside established media channels, prominent Salafist activists in the Gulf region have a large online following. They have used their status to raise funds for all kinds of fighting groups, drawing heavily on personal relationships to acquire funds. The donors have rarely proved capable of exercising any lasting influence or control over ideological and strategic developments among 'their' rebels, however. It was not in their interest to promote cooperation between rebel groups, because this might undermine any influence they had. This has also fostered corruption, as rebel groups overstated their size and impact in order to acquire as much funding as possible.[7]

6. In recent years, for example, satellite broadcaster Al Jazeera has become increasingly contro-versial, partly because of its biased position on the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The chan-nel's more outspoken political agenda is said to detract from the journalistic independence, professionalism and neutrality that a news channel should strive to achieve, and several well-known presenters have resigned from Al Jazeera over the past few years.

Clearly, all of this has only served to exacerbate the crisis in Syria. The total lack of control has made the situation in the country highly fluid and unpredic-table. Fighting groups are not only doing battle with the regime, they are also fighting each other. As a result, the original aim of the uprising has (almost) completely disappeared from view. Continuing frustration at the lack of a break-through (or any prospect of a breakthrough) in the fight against the regime has also further radicalised the opposition. This works to the advantage of the most hardened figures: the global jihadists.

### Fragmentation of jihadist movement

Despite the apparently 'favourable' circumstances for jihadists in Syria, it has become clear that the strength of the jihadist movement - its ability to mobilise individuals purely on the basis of religious zeal - is also its weakness. Al Qa'ida's internal divisions, which could previously be kept under wraps, have become public knowledge in Syria. The open power struggle between the leader of al Qa'ida, Ayman al Zawahiri, and ISIS leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, has resulted in fragmentation in the global jihadist movement. In Syria, some jihadists are opting to join ISIS, while others choose Jabhat al Nusrah, which is allied with al Qa'ida. Others prefer not to take sides, splitting off from both groups. It should be noted, however, that *all* jihadists respond strongly to Western intervention, and this could lead to a renewed orientation towards the 'distant enemy' (the West).

### Politically strategic pragmatism or ideological purism

The power struggle between jihadist leaders is based on a fundamental dif-ference of opinion on how the jihad should be fought, what the priorities should be and to what extent political compromise is possible. In the past al Qa'ida has shown that it is capable of allowing politically strategic pragmatism to prevail if it serves its objectives. The group has proven receptive to harsh criticism by Muslims who say that jihadist violence is indiscriminate and causes excessive bloodshed, particularly among the Muslims in whose name the group claims to act. Al Qa'ida responded with the concept of the 'inviolability of Muslim blood'. Its leaders adopted this position partly out of concern about the actions of Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the founder of al Qa'ida in Iraq (the forerunner of ISIS), who was killed in 2006. His ruthless campaign against Shiite Muslims in Iraq soon caused concern

7. See: Elizabeth Dickinson, 'The Case Against Qatar' in *Foreign Policy*, 30 September 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/09/30/the_case_against_qatar_funding_extremists_salafi_syria_uae_jihad_muslim_brotherhood_taliban.

among the leaders of al Qa'ida. This showed that engagement and mobilisation - winning the 'hearts and minds' of the wider Muslim community - was more strategically important to al Qa'ida than the ideological purism propounded by ISIS.

The current leader of ISIS, al Baghdadi, is continuing on the same course as his predecessors. His priority is to continue the merciless fight against 'infidel' sects in order to establish a pure 'Islamic' state. He appears convinced that a campaign of brutal violence and refusal to compromise will bring him the power he seeks. It is clear that, thanks partly to the actions of ISIS, the jihadist movement is under great pressure from both internal and external factors, and that this pressure will only increase. This may lead to further fragmentation of the global jihadist movement. Radical splinter groups or individuals might, under this growing pressure, turn their attention to other areas, set new priorities and proceed to use violence however they see fit.

One issue of particular concern is the fact that since summer 2013 more foreign fighters have been active in Syria than ever seen before in a conflict in the modern history of countries with a majority Muslim population.[8] It is estimated that between two and four thousand Europeans are in the region. With their fanaticism, these fighters have not only intensified the civil war, they have also boosted the revival of jihadist movements in their countries of origin. Most Dutch jihadists in Syria are now part of global jihadist combat groups.[9]

### Jihadists in the Netherlands

Although jihadists can differ widely in terms of their background, and in the way they put jihadism into practice, the global jihadist ideology outlined above is subscribed to by jihadists in many countries. The ideas of Dutch jihadists reflect the various tendencies among their ideological fellows in other countries. They focus on the one hand on ideological purism, emphasising the dangers of 'infidel' sects and 'un-Islamic' habits and customs. On the other hand, however, they do occasionally try to be more pragmatic, by appropriating issues currently of concern to the wider Muslim community, or framing them in terms of the

8. Thomas Hegghammer, 'Syria's Foreign Fighters', *Foreign Policy*, 9 December 2013: http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/12/09/syrias_foreign_fighters.

9. See Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands (DTN36), NCTV, June 2014.

injustice done to or victimhood of Muslims. One method they employ is to exploit a climate that Muslims perceive as xenophobic or discriminatory in order to spread their ideological message and to create or intensify a sense of threat and urgency. They focus particularly on any expressions of anti-Muslim sentiment, which serve to bolster the premise central to jihadism of an anti-Muslim society and a community of the faithful that is repressed at every level, from the local to the global. Jihadists delude their audience into thinking that Western countries and institutions would like nothing better than to rob Muslims of their religious identity. They accuse them of being out to assimilate Muslims into the dominant community of 'infidels'. Utterances and incidents perceived as anti-Muslim not only give activist jihadists justification for their deep mistrust, they also give them the opportunity to present themselves as the 'defenders' of the suffering *ummah*.

### Brief review: from 'flirting' with jihadism to joining fighting groups

After a relatively quiet period, from 2010 onwards groups of radical activist Muslims began to emerge in the Netherlands. The best known small groups were Sharia4Holland (S4H), Straatdawa and Behind Bars (BB). In the name of 'the Truth', and in line with developments in the Netherlands' neighbouring countries, the leaders of these jihadist groups became directly engaged in the practical proselytising of the faith. In these groups, activist jihadists acted partly on their own initiative and account (in the name of 'pure' Islam), though did share a common goal. While one would emphasise public proselytising (da'wa), another would focus on standing up for the interests of detainees and/or allegedly repressed Muslims (in this case their fellow jihadists).

The jihadist activists were able to attract media attention by making provocative statements and engaging in provocative acts targeting secular and liberal Muslims, among others. The media coverage and the outrage these acts generated were exploited by the initiators to create unity in their ranks, attract supporters and/or create the impression they had a significant number of followers. The willingness to act fluctuated widely between different circles, from increased visibility in public and noisy protests to more passive forms of action.

The side effect of this public positioning was to focus society's attention on the actions of individuals in these networks. The pressure on individuals within radical circles (both internal and external) thus increased. The sometimes

random and impulsive use of *takfir* (declaring other Muslims apostates) and a high degree of suspicion and mistrust among these radicals undermined any possibility of a solid community being formed in the Netherlands.

Against this backdrop, travelling to conflict zones and seeking confrontation with the 'enemy' was the only effective way of maintaining or restoring the illusion of a 'community'. President Assad's regime in Syria served as a compelling and timely embodiment of that enemy.

# 3 REFLECTIONS ON RADICALISATION

Radicalisation is a complex and dynamic process without any fixed causes or outcomes, to which various academic disciplines attribute a range of meanings. It is not possible to speak in terms of specific 'profiles' that fit all radicalised youngsters. The many studies that have been conducted on this issue show that there are no clear 'roots' of radicalisation. There are many 'routes', however, which lead in only a few cases to actual extremism and terrorism. The manner and pace of radicalisation also vary considerably. Sometimes entire groups are radicalised, while there are also individuals who develop 'strong ideals'.

There is no direct causal link between socioeconomic disadvantage, relative deprivation and radicalisation. It would, however, be wrong not to take these factors into account, as jihadists play on such feelings and circumstances to help them spread their message.

## The appeal of the jihadist message
- Positive social identity and identification

Psychology has taught us that people have two very deep-seated needs: to be part of a group, and at the same time to be an individual. Jihadism meets both these needs perfectly, and this goes some way to explaining its appeal.

Generational conflicts, which cause young people to feel that they cannot turn to their parents or established mosques, can prompt young Muslims to seek their own, independent form of their faith, and like-minded people with whom they feel comfortable. Muslims who become convinced that a life as a 'Dutch Muslim' is a contradiction in terms, because they feel they receive no acceptance or respect here, and are not likely to in the future, may be inclined to cling rigidly to their religious identity. What this identity offers above all is security, (absolute) certainty and the kind of unconditional love that many people (young adults in particular) long for. Loneliness, a sense of being left to one's own devices in a hyper-individualistic society and all the attendant pressures (not least the pressure to perform) can drive people to join others who think the same way and embrace radical ideas that offer a refuge.

It is not surprising that youngsters with a criminal history often feel attracted to jihadism. The rhetoric of the jihadist movement focuses on the deeply 'sinful', 'morally bankrupt' Western society. Jihadists appeal to youngsters' sense of guilt

about their 'sinful' life and offer them a short cut to redemption, atonement and a strong social identity from which they can derive new status.

- Challenge to authority

The absence of a robust, clearly defined scholarly authority and power structure within Islam leaves room for political and religious 'entrepreneurship'. Individuals who are sympathetic to jihadism exploit this. Jihadists explicitly challenge all 'authorities' in religion, politics and the media in a broader sense. Dutch jihadists also derive their legitimacy from their rejection of any form of institutionalised authority, whether it be religious or political. On the internet, however, they encounter competition from other groups and individuals peddling their ideas on the (virtual) international market. In a general sense, the traditional news media and alternative blogs compete with citizen journalism initiatives. Jihadists seek out and align with many issues favoured by 'alternative' media channels, including the countless conspiracy theory sites, uncensored sites with extreme audiovisual content and players who are fighting a political and ideological battle against their (virtual) opponents.

- Means of communication merge seamlessly with message

The transnational media are vitally important to jihadists, enabling them to identify and communicate with the 'global community of the faithful' not only in words but also in images. Jihadists continually link places that are geographically, politically, culturally and historically far removed from each other in a single reductionist narrative. The jihadist media have become increasingly skilled at portraying the humiliation and powerlessness of the *ummah* in the most compelling fashion. The rise and proliferation of global jihadism is therefore closely related to the explosion of new media technologies.

At the height of the Arab Spring, the Western press debated the role and influence of social media in mobilising the population. The potential for interaction has expanded with the advent of social media. The boundaries between public and private space have become blurred. Visibility has become the norm, thanks to social media like Facebook and Twitter. It is impossible to draw boundaries between transmitter and recipient, producer and consumer. Anyone can acquire an influential position in a relatively short time by making maximum use of their freedom to express themselves. These tools align seamlessly with the core

of jihadism: the 'arming' of the individual in his rebellion against the established authorities.

Jihadists draw sympathisers not only by 'exposing' Western reporting but also by posting reports on their own actions and the reaction (or overreaction) to them. In war zones, they use the physical battle to provide material for the propaganda battle. Taking part in the fighting goes hand in hand with reporting one's own experience and controlling or at least influencing perceptions of the war. By billing themselves as 'fighting journalists', jihadists can personally influence their own credibility, prompting others to follow their example.

- Moral outrage

Jihadists in the Netherlands aim to exploit mistrust of the established media. They continually attempt to expose the 'shortcomings' of the mainstream media by quoting sources and pointing out the 'hypocrisy' of the message. They eagerly quote Western media sources that shore up their own message. They discuss issues they believe are of wider interest to fellow Muslims on social media. Widely felt frustration - with reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the regular media, for example - provides a direct excuse to confront others with the broader framework of the 'war against Islam'. By appealing to viewers' moral outrage, jihadists attempt to find an opening through which to drive home their arguments to the susceptible. Their propaganda efforts are aimed at highlighting the very issues that are currently of concern to broader communities. Jihadists have their finger, as it were, on the volume dial of a radio that is already on, and they are raising the volume to the maximum level.

# 4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

As noted above, global jihadism takes many forms. The horrific acts committed by 'Islamic State' in Syria and Iraq are of an entirely different order than jihadists' attempts in Western media to inspire moral outrage. Nevertheless, the ideology of global jihadism has certain recurrent elements that also attract people in the Netherlands - elements by which global jihadism differs fundamentally from other movements, including political Islam.

These elements have been outlined above. This analysis has described the global jihadists' fundamental rejection of the Western state and of the democratic legal order, their desire for sacrifice and resulting willingness to use violence. This ideology has laid the basis for behaviour that affects the Netherlands as well as other countries. In the name of global jihadism people leave the Netherlands and find themselves in conflict situations like those in Syria and Iraq. As a result they may become involved in acts of violence, or become further radicalised or even traumatised. In the name of global jihadism, people call for financial or logistic support to be given to groups that do not eschew violence to achieve their Utopian ideals. In the name of global jihadism people carry out attacks, including in the West. In the name of global jihadism people die, including Muslims. To counter this movement, it is vital that we understand what motivates those who sympathise with its ideology.

As will be clear from the above, though global jihadism presents itself as the 'true Islam', it is in fact a violent and fluid ideological movement with characteristics typical of a cult. This cult-like character lies in the absolute loyalty demanded of the individual, which usually leads them to break with their family and friends. The lack of any form of self-criticism and the fact that individual followers claim moral superiority over anyone who thinks differently are also features reminiscent of a cult. A further characteristic is the absolute assurance of salvation that jihadists are promised if they devote their life fully to serving the higher purpose.

All ideological and religious movements have or have had their distorted variations, and Islam is no exception. Something that originates in idealism (religious or otherwise), a call for justice, is gradually perverted and degenerates into precisely that which the impassioned fighters claim to oppose: injustice and absolute ruthlessness. And so jihadists become guilty of the very crimes they accuse their enemies of, going further, in fact, even than their enemies.

Another feature that typifies global jihadism is the fact that its adherents recognise no territorial boundaries in their fight. Their message is reinvigorated by major international political crises and instability, as with the civil war in Syria, which led to the international mobilisation of jihadists. The less purely *Syrian* the struggle there became, the more it appealed to jihadists. Those who, in their country of origin, were already spreading the jihadist message were able relatively simply to turn their words into deeds.

Jihadists are benefiting from apparently favourable circumstances, such as the fragmentation of the international media landscape. The internet allows individuals to challenge the established media by creating information channels and transmitting messages of their own. Jihadists make full use of the potential of modern media technologies. This can help mobilise others, attracting new members to the movement. The current recruitment mechanisms are based on an insistent moral and emotional appeal to potential recruits, bypassing established institutions and transmitted via the media.

Since the leadership of the global jihadist movement is under such pressure, there is a real opportunity for jihadist splinter groups or individuals to act alone. Jihadist ideology includes a whole range of enemies that are potential targets. The combat experience that global jihadists now have the chance to acquire has therefore substantially raised the threat of violent attacks in the West.

If we are to effectively counter the global jihadist movement, we must involve Muslim communities. However, it is important to acknowledge that the debate on political and religious extremism in the Netherlands (and elsewhere) has only grown more complex. For years, we have seen a polarised debate on the role of religion in society in general and the sociocultural and political integration of Muslim communities in the Netherlands in particular. Concern about the threat that Islam and Muslims in a generic sense are said to pose to 'our culture and way of life' has grown. Religious symbols and expressions of faith like the wearing of headscarves, the building of mosques, halal butchery and circumcision are regularly the subject of debate. This debate has become interwoven with the debate on jihadist terrorism.

The polarisation has also impacted on Muslim communities. Judging by comments in social and other media, Muslims wish to challenge the tendency to

put them collectively 'in the dock' and 'call them to account' whenever jihadism makes the headlines. Their perception is that all Muslims are expected to pay collectively for the radical and/or extremist statements and actions of individuals. The oft-heard rejection of the term 'moderate' Muslim shows how young Muslims wish to distance themselves from the negative connotations that over the years have become associated with the word 'Muslim'.

Muslims have an understandable need to relate positively to their religion, seeing it not as an obstacle but as a means of emancipation. Outside the bipolar world of jihadists and their enemies, ordinary Muslims are trying to shape their own (multi-faceted) social and religious identities, seeing their religion as a valuable moral compass. The artificial bipolar contrast between 'moderate' and 'extremist' Muslims also does no justice to the pluralistic nature of Muslim communities in the Netherlands. This must be taken into account when discussing and devising an effective approach to radicalisation and terrorism.

One thing is clear: by their views, actions and crimes, global jihadists have placed themselves outside traditional theological frameworks. This is also evidenced by the countless *fatwas* issued over the past few years condemning terrorist attacks and individual acts of violence. If this is not given sufficient consideration, the extreme acts of individuals could easily lead entire communities into conflict with each other. This would only help jihadists succeed in their aims.

# ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Introduction: on the shoulders of giants**

The article by Paul Scheffer, 'Nostalgische idealen zijn er niet alleen bij jihadisten' [Nostalgic ideals are not reserved for jihadists] (*NRC Handelsblad*, 11 October 2014) is one of the latest in a long line of publications examining the attraction of jihadist terrorism. A very recent overview of jihadism in the Netherlands since c. 2001 was presented by B. de Graaf in 'The Van Gogh Murder and Beyond', in: B. Hoffman & F. Reinares eds., *The Evolution of the Global Terrorist Threat: From 9/11 to Osama bin Laden's Death* (New York 2014). After the attacks of 11 September 2001, there was a huge increase in research and analysis in this field. Since then, governments, academics and journalists, working in constant interaction, have devoted their efforts to improving our understanding of this phenomenon. The list of publications is simply endless, and is typified not only by constantly diverging views, but also by varying quality. It would therefore be beyond the scope of this report to attempt to cover the entire range of publications in this subject area (but see, for example, M. Ranstorp, 'Mapping Terrorism Studies after 9/11: An Academic Field of Old Problems and New Prospects', in: R. Jackson, M.B. Smyth & J. Gunning eds., *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda* (London 2009) or more recently, M. Sageman, 'The Stagnation in Terrorism Research', in: *Terrorism and Political Violence* vol. 26 no. 4 (2014) 565-580, for an overview and discussion of the international status quaestionis).

This annotated bibliography to *Global Jihadism: Analysis of the Phenomenon and Reflections on Radicalisation* covers only a limited number of works in the constantly evolving debate on jihadism and radicalisation. It includes academic works produced in the Netherlands and abroad, some of which have been financed (fully or partially) with Dutch government research grants. It also includes the most important government publications on the phenomenon. The aim is to briefly reflect the works that have influenced the debate and policy over the past ten years or so. Although they do not always agree entirely with the government's analyses underlying counterterrorism policy, all of the books and articles mentioned have influenced the government's view and assessment of the matter.

**Reports**

Government bodies in several countries regularly publish trend reports on terrorism and extremism. Since 2001, in particular, global jihadism has come to occupy a permanent and prominent place in these reports. At international level, various bodies - including the EU, Europol *(Te-SAT: EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report)*, the CIA and the US Department of State *(Country Reports on Terrorism)* - regularly update their monitoring of the situation. The Dutch government also publishes regular reports on the matter (see for example the relevant sections of the AIVD's annual reports and the Ministry of Justice Research and Documentation Centre's (WODC) monitor of jihadist terrorism in the Netherlands *Monitor jihadistisch terrorisme in Nederland*).

In recent years government agencies have supplemented these general reports almost annually with more in-depth analyses of certain aspects of the phenomenon. *Global Jihadism: Analysis of the Phenomenon and Reflections on Radicalisation* refers to and builds on these earlier analyses. In the Netherlands, the NCTV (formerly NCTb) submits a quarterly Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands (DTN) to the House of Representatives, 37 editions of which had been published up to October 2014. The DTN reports on the main developments in terms of terrorism and radicalisation, and thus provides an ongoing basis for determining the threat level in the Netherlands. On the basis of DTN32 (March 2013), for example, which analysed the potential threat of jihadists returning from Syria, the threat level for the Netherlands was raised to 'substantial'.

Other government publications often highlight certain aspects of the situation. The best known examples are a number of public AIVD documents produced over the past few years. With its account of the development of jihadism in the Netherlands and beyond in its publications *De politieke Islam in Nederland* [Political Islam in the Netherlands] (1998), *Radicalisering en rekrutering voor de Jihad* [Radicalisation and Recruitment for Jihad] (2002), *From Dawa to Jihad* (2005) and *Violent Jihad in the Netherlands* (2006), the AIVD has created an influential framework for analysis of the phenomenon. The AIVD also led the field internationally with its focus on non-violent Islamic radicalism and society's resilience to it, as in its publication *The radical dawa in transition. The Rise of Islamic Neoradicalism in the Netherlands* (2007) and the follow-up publication *Resilience and Resistance* (2010). The AIVD's most recent publication, *The Transformation of Jihadism in the Netherlands: Swarm Dynamics and New Strength* (2014) provided the main basis for the present analysis.

### Global jihadism

Although studies on the threat of global terrorism were being published prior to 11 September 2001 (e.g. B. Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York 1998)), the attacks of that year put global jihadism as represented by al Qa'ida and related groups permanently on the radar of Western governments, academics and journalists. Immediately after 9/11 journalists and researchers began to examine the development of global jihad in general, and al Qa'ida in particular. In some cases, this gave rise to interesting publications, such as L. Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York 2006). The official report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, is not only a revealing and broad-based study of the background to the attack, it is also anything but a dull official report. Following these studies on the al Qa'ida attacks, attention was also focused on recruitment for and facilitation of jihad. They include P. Neumann, *Joining Al-Qaeda: Jihadist Recruitment in Europe* (Abingdon 2008). In 2002 the AIVD published *Rekrutering in Nederland voor de jihad* [Recruitment in the Netherlands for Jihad], and 2006 saw the publication of a WODC study of facilitation (M. Verhoeven 'Facilitering van de gewelddadige jihad' [Facilitating Violent Jihad], in: *Justitiële Verkenningen* 1 (2006) 1-20). More recently, in 'The Case Against Qatar' (*Foreign Policy*, 30 September 2014), E. Dickinson exposed how fighting groups in Syria are funded.

Besides writing about the al Qa'ida network and global jihad (see also, for example, M. Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia 2004)), others looked in more depth at the ideological development and specific features of global jihadism. The studies by Gilles Kepel (*Jihad: expansion et déclin de l'islamisme* (Paris 2000, revised ed. 2003); *Fitna: guerre au coeur de l'islam* (Paris 2007)) and Olivier Roy (*L'islam mondialisé* (Parijs 2004)) were influential and impressive. Both authors made it clear that global jihadism is essentially a modern, globalised movement that represents a clear break with Islamic tradition. Works that explain global jihadism on the basis of a specific political context (as opposed to a religious or psychological approach, for example) include F. Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity* (London 2005) and T. Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia, Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979* (New York 2010). Analyses of the specific ideology of global jihadism have been published by P. Nesser, 'Ideologies of Jihad in Europe', in *Terrorism and Political Violence* vol. 23 no. 2 (2011) 173-200. In 2009 the then NCTb also published an extensive analysis of the phenomenon *(Ideology and Strategy of Jihadism)*. The destructive ideology of martyrdom has been described by

N. Lahoud, *The Jihadis' Path to Self-Destruction*, B. de Graaff, *Op weg naar Armageddon. De evolutie van fanatisme* [On the Road to Armageddon. The evolution of fanaticism] (Amsterdam 2012) and, very recently, by P. Nanninga in *Jihadism and Suicide Attacks, al-Qaeda, al-Sahab and the Meaning of Martyrdom* (Groningen 2014). The apocalyptic nature of the current fighting in Syria was described by B. de Graaff in 'De Grote Slachting. Derde Wereldoorlog of Apocalyps in Syrië' [The Great Slaughter. Third World War or Apocalypse in Syria] in: *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 4 December 2013.

### Online sources

The role of the internet and social media in spreading jihadist ideas receives special attention in *Global Jihadism: Analysis of the Phenomenon and Reflections on Radicalisation*. Besides standard works like G. Weimann, *Terror on the Internet. The New Arena, the New Challenges* (Washington 2006) and more specialised studies like R. Thompson, 'Radicalization and the Use of Social Media', in *Journal of Strategic Security* vol. 4 no. 4 (2011) 167-190, Dutch government agencies also gave early warning signals about the importance of the internet to the jihadist movement. Back in 2007 the NCTb and AIVD collaborated on the study *Jihadisten en het internet* [Jihadists and the Internet], which was updated in 2010. The more recent AIVD publication *Jihadism on the Web, a Breeding Ground for Jihad in the Modern Age* (2012) received a lot of attention in the debate on the role of the internet in the global jihadist movement.

### Home-grown jihadism

The attacks in Madrid, Amsterdam (2004) and London (2005) lent renewed urgency to the question of why young people who had grown up in the West felt attracted to global jihad. Internationally, the discussion of 'home-grown jihadism' was largely dominated by the fierce debate between Marc Sageman (whose work includes *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century* (Pennsylvania 2008)) and Bruce Hoffman (whose work includes 'The Myth of Grass-Roots Terrorism: Why Osama bin Laden Still Matters', in *Foreign Affairs* vol. 87 no 3 (2008) 133-138) over the significance of al Qa'ida's role in home-grown terrorist plots and networks. While Sageman focused on the role of the group (home-grown jihadist groups as 'a bunch of guys' linked by pre-existing social ties) Hoffman highlighted the continuing importance of inspiration and direction from global jihadist networks.

The attacks in Europe were examined by authors including P. Nesser (see for example his *The Slaying of the Dutch Filmmaker - Religiously Motivated Violence or*

*Islamist Terrorism in the Name of Global Jihad?*, FFI report (2005) about the murder of Theo van Gogh).  In the Netherlands, too, significant interest developed in the phenomenon of home-grown jihadism. The murder of Theo van Gogh in 2004, in particular, and the prosecution of the 'Hofstad' terrorist group made the urgency of the issue all too clear. Both journalists (see J. Groen and A. Kranenberg, *Strijdsters van Allah. Radicale moslima's en het Hofstadnetwerk* [Allah's Female Warriors. Radical Muslim Women and the Hofstad Network] (Amsterdam 2006)) and academic researchers (F. Buijs, F. Demant and A. Hamdy, *Strijders van eigen bodem. Radicale en democratische moslims in Nederland* [Home-grown Fighters. Radical and Democratic Muslims in the Netherlands] (Amsterdam 2006); B. de Graaf, 'The Nexus between Salafism and Jihadism in the Netherlands', in: *CTC Sentinel* vol. 3 no. 3 (2010), 17-22) tried to paint a picture of the jihadist movement in the Netherlands. The government was equally engaged in this task (see for example AIVD, *Local Jihadist Networks in the Netherlands. An Evolving Threat* (2009) and the WODC study C. de Poot & A. Sonnenschein, 'Jihadistisch terrorisme in Nederland. Een beschrijving op basis van afgesloten opsporingsonderzoeken' [Jihadist Terrorism in the Netherlands Described on the Basis of Completed Investigations], in *Onderzoek en beleid* 281 (The Hague 2009)).

As the AIVD showed in *The Transformation of Jihadism in the Netherlands* (see above), the conflict in Syria has had a dramatic impact on the dynamics of the jihadist movement in the West. In recent years attention has therefore focused on the phenomenon of foreign fighters in Syria. Recent studies on this subject include:
R. Barrett, *Foreign Fighters in Syria*, The Soufan Group (2014).
T. Hegghammer, 'Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting', in *American Political Science Review* vol. 107 no. 01 (2013) 1-15; idem, 'Syria's foreign fighters', in *Foreign Policy*, 9 December 2013.
D. Weggemans, E. Bakker & P. Grol, 'Who Are They and Why Do They Go? The Radicalisation and Preparatory Processes of Dutch Jihadist Foreign Fighters', in: *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 8 no. 4 (2014).

**Background studies on radicalisation**
This analysis ends with reflections on radicalisation. Many studies on the background to radicalisation processes have appeared, partly aimed at helping the government develop its counterterrorism policy. They include

J. van der Pligt & W. Koomen, *Achtergronden en determinanten van radicalisering en terrorisme* [Background and Determinants of Radicalisation and Terrorism], WODC (Amsterdam 2009). Jean Tillie and Frank Buijs have conducted influential studies (M. Slootman & J. Tillie, *Processen van radicalisering: waarom sommige Amsterdamse moslims radicaal worden* [Processes of Radicalisation: Why Some Amsterdam Muslims Become Radical] (Amsterdam 2006); F. Buijs, F. Demant & A. Hamdy, 'Radicalisering van moslimjongeren' [Radicalisation of Young Muslims], in *Racism & Extremism Monitor. Seventh Report* (2006) 138-157). More recent studies include K. van den Bos, A. Loseman & B. Doosje, *Waarom jongeren radicaliseren en sympathie krijgen voor terrorisme: Onrechtvaardigheid, onzekerheid en bedreigde groepen* [Why Young People Radicalise and Sympathise with Terrorism: Injustice, Insecurity and Groups under Threat'] (The Hague 2009); M. van San, S. Sieckelinck & M. de Winter, *Idealen op drift: een pedagogische kijk op radicaliserende jongeren* [Ideals Adrift: a Pedagogical View of Radicalised Youngsters] (The Hague 2010); L. Wessels & A. Dijkman, Radicaal (on)zichtbaar. Verkennend onderzoek naar omvang*, kenmerken en oorzaken van mogelijke radicalisering onder Amsterdamse moslima's* [Radically (In)Visible. Survey of the Scale, Character and Causes of Potential Radicalisation Among Female Muslims in Amsterdam] (2012).

There has also been interest in the wider social and political setting of - or 'stepping stone' to - the jihadist movement. Researchers also began to focus on Salafism in the Netherlands (NCTV, *Salafism in the Netherlands* (2008); M. de Koning, *Zoeken naar een 'zuivere' islam: geloofsbeleving en identiteitsvorming van jonge Marokkaans-Nederlandse moslims* [In Search of a 'Pure' Islam: Faith and Identity of Young Moroccan-Dutch Muslims] (Amsterdam 2008) and K. Roex, *Leven als de profeet in Nederland: over de salafi-beweging en democratie* [Living Like the Prophet in the Netherlands: the Salafist Movement and Democracy] (Amsterdam 2013). Research into radicalisation has produced some specific studies on deradicalisation and disengagement, among which the innovative work by T. Bjørgo and J. Horgan deserves special mention (*Leaving Terrorism Behind: Individual and Collective Disengagement* (Abingdon 2009) and J. Horgan, Walking *Away from Terrorism: Accounts of Disengagement from Radical and Extremist Movements* (Abingdon 2009)). The AIVD publication *Disengagement en deradicalisering van jihadisten in Nederland* [Disengagement and Deradicalisation of Jihadists in the Netherlands] (2010) draws on their work. In the Netherlands, this subject was investigated further by F. Demant, M. Slootman, F. Buijs & J. Tillie in 'Decline and Disengagement: An Analysis of Processes of Deradicalisation', in IMES report series (Amsterdam 2008)

and by B. de Graaf & F. Demant in 'How to Counter Radical Narratives: Dutch Deradicalization Policy in the Case of Moluccan and Islamic Radicals', in *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* vol. 33 no. 5 (2010), 408-428.

Finally, studies of the psychological background to terrorism occupy a special place in research on radicalisation, not least because there is such fierce debate on this issue. Since the 1970s, attempts have been made to find a framework that can explain terrorism in terms of psychology. Various movements have featured in the debate, which can be roughly divided into the schools of thought that believed they could find an explanation in the psychological state or characteristics of individuals who are drawn to terrorism, and researchers who sought an explanation in the processes that lead to terrorism. The need to develop models of the radicalisation process also characterised this debate. Examples include F. Moghaddam, 'The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration', in *American Psychologist* vol. 60 no. 2 (2006) 161-169, and, more recently, C. McCauley & S. Moskalenko, *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us* (Oxford 2011). See J. Horgan's 'From Profiles to Pathways and Roots to Routes: Perspectives from Psychology on Radicalization into Terrorism', in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* vol. 618 (2008) for a summary of this debate and proposed new approaches.

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