

1. Preface

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Dear readers,

Hereby you receive the second newsletter of the FP6-project Transnational Terrorism, Security and the Rule of Law (TTSRL). In the first newsletter of 4 April 2008 (click [here](#)) we gave a general introduction of the TTSRL-project and the executing partners. We also published the first results of Deliverable 1 on the study into the concepts of security and the key temporary debates in security studies. The full text of this deliverable can be retrieved through our website under Publications (click [here](#)).

It is in this newsletter that we proudly present the next set of results. Focusing on the research findings of deliverable 10 from Workpackage 6 entitled “Theoretical Treatise on Counter-terrorism Approaches”, the newsletter provides a short overview of the report and highlights the main conclusions.

With an eye on the future, we are happy to report the culmination of another study that is part of the TTSRL project. The in-depth look at the causal factors of radicalization provides insight into the complex interaction of issues at the external, social and individual level leading to the development of radical behaviour. To further illustrate how the different dimensions and levels relate to one another, a graphical representation of the theoretical framework has been developed. For a full text of the report, please check the TTSRL [website](#).

Making the most of our research, the findings of both reports are incorporated into lectures at Utrecht University and diplomatic trainings at the Clingendael Institute. Prominent groups have included diplomats from Indonesia and Iraq as well as Dutch professionals seeking more comprehensive insights into the state of affairs.

Lastly, on behalf of Clingendael, I am pleased to announce the launching of our recently refreshed [website](#) that includes information about the Institute’s involvement with TTSRL.

We hope that this edition of the newsletter will contribute to the growing success of the series and look forward to continuing our collaboration with the partners of this consortium. And again, we are looking forward to your ideas, suggestions or general feedback.

On behalf of the entire TTSRL-consortium,

Edwin Bakker
 Head of Clingendael Security and Conflict Programme (CSCP)



2. TTSRL Workpackage 6 – Executive Summary Deliverable 10

As part of a more general objective focusing on providing advice for an ethically just and comprehensive European strategy against terrorism, the aim of this report was two-fold. First, conceptualizing the notion of counter-terrorism by elaborating on its theoretical dimension. And second, generating a benchmarking system to account for 'good practices' within the context of a theoretical dimension.

Given the plethora of research focused on counterterrorism, the aim of this report was to synthesize the often scattered theoretical notions into a coherent study that would serve as a launch pad for assessing the measures outlined in the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Action Plan. Bearing in mind the scope of this report, we chose to take a wide approach focusing on a broad range of perspectives in academic fields. Following an initial survey of the prevailing literature, we narrowed down the perspectives to include public policy, international relations, sociology, psychology, communication studies, conflict studies and economics. The selection process was based on the combination of factors including a general inventory of the literature, citation indices and bibliographical references

Formatting the report according to these perspectives serves a dual purpose. First, it neatly organizes the literature, giving the seemingly scattered ideas an organic flow. Second, it demonstrates the wide span of counterterrorism research insofar as it contributes to an overall understanding of the theoretical dimensions, offering the necessary suggestions to derive a set of generally accepted assumptions.

Striving to find a balance between the breadth of contextual information and the EU measures, the report introduces a comprehensive list of concrete examples of counterterrorism policy suggestions. Using the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy as the basis for evaluating tactical recommendations derived from the literature against the measures already in place, the findings were depicted in a table complete with status updates from the EU Action Plan.

From initiating and promoting ideological responses to using non-stigmatizing language, the key issues and recommendations derived from the literature seemed to parallel the views of the EU. While the research ultimately revealed an absence of a single agreed-upon theory, the distilled recommendations were instrumental in bridging the gap between theory (literature suggestions) and action (EU measures).

Additional information and a synopsis of the findings can be found in the next section. A complete version of the report is available on the TTSRL [website](#).

3. General Conclusions on Counterterrorism Approaches

Providing an in-depth overview of the prevailing scholarly literature on counterterrorism policies, the aim of the report was to delineate generally accepted assumptions of counterterrorism practices based on a theoretical framework. By drawing on research from a broad range of fields and disciplines, the report highlights studies, reports and book chapters that contribute to an existing body of knowledge and provide meaningful suggestions for future policymaking. From public policy to economics, the identified perspectives served as guides to categorizing the literature and distilling a set of generally accepted assumptions.

Presented in the form recommended considerations, the assumptions – or commonly held beliefs – are intended to serve as a basis for guiding future counterterrorism policymaking. Additionally, they are used to evaluate the measures set forth in the EU Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Following is an excerpt from the complete study, highlighting the nine commonly accepted notions distilled from the literature review.

1. Assess the relevant theories

Working in concord with scholars and practitioners who examine and assess theoretical notions contributing to counterterrorism, isolating generally agreed upon assumptions can be a step forward in contributing to the development of policies aimed at combating terrorism. A multi-dimensional approach that considers the contextual complexity of terrorism and counterterrorism is useful in developing strategies and shaping policy.

As there are numerous scattered theories on counterterrorism, focusing on delineating or emphasizing social theories, for example group dynamics, can bear fruitful results and shed additional light on formulating counterterrorism measures. Furthermore, measuring the effectiveness of counterterrorism strategies is essential in distinguishing not only whether measures are effective, but also whether they may produce harmful or counter-productive results.

2. Initiate and promote ideological responses

Community engagement is an essential element of an ideological response to terrorism. Engagement in and promotion of inter-cultural dialogues and interfaith initiatives can help alleviate deep-rooted misunderstandings. When considering religious-inspired terrorism, lending support for the preaching of moderate clerics can help raise awareness and tolerance of different views without resorting to extremism. Recognising that terrorism thrives on bitterness, frustration and humiliation, avoiding the use of politically charged rhetoric can reduce the likelihood of alienating vulnerable groups from society. Lastly, encouragement of engagement and cooperation within the political context is one way to build cultural and societal bridges between government and certain Muslim communities.

3. Develop a coherent counter-narrative and communication strategy

Analyzing counterterrorism within a communication framework illustrates the imperativeness of considering a coherent counter-narrative as part of a larger communication strategy. As Casebeer and Russell's research denotes, the impact of language rhetoric is significant and has a profound affect on how audiences perceive the world at large. Developing a coherent communication strategy is essential in presenting a unified narrative domestically and abroad, where audiences are vulnerable to radicalization and susceptible to violent ideologies.

4. Reflect on foreign policy approaches

As counterterrorism spans a number of policy areas, it should be taken into account that declining support of European member states' foreign policies in Muslim regions may have a negative impact on the views and opinions of Muslims living inside the borders of the European Union. Although the EU member states have engaged in development programs abroad – with initiatives that include promoting inter-cultural dialogue and supporting improvement of law enforcement – additional attention should focus on achieving the same basic aim. Difficulties in implementing such an approach at the EU level however, arise due to a lack of common agreement on foreign policy initiatives among the governments which comprise the EU.

5. Ensure efficient integration of counterterrorism efforts

Discrepancies between counterterrorism policies at the EU level and national law enforcement of member states should be limited in scope. Additionally, while the primary responsibility of combating terrorism lies with the national governments, timely implementation of EU measures must be ensured. With this in mind, the EU should use its leadership role in guiding national governments by encouraging the sharing of experiences and cross-border cooperation between member states.

6. Recognize the 'root causes'

Despite a sizeable volume of research aimed at understanding the causes of terrorism, no significant progress has been made in isolating specific factors since the pioneering research of Martha Crenshaw in 1981. Distinguishing between preconditions (root causes) and precipitants (trigger causes), Crenshaw sought to isolate factors that set the stage for terrorism. Over the years she has been instrumental and influential in furthering terrorism and counterterrorism research. In one of her more recent works, Crenshaw points out that "government security services must also recognize that they cannot eliminate the threat [of terrorism] entirely". As such, assumptions should be continuously tested against reality. Given the increasing fear of radicalization among parts of Europe's Muslim immigrant communities and the imminent threat of so-called "home grown terrorists", making a serious effort to recognize the motivations of persons and groups to radicalize is one of the keys to understanding terrorism and subsequently developing successful counterterrorism strategies.

7. Adopt a common definition

One of the most generally accepted assumptions in terrorism research is the paramount importance of espousing a universally accepted definition of the phenomenon. There is still widespread difference in perception of what exactly constitutes terrorism. Although the EU has adopted a definition of terrorism through its 2002 Framework Decision, which serves as the foundation on which the Union's counterterrorism policies are based, an encompassing internationally accepted definition is still lacking.

As the EU continues to press the member states of the United Nations to adopt a common definition, our research has found that its absence is among the essential elements precluding the formulation of an internationally accepted counterterrorism strategy. The widespread agreement among scholars and practitioners alike, however, is that despite the difficulty in generating a coherent definition of terrorism, great steps have been taken towards coping with the threat of terrorist violence.

8. Be cautious with violent approaches

Scholars from various disciplines stress that military intervention as a counterterrorism measure should be employed only as a last resort. Given the potential backlash challenges posed by policies based on proactive strategies, the biggest challenge is developing a counterterrorism strategy that causes as little harm as possible. While military action may serve as an effective measure to impair the capabilities of terrorist organizations leading to a reduction in some forms of terrorist threat, such actions may also lead to an increase of the support and number of recruits for the terrorist organization. In effect, any strategy that is legally questionable in terms of violation of international law, human rights norms or has the potential to challenge democratic values should be seriously reconsidered.

9. Avoid focusing solely on religious-inspired terrorism

Although counterterrorism research in recent years has concentrated mainly on various forms of Islamist-inspired terrorism, it is a mistake to focus exclusively on this type of terrorism. While the terrorist threat posed by radical Jihadi Muslims is currently a top priority for EU governments, Islamist-inspired terrorism is not the only form of terrorist violence Europe has experienced. As such, various academic and professional publications state that it is essential to bear in mind that terrorism can take a variety of forms and appearances, posing a threat to communities of all nationalities, religions, political or ideological backgrounds.

Conclusions

The report presented an overview of the prevailing literature from a broad range of disciplines in an effort to distil a theory-based framework for developing effective counterterrorism strategies. Based on the inventory, this research illustrated an apparent multiplicity of theoretical discussions are found in a number of academic spheres. However, a conclusive and universally accepted theoretical framework is yet to be formulated. As such, while suggestions drawn from the literature can add constructive knowledge to the practical side of counterterrorism strategy formulation, it is perhaps premature to conclude that the field of counterterrorism studies is ready to serve as a firm basis for policymaking.

4. Upcoming Events

Transnational Terrorism, Security & the Rule of Law

www.transnationalterrorism.eu



Presents:

The Concluding Conference

December 2008, Brussels

Presenting the results of the research-project
With: workshops, lectures, plenary sessions

Speakers: Prof. Dr. Uriël Rosenthal
Prof. Dr. Erwin Muller
Dr. Edwin Bakker
Dr. Petr Drulák
Mariano Aguirre Ernst
And many others...

More information on the exact date, location and program will be announced in subsequent newsletters and website.

Other Events:

- **Seminar on Terrorism and Counterterrorism** (Leiden, The Netherlands) 24th of April 2008 organised by the Centre for Terrorism and Counterterrorism (Leiden University, Campus The Hague). For information on this Centre <http://www.campusdenhaag.nl/ctc/>
- **Assembly of the Flemish and Dutch network of terrorism researchers** (Gent, Belgium) 9th of May 2008. For more information on this network <http://www.counterterrorism.nl/>
- **15th World Congress of Criminology** (Barcelona, Spain) 20-25 July 2008 <http://www.worldcongresscriminology.com/index.asp?pagina=presen&idioma=en>

5. The Reading Corner



Adobe Acrobat 7.0
Document

Studying Violent Radicalization 1

Study performed by our consortium partner DIIS (Danish Institute for International Studies) on Radicalization in Europe.



Adobe Acrobat 7.0
Document

Studying Violent Radicalization 2

Follow-up study on Radicalization in Europe by our consortium partner DIIS.

The Evolution of Al-Qaedaism: Ideology, terrorists, and appeal

By Edwin Bakker and Leen Boer
(Clingendael Security Paper, December 2007)

Given the extreme fluidity of 'Al-Qaeda,' this study will not try to analyze the latest developments or to describe the Al-Qaeda of today. Instead the authors go back to basics and look at the different forms and phases of Al-Qaeda, and investigate the persons and ideas behind it. With regard to the latter, their primary focus is not on the many post-'9/11' studies on Al-Qaeda, but on the documents and statements of Al-Qaeda itself. The basic research questions of this study can be divided into two sets. First it focuses on the following two questions: *how did Al-Qaeda develop since the early 1990s?*, and: *who are the Al-Qaeda terrorists?* Next, the study zooms in on Al-Qaeda's ideology: *what does Al-Qaeda stand for?*; *what does Al-Qaeda feed on?*, and *why, how and to what extent does Al-Qaeda appeal to various groups of Muslims?* The study concludes with a brief exposé on possible future developments and a number of recommendations for policy makers and suggestions for further research.

Jihadi terrorists in Europe

By Edwin Bakker
(Clingendael Security Paper, December 2006)

The exploratory study of jihadi terrorist in Europe focuses on the developments of jihadi terrorists as 'self-organised' and 'self-recognised' groups. Based on the methodological framework of Marc Sageman, the study examines characteristics of 242 individuals and 28 networks involved in jihadi terrorist activities in Europe in the period between September 2001 and October 2006. The study aims to shed light on whether the groups and individuals differ from global Salafi terrorists, or if the circumstances in which they joined are fundamentally different from those in which Salafis joined the fight. Finally, it compares the European sample with that of Sageman's research of 172 global Salafi jihadi terrorists.