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Causal factors of radicalisation

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since the brutal assassination of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh and the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London, radicalisation of young Muslims has risen to the forefront of public debate. In the case of the murder in Amsterdam and the London bombings, Europe was shocked to learn that relatively well-educated and integrated Muslims had radicalised and were motivated to engage in extreme physical violence. Politicians, policy makers and scientists have been confronted with questions about the scope of and the reasons for radicalisation.

The first general assumptions on the phenomenon of radicalisation leading to modern-day terrorism date back to the 1960s and 1970s. Radicalisation among Muslims has been the subject of study since the 1990s. Attention to this particular phenomenon has increased dramatically after the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. Interest in radicalisation among Muslims in Europe and the phenomenon of home grown Islamist terrorism received a boost by the Madrid bombings in 2003 and other incidents and arrests in, among others, the UK, Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany and Denmark. However, the urge to understand and tackle the threat of radicalisation is not only rooted in fear of possible terrorist attacks. Radicalisation of minority groups poses a serious threat to society and intercultural relations, even when, as in most cases, it does not lead to terrorism. Or, as the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) notes in her latest report on radicalisation and Salafism: "There is no threat of violence here, nor of an imminent assault upon the Dutch or Western democratic order, but this is a slow process which could gradually harm social cohesion and solidarity and undermine certain fundamental human rights" (AIVD, 2007: 9). The development of extreme attitudes and behaviours in minority groups can enhance impermeability of group boundaries and exert strong influence on groups' social position in society, resulting in polarisation and intercultural tensions. For example, after Dutch right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn was killed in May 2002 by a person belonging to a radical left-wing subculture, right-wing groups and individuals became increasingly offensive against Muslim communities, even though the murder was all but an Islam-inspired act. The incident heated up the debate about multiculturalism in the Netherlands and increased intercultural tensions between Muslims and other cultural groups.

The question arises what the causes of radicalisation are and, subsequently, which social groups are most susceptible to radicalisation. In past and present studies, factors or conditions that are frequently mentioned as causes of radicalisation (in general) include relative deprivation (Gurr, 1970), Western occupations and support for oppressive regimes (e.g., Pape, 2006), identity politics (Choudhury, 2007), poor political and socio-economic integration (Buijs, Demant & Hamdy, 2006), feelings of humiliation (Stern 1999, 2003; Juergensmeyer, 2000; Richardson, 2006), and other psychological mechanisms (for an overview, see Victoroff, 2005). Although all of these factors contribute to radicalisation, none suffices independently in explaining the drastic change in attitudes and behaviours of well-integrated individuals like Theo van Gogh's murderer.

The present paper aims to explain this confusing phenomenon by providing insight in the causal factors of radicalisation and the complex interactions by which they lead to radicalisation and radical behaviour. In doing so, the line of reasoning rests on a few essential assumptions.

First and foremost, radicalisation is seen as a collective phenomenon that is the result of individual behaviour. This is also referred to as *methodological individualism* (e.g., Boudon, 1981 & Coleman, 1990). It implies that radicalisation of collective entities can only be explained if we understand how individual behaviour emerges.

Secondly, there is no single explanation for radicalisation. The causes of radicalisation are as diverse as they are abundant (for overviews, see Hudson, 1999; Borum, 2004[1]; 2004[2] Nesser, 2004; Bjorgo, 2005; Victoroff, 2005; Slootman & Tillie, 2006; Loza, 2007; Silber & Bhatt, 2007). On the one hand, this implies that independent factors are insufficient to result in radicalisation. On the other, radicalisation can only be the outcome of a complex interaction between factors.

Thirdly, causal factors differ in the extent to which they contribute to radicalisation. More explicitly, we argue that external factors like political, economic and cultural conditions indeed shape and constrain the individual's environment but that they do not have a direct effect on individual behaviour. At the social and individual level, dynamics in which the individual is directly involved need to be started in order for external factors to lead to radicalisation. In addition to these three measurement levels, causal factors are further

distinguished into *causes* that set the foundation for radicalisation, and *catalysts* that abruptly accelerate the radicalisation process. Based on the literature on radicalisation, these causes and catalysts can be additionally subdivided into a number of more specific types that are explained and analysed in the coming paragraphs. Together with the three measurement levels (extern, social and individual, that are described in par. 4), these causes and catalysts define the x- and y-axes of a simple model with which we study the different dimensions and aspects of radicalisation (see figure 1).

Fig. 1: Categorisation of causal factors of radicalisation.

Level	**Types of causes**	**Types of catalysts**
External level	- Political - Economic - Cultural	- Recruitment - Trigger Events
Social level	- Social identification - Network dynamics - Relative deprivation	- Recruitment - Trigger Events
Individual level	- Psychological characteristics - Personal experiences - Rationality	- Recruitment - Trigger Events

The central question in this paper is how these levels and types of causes and catalysts relate to each other and how they, when combined, result in radicalisation. The main premise is that, in general, radicals are 'ordinary' people: they are not insane psychopaths suffering from mental illnesses (Post, 1998; Reich, 1998; Silke, 1998; Crenshaw, 2000). Although most factors are assumed to contribute to all forms of radicalisation, the present study applies the theoretical framework to cases of Islamic radicalism in post 9/11 Europe, due to the present importance to society of understanding this type of radicalisation. Additionally, with the aim of identifying the most vulnerable segments of society, a closer look will be taken at the way in which members of particular groups are exposed to and affected by the relevant causal factors. First, however, we need to take a closer look at the key concepts involved.

2. RADICALISATION AND RECRUITMENT

Although radicalisation and recruitment are increasingly subjected to scientific studies, no universally accepted definitions of either concept have been developed yet. Nevertheless, faced by pressure to tackle radicalisation policy makers have developed a few definitions. In particular, the European Commission came up with a clear and frequently applied definition of violent radicalisation, which will be followed in the present study and which will function as a starting point to define recruitment.

Accordingly, violent radicalisation is defined as follows: *"The phenomenon of people embracing opinions, views and ideas which could lead to acts of terrorism" (EC, 2006).* Radicalisation is a gradual process that, although it can occur very rapidly, has no specifically defined beginning or end-state. Rather, radicalisation is an individual development that is initiated by a unique combination of causal factors and that comprises a drastic change in attitudes and behaviour.

Hence, the EC's definition elegantly accounts for radicalisation's most prominent feature: it is thoroughly distinct from terrorism[1]. Radicals might subscribe to an ideology that is oriented at generating political and physical distance between their own social group and others without engaging in violence, whereas terrorism is perceived as a political tool. Or, as Robert Pape, one of the most influential scholars of suicide terrorism, states it: "terrorists are simply the members of their societies who are the most optimistic about the usefulness of violence for achieving goals that many, and often most, support" (2006: 8). Hence, terrorism is a political tool and as such comprises a conscious act of the people involved, whereas radicalisation is a development people go through that could, ultimately, bring them to acts of terrorism.

Although the present paper primarily focuses on describing the most essential causal factors of terrorist radicalisation, it is important to note that terrorism is not the only and inevitable result of radicalisation processes. Rather, terrorism is one of the worst possible, but nevertheless not unavoidable, outcomes of radicalisation. In other words, although every terrorist is a radical, not every radical is a terrorist. This implies that radicalisation processes can evolve in many directions, including non-violent ones. Radicals can engage in non-violent behaviour without terrorist intent that can nevertheless be perceived as radical. For example, radicalisation can prompt people to

[1] In defining terrorism the present study follows the Council of the European Union, who refers to terrorism as international acts that were committed with the aim of seriously intimidating a population, or unduly compelling a government or international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act, or seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organisation.

become committed to extreme dawa- or missionary practices or intense religious devotion. In some cases, these acts forebode terrorist engagement. In others, they do not.

As our interest lies in violent radicalisation that poses a threat to European societies, radicalisation as defined by the European Commission accounts for every act or behaviour that can inspire people to engage in terrorist activity. The generation or distribution of radical material for others to radicalise by, as well as incitement of jihad and recruitment for radical organisations all behold acts that have the potential to lead to terrorism and are therefore accounted for by this definition.

In fact, in 2005, alleged members of the Dutch Hofstad Group were convicted for mere possession and distribution of radical documents. At the time, the court judged that the network members incited for jihad with terrorist intent, indicating that the Dutch legal system perceived these acts as potential forebode of terrorist engagement.

In January 2008, however, the Dutch Court of Appeal overturned a number of the convictions of the Hofstad Group members. Prominently, although the Court of Appeal concluded that the alleged network members embraced and incited radical attitudes and ideologies, she stated that it could not be proven that the Hofstad Group was a terrorist organisation and that these acts would inevitably result in terrorist engagement (Jensma, 2008). The court did consider the suspects radical, however. Accordingly, the EC's definition of violent radicalisation is all-inclusive in the sense that it includes every behaviour or ideological expression that potentially results in terrorism, including incitement, distribution of radical material, recruitment, and condoning others to hold radical views. Even when these generally non-violent acts do not lead to terrorism, they can nevertheless pose a significant threat to society by facilitating the spread of radical ideologies through social groups.

Based on the EC's definition of radicalisation we define the term recruitment as "*the process of joining a group that embraces opinions, views and ideas which could lead to acts of terrorism".* This definition encloses a few important assumptions and implications regarding recruitment and its relationship with radicalisation. First and foremost we stress that recruitment is, at least to a certain extent, a gradual process that is a fundamental component of radicalisation. The essential element that links recruitment and radicalisation is the moment and process towards joining a certain

group. Recruitment into a radical group is likely to accelerate and intensify the process of radicalisation and could even make the subtle difference between radicalisation and terrorism. The overlap between recruitment and radicalisation is illustrated by the aforementioned convictions of young Dutch Muslims for distribution of radical material. Although these acts can be seen as to facilitate recruitment into a radical group or ideology, the judges did not explicitly distinguished between radicalisation and recruitment and perceived the relevant acts as part of radicalisation processes. Hence, recruitment should, when discussing the causal factors of radicalisation, not be viewed as an independent development. Brian Jenkins (2007), public policy expert at RAND, even refers to radicalisation as "the mental prerequisite to recruitment" (Jenkins, 2007: 2). In other words, there is no recruitment without radicalisation.

Importantly, we argue that recruitment does not necessarily have to involve a defined network of physically interrelated actors. In contrast, we suggest that recruitment – and hence radicalisation – often involves the process of joining a virtual radical group in which the sense that others share ones ideology and beliefs provide the uniting factor (see for example, Mandaville, 2005).

Furthermore, we assume that people are only motivated to join a radical group when they have radicalised, or are at least appealed by radical attitudes and beliefs. This implies that joining a radical group is always a multilateral process that requires efforts from the group as well as the potential new member. Hence, the definition of recruitment accounts for *recruitment*, with a focus on the role of the recruiting party attempting to persuade others to join an existing radical group, as well as *self-recruitment,* which focuses on the effort of an individual in the process of joining a radical group (e.g., Sageman, 2004; Coolsaet, 2005; Bakker, 2006). As such recruitment encompasses every act that facilitates or otherwise contributes to the process of joining a radical group, including incitement and distributing radical materials for other to radicalise by.

When attempting to describe the most essential characteristics of radicalisation, the question arises how "characteristics" should be interpreted. Given that determinants, indicators and causal factors can all be labelled characteristics, the term needs further specification. The present paper limits itself to an analysis of causal factors of radicalisation, first and foremost because prevention is better than a cure.

In other words, we are interested in understanding why people radicalise, not so much in what they look like once they have radicalised. An analysis of, for example, indicators or determinants of radicalisation might assist in recognising radicalising groups

or individuals but will fail to explain why some groups are more or less vulnerable to radicalisation and recruitment than others. In-depth understanding of why some people do and others do not resort to extreme attitudes and behaviours is thus of profound importance for the development of effective interventions in the radicalisation process. We feel that this purpose is best served by investigating the causal factors, rather than indicators of radicalisation.

3. METHODOLOGY

An exploratory approach is chosen to investigate the most essential contributors to radicalisation. Initially, we aim to map the most relevant literature in the realm of radicalism studies. More specifically, we seek to identify the authors and publications that contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge about the causes of radicalisation. In order to ascertain that the selected authors and studies are influential, their contributions to the two major peer-reviewed journals in terrorism studies are assessed: "Studies in Conflict and Terrorism", and "Terrorism and Political Violence". Additionally, the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) is consulted to estimate the authors' and publications' impact.

One of the downsides of this approach, however, is that not every important author is included in the SSCI, which hinders obtaining a full account of the impact of relevant literature. For example, neither Sageman's publication "Understanding Terror Networks" nor "Strijders van Eigen Bodem" by Buijs, Demant & Hamdy, both of which are among the most influential publications on radicalisation, are included in the SSCI.

Additionally, the SSCI as well as the two peer-reviewed journals include only English language literature. Publications in other important languages like German or French do not come into sight by consultation of these sources. As such, selection of the relevant literature relies to a certain extent on our own reading of the field.

4. CAUSES AND CATALYSTS

Causal factors are categorised into two different axes. First, we distinguish between factors at the external, social and individual level respectively. These factors differ in the extent to which they contribute to radicalisation. More specifically, we expect that external factors do not have a direct effect on radicalisation but that this relationship is interceded by social and individual causal factors. Second, causal factors are divided

into causes and catalysts that manifest themselves across all three levels and which are in turn subdivided into different dimensions. The following section discusses how the different measurement levels and dimensions in the model relate to each other. Figure 2 denotes a graphical representation of the theoretical framework of causal factors of radicalisation.

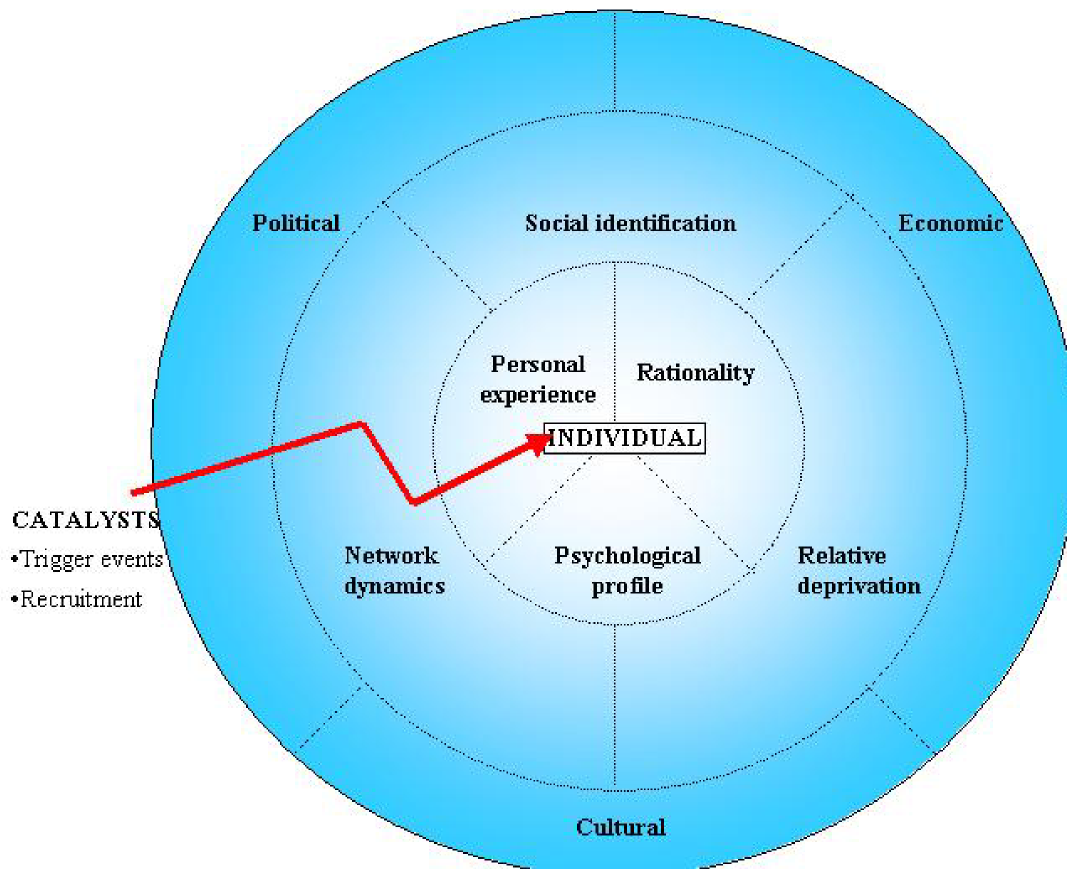

Figure 2: Causal factors of radicalisation

As can be seen, at the centre of the spectrum is positioned the individual, whose behaviour is *regularly* subjected to a variety of causes at different measurement levels. From the outside inwards, the outside layer represents causes at the *external* level. External factors manifest themselves independent of the individual. They shape and constrain people's environment, but individuals have only minor influence on their environment. External factors can be subdivided into political, economic and cultural dimensions. The political climate, for example, is an external factor. The actual influence of civilians in democratic states is small and political events generally occur outside the scope of individual civilians' power. The same holds for economic or cultural

developments like globalisation and industrialisation. External factors do not have a direct effect on individual behaviour, which is illustrated by the effect of *absolute* deprivation. If poverty has a direct effect on radicalisation, how can we explain why many poor people never radicalise?

The answer lies in the fact that social contexts, including factors that refer to the individual in relation to others, influence human behaviour. Social factors, represented by the second or middle layer, refer to mechanisms that position the individual in relation to relevant others and hence can include people from in-groups as well as out-groups. Identification processes, network dynamics and relative deprivation are examples of dimensions into which social factors can be subdivided. The difference between external and social factors is reflected in the comparison between *absolute* and *relative* deprivation. While absolute deprivation refers to a lack of means to survive, relative deprivation focuses on the individual in relation to significant reference groups (Gurr, 1970).

A complex interaction between factors at the various levels is likely to be crucial for the intensity of the readiness for radicalisation. Social factors play an important intervening role in the relation between external factors and radicalisation. For example, stigmatisation of Islam in the media, an external cultural factor, is likely to impose a stronger radicalising force on Muslims than on non-Muslims.

The third and last layer represents causal factors at the *individual* level. At the individual level, psychological characteristics, personal experiences and rationality influence how people respond to their social and external environment. Whether people radicalise depends, for example, on their knowledge about and attitudes against the political and economic climate, but also on the way they cope with major life events. In the model, individual causal factors are positioned closest to the individual. However, these factors are not necessarily assumed to exert the strongest influence on the individual's behaviour. Rather, factors at all three measurement levels only lead to radicalisation through complex interactions involving factors at every level. The individual is the main focus of analysis in the present theoretical framework; the different levels represent the factors' position in relation to the individual, which explains why external factors denote the outside layer and individual factors are found at the core. The causes in the model gradually influence the individual's behaviour, which implies that at every stage in the radicalisation process, these factors steadily, although perhaps at times more intensely than at others, press the individual.

In addition to causes, *catalysts* are also causal factors that contribute to radicalisation. Catalysts can occur at the external as well as the social and individual level and often penetrate across all three measurement levels. They accelerate or catapult radicalisation processes but differ from causes in the sense that they cannot initiate radicalisation. Whereas causes are structural factors that gradually influence the individual, catalysts are often unpredictable and volatile. Moreover, they vary per individual; others can discard as irrelevant what can be a trigger for one person, like provoking statements by public figures. Therefore, catalysts are not *reasons* for radicalisation but merely influencing factors for individuals in an advanced phase of radicalisation. The two catalysts that are distinguished in this context are *recruitment* and *trigger events.*

It should be emphasised that the causal factors could be categorised in several sensible ways. Most factors could theoretically be listed at both the external and social, sometimes even the individual level. To a large extent the levels and their dimensions overlap. The external factor "poor integration", for example, can manifest itself in a political, economic and cultural dimension. Nevertheless, without claiming that this classification is all-inclusive, it is a comprehensive way of integrating and organising the most frequently mentioned contributors to radicalisation.

5. CAUSAL FACTORS AT THE EXTERNAL LEVEL

5.1. Causes

5.1.1. Political causes

Political climates, be they global, national or local, affect the emergence of radicalism. The political system creates autonomy but simultaneously constrains public life and is as such seminal for individual behaviour. For example, compared to civilians in a democratic system where freedom of speech and religion are central values, civilians of a dictatorial system generally have less political freedom to oppose the political system.

More specifically, the position people - both as individuals and as members of collective entities - take in society affects radicalisation tendencies. Poor integration, for example, is frequently mentioned as a prominent cause of radicalisation. Research has shown that Muslim communities in Europe are often not completely integrated. In 2006, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUCM[1]) published a study on discrimination of Muslims in the Member States of the European Union, which

included a report consisting of interviews with European Muslims (2006[2]). In general, respondents felt that the needs of Muslims are not a priority for policy makers and public authorities. Moreover, many respondents felt that Muslims are underrepresented in public institutions and organisations, which, according to the respondents, hinders identification with such institutions. Most of the respondents were of opinion that institutional support for Muslims challenging religious discrimination is lacking, and that at times, invitations for Muslims to participate in public debates do not represent genuine attempts to get Muslims involved (2006[2]). Generally, these findings are supported by findings by Buijs, Demant and Hamdy (2006), who point to the fact that Moroccans in The Netherlands are severely underrepresented in governmental institutions**.**

Poor integration of Muslim communities in Western societies implies that groups of people are excluded from active participation in the public domain. In a series of articles and with a variety of co-authors, Baumeister and Twenge showed that when excluded from social groups, people tend to become less pro-social (Twenge, Baumeister & DeWall, 2007) engage in self-defeating behaviour (Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, 2002) and demonstrate aggressive action tendencies, even against targets who are not the source of rejection (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001). The core assumption of their work is that the need to belong is one of the most significant motivations for social interactions (Baumeister & Leary, 2005).

Although in Baumeister's and Twenge's research subjects were individually excluded from group membership, their findings provide an indication that exclusion of groups as entities can likewise instigate negative and aggressive attitudes and behaviours. As will become clear in later sections on the effect of social identification issues on radicalisation, group membership is one of the most important indicators of social behaviour (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1982; 1984; Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 2002). Even more so, it has been shown that under some circumstances, people can experience emotions on behalf of their in-group and can be motivated to act toward group goals, especially when the group is being threatened (e.g., Smith, 1993). In particular for people who identify strongly with the relevant social group, threats of the group can be perceived and treated as personal threats, indicating that exclusion of a self-relevant group can trigger similar responses as exclusion of the self. As such, poor integration and exclusion of Muslims in Western societies might lay a significant foundation for radicalisation and polarisation.

Political events are often thought to incubate Muslim fundamentalism, not only at national or local levels, but also at the international and global level. Around the world, Muslims appear to feel that the West is fighting Islam. Al-Zawahiri for example, Bin Laden's deputy, often accuses the West of engaging in a "new crusade" against Muslims (CNN, 2005). An opinion poll among British Muslims, conducted for the BBC, showed that the majority of British Muslims feel that the 'war on terror' is actually a war on Islam (BBC News, 2003). In particular, conflicts in the Middle-East and the diplomatic position of Western governments in these conflicts are believed to contribute to radicalisation. Robert Pape, in consensus with other scholars (e.g., Benzakour, 2001; AIVD, 2004[2]; Kepel, 2004), argues in a series of publications (e.g. Pape, 2003; 2005[1]; 2005[2] 2006) that terrorist organisations, both in the West and in the Middle East, apply strategic decision making to employ suicide bombings to coerce Western democracies to withdraw combat forces from Islamic territory.

5.1.2. Economic causes

Economic deprivation and poverty are frequently mentioned in discussions about the origins of terrorism (see for example, Gurr, 1970; Portes, 1971; Muller, 1985; Lichbach, 1989; Brock Blomberg, Hess, and Weerapana, 2004[1]; 2004[2]; Bravo & Dias, 2006; Franz, 2007). The question arises, however, whether such a causal relationship actually exists. Research has shown that although the majority of European radicalised Muslims stem from lower socio-economic strata of society, radical Muslims are distributed across all socio-economic classes (e.g., Sageman 2004; Bakker, 2006).

On the one hand, Brock Blomberg, Hess, and Weerapana (2004[1]; 2004[2]) suggest that a negative association exists between a country's economic situation and the occurrence of terrorism. The authors argue that in times of economic deprivation, the likelihood of terrorism increases. The decision to engage in terrorist activity is based on opportunities and constraints. According to the authors, terrorism can become a rational and attractive behavioural alternative for economically marginalised social groups.

On the other hand, Krueger and Malečková (2003) came forth with a well-cited publication in which they refute the hypothesis that economic deprivation is the wellspring of terrorism, a statement that was supported by RAND economist Berrebi (2003). Krueger and Malečková scrutinise public opinion polls from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in order to define which social groups express higher

levels of support for armed attacks on Israeli civilians. Their findings mainly show that people with higher educational levels mostly supported violence against Israelis. Additionally, compared to people in similar age groups; the educational level of Hezbollah participants is slightly above average.

Although scholars do not agree as to whether a causal relationship between poverty and radicalisation exists, we argue that such a relation would in any case not be a direct one, but dependent on social and individual factors. The fact that not every poor person radicalises indicates that other factors intervene in the relationship between economic deprivation and radicalisation. As a consequence, several authors have focused on relative rather than absolute deprivation as a possible cause for radicalism. As relative deprivation refers to a subjective perception of being unfairly disadvantaged in relation to reference groups, its effect will be further discussed in the section on causal factors at the social level.

5.1.3. Cultural causes

Muslims in the Netherlands and Europe are often confronted with stigmatisation of their religion, and discrimination. The EUCM report on discrimination of European Muslims concludes that "it is evident that Muslims often experience various levels of discrimination and marginalisation in employment, education and housing, and are also victims of negative stereotyping and prejudicial attitudes" (2006[1]: 110), and that these issues pose considerable threats to Muslim integration.

In addition, globalisation and modernisation facilitate frequent interaction between different religions and cultures, which coincides with an increased likelihood of interethnic and intercultural conflicts. Globalisation and modernisation are considered cultural, rather than political or economic factors because both developments involve social and cultural convergence, for example manifested by westernisation and global media coverage.

These products of globalisation facilitate the emergence of transnational ideological movements that spread radical Jihadi messages and reach large populations of Muslims around the globe. In a discussion of global Salafism, Quintan Wiktorowicz (2001) outlines how this transnational Salafi movement connects Muslims into a virtual community through a common approach to Islam. According to Wiktorowicz, the Salafi movement is the most rapidly expanding Islamic movements and has profound influence on Islamic practice and ideological orientations of Muslims throughout the world (Wiktorowicz, 2001). Such extensive spread of radical interpretations of radical

interpretations of Islam are by-products of globalisation and symbolise the rapid expansion of transnational, virtual networks that serve as platforms for transnational opinion formation and recruitment into radical movements. Or, as Reuven Paz (2002) puts it: "These means of globalisation encourages the ´brotherhood of the oppressed´".

Globalisation and modernisation are often suggested to cause conflicts in which Islam and the West are confronted, as well as conflicts *within* Muslim communities. First, Benjamin Barber (1995) postulates that the aggressive force of modernisation and globalisation dissolves social and economic barriers and exports capitalism to all parts of the world, a mechanism which he elegantly coined 'McWorld'. Muslims all over the world are now confronted with consumerism, modern technologies and emancipation. According to Barber, globalisation increases economic deprivation for lower class societies and globally confronts Muslims with values and events that are originally refuted by the Koran and Islamic culture. According to Barber, fundamentalist Islamists believe that Islam cannot co-exist with the Western form of modernism, and perceive the rapid rise of westernisation as an attempt of the Western world to gain control over the Islamic world.

Second, developments within Islam are believed to contribute to Muslim fundamentalism. Gilles Kepel (2002) for example, suggests that radicalisation of Muslims is partly the result of conflicts between moderate and radical movements within Islam. According to Olivier Roy (1994; 2004), one of the most famous authors on political Islam, globalisation changes the relationship of Muslims to Islam. The borders between Islam and the West are becoming increasingly vague, which is, according to Roy, the result of deterritorialisation. Religion is increasingly disconnected from a specific territory or culture, and new forms of religiosity create new communities that organise themselves solely around religion. The *ummah* ("Community of Believers") becomes a transnational, even virtual community. Religion in a global Islam is based not on culture, but on a dynamic and adaptable set of norms. It is, as such, deculturated and not affiliated with any specific culture or country, but rather adaptable to different environments (Roy, 2004). This universal Islam particularly attracts young Muslims feeling alienated and excluded in Western societies, because it offers a set of behavioural rules. With this line of reasoning, Roy extends the hypothesis that today's Muslim fundamentalism is rooted in the Middle Eastern conflict. It is the outcome of westernisation of Middle-Eastern societies. As such, an interesting paradox arises: The states and societies that radical Islamist movements reject and disgust the most, are the same states and societies that shaped these movements.

5.2. Catalysts

5.2.1. Recruitment

Recruitment is an important potential catalyst that can manifest itself at the external, social and individual level. The aforementioned definition of recruitment supposes that joining a radical group requires active effort of both the recruiter and the potential recruit.

When we assume that only people who have radicalised or are radicalising face incentives to join a radical group, the implication arises that recruitment can only occur in a later stage of the radicalisation process. In itself, recruitment is therefore not believed to be capable of igniting latent radical emotions or beliefs. In other words, recruitment can only *accelerate* radicalisation processes; it cannot initiate radicalisation.

Although potential group members always play an active role in the recruitment process, *top down* selection of new recruits is believed to be the most common at the external level. Giles Kepel (2004) is only one of many authors (AIVD, 2002; 2004[1]; Taarnby, 2005), who points to the possibility that al-Qaeda leaders are recruiting new supporters in Europe for their anti-western jihad. This mechanism is illustrated by the case of Muriel Demagauque, the Belgian woman who detonated a bomb she was carrying in order to kill American soldiers in Iraq in 2005. She was allegedly recruited by several men who went to trial in October 2007 for attempting to also recruit several other people in Belgium (Reuters, 2007).

Marc Sageman (2004) also argues that, although joining jihad often comprises a bottom-up process, it is indispensable to have relationships with members of the relevant radical movement. Alleged Hofstad Group member Samir Azzouz, for example, attempted to participate in the violent jihad in Chechnya but failed to enter the country because he lacked relevant acquaintances.

5.2.2. Trigger Events

In her famous publication "The Roots of Terrorism" (1981), Martha Crenshaw distinguishes explicitly between factors that set the stage for terrorism over the long run, also referred to as preconditions and root causes, and situational factors that immediately precede the occurrence of terrorism, also known as precipitants or trigger causes. The latter category includes events that call for revenge or action, such as a lack of opportunity for political participation, violence against in-groups, police brutality, and contested elections, but also provoking acts committed by hostile out-groups or

compromising speeches by public figures. The Abu Ghraib scandal for example, where Iraqi prisoners were humiliated and abused by American soldiers, prompted angry and violent responses in Muslims around the world. We hypothesise that trigger events, like recruitment, are incapable of initiating radicalisation processes but that they can abruptly intensify them.

In conclusion, external factors influence the individual's behavioural alternatives. However, it should be stressed that their radicalising effect is limited. The degree to which external factors lead to radicalisation depends on the way in which individuals and their social environment respond to these externalities. The upcoming sections discuss the effect of social factors on radicalisation.

6. CAUSAL FACTORS AT THE SOCIAL LEVEL

6.1. Causes

6.1.1. Social identification

Identification with social groups is a particularly accurate predictor of social behaviour and is, as such, probably one of the most important intervening factors at the social level. To a large extent, how we behave depends on whom we identify with.

Social identity approaches (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1982; 1984; Ellemers et al., 2002) argue that people define themselves not so much in terms of self, but in terms of group membership. This implies that we only feel good about ourselves if we feel good about the group. We can have as many social identities as groups with which we identify. For example, people can identify themselves on basis of sex, ethnicity, profession, religion, or based on the sports club we support. Which identity becomes salient or prominent depends on context. When we are spectators of a football match, our identity as supporter of the relevant team is probably much more important than our national or religious identity.

Regarding radicalisation, the implications of the importance of a satisfactory social identity manifest themselves in two ways. First, an identity crisis can have profound implications for our well-being and behaviour. An identity crisis can emerge when the group we wish to affiliate with rejects us, or when we are unsure which group we identify with. Young Muslims are often thought to face such an identity crisis in which Islamic and Western cultures conflict (Choudhury, 2007; Malik, 2007). Buijs and his colleagues

(2006) for example, suggest that Moroccan youngsters in The Netherlands feel alienated from both their parents and Dutch society, and have a hybrid-identity that is not recognised and accepted by their direct environment. As a consequence, they find a satisfactory identity in the *ummah* that binds them with other Muslims and for which nationality, be it Moroccan or Dutch, becomes irrelevant. The more they invest in this identity and the more their friends adopt it, the stronger the identification will become.

Second, the importance of social identification reflects that a threat of the group will be perceived and treated as a personal threat (e.g., Smith, 1993). A threat of a valued social identity generally leads to in-group favouritism (e.g., Smurda, Wittig and Gokalp, 2006) and out-group derogation (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As signalled by Olivier Roy (2004), a threat of their religious identity can prompt Muslims to withdraw into a strictly specified, inward-focused community that is obsessed by its own borders. These mechanisms can occur irrespective of whether the threat was real or perceived.

In times of an identity threat, other identities are expected to become irrelevant. For a woman who is applying for a job and finds herself being discriminated based on gender, it will probably be momentarily irrelevant that she also perceives herself as a Christian or European citizen. The same holds for Muslims. Based on social identity approaches that suggest that the stronger people identify with the relevant in-group, the stronger they will respond to identity threats (e.g., Ellemers et al. 2002), we hypothesise that especially for high identifiers (e.g., people who identify strongly with the relevant social group), perceived discrimination or stigmatisation based on Islam is expected to trigger their religious identity to be the most prominent indicator of attitudes and behaviour. Whether or not they also feel Dutch or Moroccan thus becomes irrelevant; they feel they are Muslim and they feel threatened as Muslims.

6.1.2. Network dynamics

Radicals, like everybody else, are embedded in complex interaction systems that shape and constrain their behaviour. Others have more influence on their behaviour than they might deem. Only the mere presence of a charismatic leader, for instance, can affect whether and how people and groups radicalise. Expectedly, the need to belong can drive youngsters directly into the arms of captivating leaders, who might be capable of instilling radical views and attitudes in young, receptive Muslims. In turn, radical views can be transmitted through social groups.

There are several ways in which social networks influence people's tendencies to radicalise. First and foremost, similarity breeds connection. As Sageman (2004) and Bakker (2006) also found, members of the same network are often homogenous with respect to socio-demographic characteristics, but also with respect to their attitudes and behaviour (McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001). This phenomenon is referred to as *homophily* and indicates that people invest in relationships with people who share their opinions and beliefs. Likewise, *social influence* prompts people to adopt attitudes and behaviours of others in the network (Festinger, Schachter & Back, 1950; Marsden & Friedkin, 1993; Valente, Gallaher & Mouttapa, 2004; Valente, Ritt-Olson, Stacy, Unger, Okamoto & Sussman, 2007).

Moreover, James Coleman (1990) argues that in networks where network members share opinions and attitudes, *social norms* develop that describe and regulate behaviour. Mutual encouragement and punishment in network structures enforce norm conformity and even allow for the emergence of zealous behaviour. In return for acknowledgement and behavioural confirmation, but also in order to prevent from being punished, individual group members can make considerable sacrifices on behalf of the group (Coleman, 1990). For example, extreme forms of norm compliance can play a considerable role in the emergence of suicide terrorism.

Marc Sageman (2004) illustrates how group processes can lead to terrorist behaviour. Friendship bonds are critical, he claims. Not only are radical ideas and attitudes transmitted through these relationships, the reinforcing power of group norms also has a strong effect on the emergence of radicalisation.

Hence, in social networks radical ideologies and attitudes can easily develop and spread through well-documented social mechanisms like social influence and homophily. Charismatic leaders and influential network members are capable of exerting strong influence on general opinion formation and behaviour in networks. As such, the propagation of radical interpretations of Islam that prescribe extreme religious devotion and refutation of any Western value interacts with radicalisation of thought by producing an increased pressure and willingness to act on behalf of one's religious convictions.

In relation to the radicalising effect of network dynamics, two 'environments' deserve further notice: Internet and prisons.

6.1.2.1. The role of Internet

Increasingly, attention is being paid to the role that the Internet plays in radicalisation of young Muslims. In the present study, Internet is perceived as a causal factor at the social level rather than at the external level. First and foremost, the Internet is a prominent facilitator of network formation and interpersonal interaction. As noted earlier, a radical movement can exist of a virtual group in which people who have never met are nevertheless connected through shared attitudes and ideology. Internet is a perfect instrument to establish a 'deterritorialised' virtual network of believers (Roy, 2004). As such, it enhances opinion formation and offers a platform for young, identity-seeking Muslims to express their grievances and obtain membership of a social group. Or, in the words of Schweitzer and Goldstein Ferber: "The anonymity of the web facilitates communication on sensitive issues without exposure and thus to a certain degree neutralizes pressure from governments. The internet has provided young Muslims, particularly in Europe, with a virtual community that serves primarily to ease the emotional strain on Muslim immigrants experiencing the difficulties of adapting to a new environment and feeling a need to maintain their religious identity" (2005: 31).

The Internet resembles a substantial virtual network containing free and unlimited information transition that puts individuals in relation to relevant others. Not only does the Internet facilitate opinion formation and interaction possibilities between similar-minded individuals or groups, it also contains a preposterous library of publicly accessible documentation (e.g., Mandaville, 1999; Anderson, 2000). The AIVD states that Internet plays an important role in radicalisation processes and that radical documentation is widely spread online. The AIVD even goes so far as referring to the Internet as "a turbo propelling the global violent jihad movement" (2006: 43).

6.1.2.2. The role of prisons

Prisons are often thought to be a fertile foundation for radicalisation. The feeling of being collectively marginalised can provide a strong binding factor among identity-seeking inmates. Not only are reasons for social identification abundant, the personal networks of convicts are rather limited, making it more attractive for inmates to adopt the attitudes and actions of influential others. Imams, be they contracts or volunteers,

play an essential role in radicalisation and recruitment processes in prisons (Van Duyn, 2006). Especially Muslims with little knowledge of Islam are likely to attach great value to the words of imams on religious matters. Such attributed authority makes prison imams particularly influential when it comes to incubating and spreading radical attitudes through prisons.

A few accounts of prison radicalisation are known. For example Richard Reid, the 'shoe bomber' who attempted to destroy a commercial airplane by igniting bombs that were hidden in his shoes, allegedly radicalised while in prison (e.g., Rupp & Erickson, 2006). Mohammed Bouyeri, Theo van Gogh's murderer, also became interested in radical interpretations of Islam while imprisoned (Benschop, 2005).

6.1.3. Relative deprivation

Many scholars have provided support for the hypothesis that relative deprivation can trigger violent, collective action, even for people who are not personally deprived but act on behalf of the group (e.g., Runciman, 1966; Koomen & Fränkel, 1992; Tiraboschi & Maass, 1998). One of the first and probably most influential publications on relative deprivation in relation to political unrest is Gurr's 'Why men rebel' (1970), in which the author defines relative deprivation as "actors' perception of discrepancy between their value expectations and the goods and their value capabilities" (p.24). In other words, a discrepancy between what people believe they are rightfully entitled and what they expect to obtain can cause a perception of deprivation. People can thus be subjectively deprived irrespective of whether basic needs are met, and vice versa, abject poverty does not necessarily bring about relative deprivation in the poor. Gurr suggests that the inability to obtain what is felt to be justified triggers feelings of frustration that ultimately facilitates the emergence of collective violence. Relative deprivation does not necessarily have to result from comparison with reference groups, however. Rather, "an individual's point of reference may be his own past condition, an abstract ideal, or the standards articulated by a leader as well as a 'reference group'," according to Gurr (1970: 25).

Indeed, Davies' theory of rising expectations (1962; 1969) shows how deprivation can be relative not only in relation to relevant others, but also relative to people's own expectations and previous fulfilments. According to Davies, people for whom living standards are improving tend to overestimate the

pace with which they feel their life should improve. As a result, a gap exists between people's expectations and reality. The ensuing frustration increases the likelihood of social unrest and revolutionary moods (Davies, 1962). Although both Gurr and Davies base their theoretical elaborations on the self-evident frustration-aggression hypothesis, Davies additionally stresses that time is a crucial element in generating aggravation and that initial satisfaction can lead to frustration when expectations are not met.

At the time, Gurr's publication provided conscientious insights into social and psychological circumstances under which political violence is likely to occur, although it suffers a few major weaknesses. First and foremost, Gurr uses an interdisciplinary approach in which a giant heap of theories is subsumed to fit the frustration – aggression hypothesis. Consequently, his theory faces a loss of predictive power as it becomes increasingly difficult to falsify: after all, political violence is commonly preceded by a sense of frustration or dissatisfaction. Even more so, the frustration – aggression hypothesis is in itself far but sufficient to explain radicalism as it fails to explain why the majority of economically frustrated people never radicalise. In fact, Walter Laqueur (1978; 2001; 2004) is only one of many scholars advocating that terrorists are, in general, not poor or from lower socio-economic strata. Laqueur argues that radicalism and terrorism lack any comprehensive, unilateral explanation; herewith implying that neither absolute nor relative deprivation can provide a satisfactory explanation for these phenomena. These comments notwithstanding, Gurr offers far-reaching insights into the emergence of political violence and credence must be paid to the fact that Gurr remains among the few scholars to have explicitly addressed the relationship between relative deprivation and collective political violence.

6.2. Catalysts

6.2.1. Recruitment

At the social level, groups as entities frequently recruit themselves for violent jihad. Marc Sageman (2004) for example, shows how the Hamburg Cell, accomplices in the '9/11' attack in New York, radicalised as a group of friends. During the radicalisation process, the majority travelled to Afghanistan where they collectively joined al-Qaeda. Most of the members of the Hamburg Cell actively participated in al-Qaeda's '9/11' mission.

6.2.2. Trigger events

Networks and personal relationships can be affected by unexpectedly occurring events that can manifest themselves at external, social, and individual level. For example, group discussions about public events can enhance radical attitudes of individual group members. Additionally, disturbed group processes and events affecting peers can affect radicalisation. For instance, the arrest of a group member or the failure of a friend to find a job can prompt others to radicalise even further or engage in violence.

7. CAUSAL FACTORS AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

7.1. Causes

7.1.1. Psychological characteristics

Although the conventional thinking used to be that radicals are crazy, scholars nowadays agree that radicals, even terrorists, are all but extraordinary. Even more so, their inevitable conclusion is that no socio-demographic, let alone psychological profile of radical groups and their members exists (see for example, Sageman, 2004; Bakker, 2006), which makes it increasingly difficult to identify potentially vulnerable groups.

Victoroff (2005) provided an overview of theories of terrorist behaviour and came up with a variety of psychological variables on which radicals can potentially be distinguished from each other, and from non-radicals. For instance, and to a large extent this is influenced by culture, some people are simply more violent, anti-social, or aggressive, than others. According to Victoroff, radicals might be particularly sensitive to humiliation or perceived oppression, they might be novelty seeking, identity seeking, depressed, anxious, or vulnerable to charismatic influence. Perhaps they are, in comparison to non-radicals, more impulsive and lacking self-control. However, no research has confirmed that radicals indeed match these descriptions (e.g., Sageman, 2004; Bakker 2006). Simply put, radicals do not seem to be in any way different from other people.

7.1.2. Personal experiences

The decisions people make are often based on personal experiences, and major life events can lead to radicalisation. Some scholars have argued, for example, that radicalism and engagement in terrorism is a typical outcome of traumatising, sometimes

abusive childhoods (e.g., Akhtar, 1999; Borum, 2004). DeMause even claims rigorously that the causes of terrorism should not be found *"in this or that American foreign policy error, but in the extremely abusive families of the terrorists"* (2002: 340).

Arguably, individual experiences can be divided into two categories: cognitive versus emotional experiences. Whereas cognitions refer to people's knowledge and thoughts and to how people process their environment, emotions are fast, unstable and triggered automatically.

At a cognitive level, what people know and believe about the world around them affects how they perceive their environment, and hence how they respond to causal factors at the external and social level. Radical interpretations of religion and society can therefore provide the wellspring of radicalisation and terrorism. However, we suggest that in themselves, radical ideologies or radical interpretations of religion are not direct *causes* of radicalisation. People differ in the extent to which they are susceptible to or appealed by radical ideologies, and are at some times more vulnerable than at other times. Moreover, we assume that in general, people do not turn to violent, hate-spreading ideologies without reason. That is, the mere fact that an individual adheres to radical ideologies is rather an indicator of radicalisation than a direct causal factor. Rather, adherence to radial ideologies is the outcome of an accumulation of causal factors that instil the urge or desire to commit to radical ideologies. For example, Mohammed Bouyeri, Theo van Gogh´s murderer, merely became attracted to radical interpretations of Islam after he had been imprisoned and his mother had died (Benschop, 2005). Nevertheless, although we argue that the presence of radical ideologies are mostly symbols of radicalisation, such ideologies can become embedded in the individual's mindset and subsequently become a driving factor after radicalisation processes.

In 2006, the Dutch psychologists Meertens, Prins and Doosje came forth with an extensive, convincing overview of psychological theories of radical behaviour. The authors show that well-investigated and predictable processes involving power, leadership, and normative pressure in social groups can explain how ordinary people engage in rather extraordinary behaviour. One of the theories the authors apply for explaining radicalisation is Festingers (1957) cognitive dissonance theory.

'Cognitive dissonance' refers to a psychological phenomenon that emerges when people's behaviour is in conflict with their attitudes or beliefs. One of the typical responses to such discomfort is that people increasingly start believing what they say. For instance, the more often people express statements that are more radical than their

actual opinions, the more they will start believing the accurateness of those statements. Second, people can respond to cognitive dissonance by over-justification. The more radicals have invested in the radicalisation process, for instance because they broke relationships with family members to gain membership of a radical group, the more they will believe that membership was indeed worth sacrificing family ties for. Due to cognitive dissonance, radicalising people will become even more committed to their radical views or network. Indeed, Roy's (2004) observation that faith and commitment increasingly have to be proven in order to become a member of a religious community signals that cognitive dissonance can play an essential role in the emergence of radicalisation.

Further, emotional experiences are believed to contribute to radicalisation. Sarraj (2002) for example, suggested that feelings of guilt, shame and the desire for revenge are prominent causes of suicide terrorism. Additionally, Muslims around the world are thought to feel humiliated (e.g., Stern 1999; 2003; Juergensmeyer, 2000; Lindner, 2006; Richardson, 2006). In his *Declaration of War*, parts of which were broadcasted on Al Jazeera and CNN, Osama bin Laden explicitly mentions the term humiliation several times. "Death is better than life in humiliation", he says. If we assume that people who feel humiliated will search for ways to restore their dignity, these statements should alarm us that the role of perceived humiliation, and similar emotional experiences, in the emergence of terrorism should not be underestimated.

7.1.3. Rationality

Individuals turn to radicalism for different reasons, of which some are more conscious than others. Some people join radial groups for ideological motivations or to engage in political action, whereas others are simply attracted by action and adventure, or seek group membership to obtain a positive identity. Just as there is no psychological profile that matches each and every radical, individual motivations to radicalise are abundant and unique. The question arises whether radicalism can be a product of rational choice, where actors are assumed to be fully informed and utility-maximising.

Among others (for an overview see McCormick, 2003), Martha Crenshaw is one of the most frequently cited representatives of rational choice approaches to terrorism (1981; 1998). She emphasised that the decision to engage in terrorism is a rational political choice that is influenced by psychological and strategic considerations on

constraints and benefits.[2] Rational choice approaches of terrorism do face difficulties, however. Gutpa (2004) for example suggests that rational choice theories cannot account for Olson's (1965) collective action problem where individual actors do not have sufficient incentives to engage in terrorist activity.

Again, it should be emphasised that radicalisation differs from terrorism. Irrespective of its successfulness, terrorism can be perceived as a tool that can be employed to achieve one's goals. Participation in terrorist activity requires an active, conscious decision, whereas radicalisation is a gradual process that generally does not have a clearly defined beginning or end state. Radicalisation is merely a state of mind that yields a shift in attitudes and behaviour and serves, as such, a less specified function. Hence, although rational choice approaches (e.g. Lake, 2002; Ferrero, 2002) can shed light on potential strategic benefits of terrorism, we suggest that the theory cannot suffice in explaining radicalisation.

7.2. Catalysts

7.2.1. Recruitment

In particular, mosques and prisons are infamous for facilitating top down recruitment of potential adherers of radical Islam. Even more so, however, recruitment at individual level is increasingly marked by self-enlistment. For young Muslims in search of their identity, joining a terrorist organisation can be a fruitful way of developing and enhancing their social identity (e.g., Johnson & Feldman, 1992; Post, 1987). The notion that high levels of loyalty and solidarity exist within cohesive and powerful terrorist organisations, increase the attractiveness for potential members.

The Internet makes it possible for individuals to recruit themselves without leaving their homes, and spread their radical opinions through chat rooms and other forums. Online, radicalising individuals can obtain membership of a virtual Ummah and find their attitudes reinforced by similar-minded others with whom they can freely interact and exchange information (e.g., Mandaville, 1999; Anderson, 2000). As such, Internet facilitates (self-) recruitment of people whom were otherwise not very likely to get engaged in radical groups, like moderately religious Muslims, shy individuals, and women.

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[2] For a more detailed description of Crenshaw's (1981) deliberations on the causes of terrorism see Work package 3: 'Exploring root and trigger causes of terrorism'

7.2.2. Trigger events

At the individual level, trigger events that accelerate radicalisation are abundant. For instance, individual coping strategies with major life events can make the difference for somebody who is on the verge of radicalising. People who have difficulties coping with traumatic events, like becoming a victim of physical violence or the death of a friend, might respond to such devastating events by delving into depth into radical ideologies. Also, individual perceptions of social and external trigger events can contribute to radicalisation. Somebody who perceives a public speech by the prime minister as provocative is much more likely to respond with anger or aggression than somebody who does not feel offended. Hence, trigger events at individual level are plentiful and unique for each and every individual.

8. VULNERABILITY

After having given a literature-based overview of the most essential causal factors of radicalisation, the question arises which social groups are most affected by these factors. In other words, which social groups are most vulnerable for radicalisation?

Crucially, we have to conclude that it is as impossible as it is undesirable to specifically define the groups that are most susceptible to radicalisation tendencies. First and foremost it is essential to realise that *groups* do not radicalise, *individuals* do. That is, there can be no collective radicalisation when individual group members are not radicalising. The focus of analysis should therefore not be at the group level, but at the individual level. It is often only a minority of a minority who turns to radicalism. For example, according to the latest estimations over 857.000 Muslims live in the Netherlands, comprising approximately five percent of the total population (CBS, 2007). Between 20.000 thousand and 30.000 Muslims are believed to feel attracted to Salafi ideologies and, according to the Dutch minister of Integration, 2.500 are potentially susceptible to violent radicalisation (Kloor, 2007). In other words, in the Netherlands, not even 0.3 percent of the total Muslim population should be considered potentially dangerous. Of this group, only about a dozen have been sentenced for terrorist activities, including the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh. This represents only 0.5 percent of those considered potentially susceptible to violent radicalisation.

Furthermore, it should be stressed that current knowledge about radicalisation processes is essentially limited. Despite the extensive amount of literature on the causes and consequences of radicalisation, fundamental knowledge about who radicals are and, more importantly, why they commit to extreme and often violent ideologies remains lacking. Even more so, preceding research has demonstrated that radicals, let alone those who engage in terrorism, do not match a specified demographic or psychological profile. Not only do they stem from different age categories, socio-economic strata, and cultural backgrounds (e.g., Sageman, 2004; Bakker, 2006), they are generally not characterised by psychological peculiarities or deviating personality types (e.g., Victoroff, 2005). As long as in-depth understanding of the prime grounds and inspirations for radical's attitudes and behaviours is lacking it is impossible to identify vulnerable individuals, let alone categorise them into different groupings. Doing so will only make sense when sufficient knowledge of the underlying mechanisms of radicalisation is available. Therefore, as the only common distinctive at present seems to be that all these individuals have been labelled 'radical', it seems yet unattainable as well as objectionable to denote them in terms of group affiliation.

The most prominent implication that arises from these elaborations is that we can only aim to assess of which groups the individual members seem most susceptible; we cannot draw any conclusions about the vulnerability of social groups as entities. Radicalisation is an individual development. The combinations of causal factors that motivate people to radicalise are unique per person. And the various factors have stronger radicalising effects on some individuals than on others. For example, some people are heavily influenced by social identification issues, while others are prominently inspired by group discussions on political matters.

Secondly, as noted earlier, the discussed factors are assumed to lay the foundation for different types of radicalism, not only Islamic radicalism. Assessing the vulnerability of collective entities, and subsequently developing policy measures that target these particular groups, therefore enhances the risk that groups receive biased and unequal treatment by governmental and societal institutions. Rather than curbing the reasons for radicalisation such measures are likely to enhance stereotyping and stigmatisation, hereby even increasing the likelihood of polarisation and intergroup conflicts.

Consequently, the present study refrains from categorising individuals into potentially vulnerable groups and only aims to shed light on the circumstances that make individuals, in terms of independent actors as well as members of social groups, more likely to be drawn to radicalism. Who are exposed, and how, to which causal factors? The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2007), who did feel the need to look into vulnerability of social groups, introduced a few useful indicators of vulnerability that are generally supported by the findings of the present study. For example, perceptions of marginalisation, exclusion, and discrimination, as well as a generational gap and religious or ethnic persecution increase the susceptibility to radical ideologies, according to the Ministry.

Based on the foregoing discussion on the causal factors of radicalisation, a few general statements about vulnerability can be made. First, people who are exposed to causal factors are more vulnerable to radicalisation than people who are not. For example, people who belong to social groups that are politically, economically, or culturally marginalised and poorly integrated, have greater incentives to rebel than people belonging to groups that are not. Second, as the number of causal factors and intensity of exposure increases, so does the potential for radicalisation. Somebody who belongs to a marginalised social group, who experiences discrimination, who feels humiliated as well as depressed, and who has recently lost a family member, is more likely to turn to radicalism than somebody who is only relatively deprived.

In addition to these general statements, a few particular findings stand out, although it must be noted that these are merely examples of an abundance of indicators of vulnerability. First, high-identifiers with relevant social groups are more vulnerable than low-identifiers. For example, both Muslim and non-Muslim citizens of Europe can be angry about and responsive to perceiving Muslims around the world being humiliated. However, social identification approaches (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Ellemers et al., 2002) predict that in such particular events, Muslims will respond more strenuously to such perceptions because they identify more strongly with the relevant in-group. Moreover, as signalled by the sensationally small proportion of Muslims that is potentially appealed to radical ideologies, only Muslims for whom being a Muslim is of strong emotional significance to their self-concept are likely to be drawn to radicalism when they perceive their in-group to be threatened. This indicates that when defining the most vulnerable members of society, specific attention should be

paid to those who demonstrate strong identification with groups that are heavily affected by causal factors of radicalisation.

Second, the importance of social identification in predicting human behaviour implies that identity-seeking individuals are particularly likely to be appealed by radical groups and ideologies that provide an identity as well as behavioural guidelines. For instance, second-generation Muslims who feel not completely accepted by their parents' generation as well as their 'autochthonous' peers often turn to strong identification with the Ummah (e.g., Buijs et al., 2006). The stronger the need to belong is, the more these individuals will be susceptible to peer pressure and norm-conformity in order to affiliate with a social group. The more, also, they will be motivated to prove faith and loyalty to common values of the group. As such, the need for a satisfactory social identity inherently brings forth the urge to belong to a social group and, subsequently, creates incentives to adapt to radical attitudes and opinions of others. As a consequence, the need to belong might drive young, identity seeking individuals into the arms of potential recruits and radical groups.

In sum, the complexity of the underlying mechanisms that lead to radicalisation signals that it is impossible to identify social groups that are likely to be drawn to radical ideologies. Not only is radicalisation a unique and individual circumstance, the proportion of potentially radicalising individuals is too small and diverse to categorise them into strictly specified groups. Even more so, developing counter-radicalisation policy that targets particular segments of society is likely to generate counterproductive results: unequal treatments of groups can reinforce group boundaries and lead to polarisation and intergroup tensions. Nevertheless, the most prominent conclusion that can be drawn about vulnerability reflects the importance of social identification issues in predicting social behaviour. Individuals who categorise themselves as members of minorities that they perceive to be harmed or threatened in any way, are most likely to respond by means of aggression and negative attitude formation, which could eventually lead to radicalisation and violent outbursts.

9. CASE STUDIES

The present study aimed to give an overview of the most essential causal factors of radicalisation. Based on scholarly and policy literature, we have assembled the most frequently mentioned factors, which have subsequently been

categorised into different measurement levels and dimensions. The question arises whether the causal factors distinguished from the literature reflect the causal factors that have been responsible for causing known radicalisation processes. Perhaps, theoretical elaborations on the dynamics and interactions with which causal factors contribute to radicalisation are not realistic representations of the actual development of radical attitudes and behaviours in people. Not only can scholars have overseen important factors, the reverse can also be true: perhaps factors that scholars presume to be distinctively important contributors to radicalisation might, in fact, have only little effect on the formation of radical ideologies in people.

To obtain first insight into the overlap between theory and practice, five well-documented cases of European radical Islamists are selected and compared to see whether prominent causal factors emerge. That is, we do not aim to determine which factors have played a substantial role in initiating and promoting the radicalisation of these individuals. Rather, we highlight causal factors that appeared to have manifested themselves in the individual's life during the time of radicalisation. For example, the discovery that people have been involved in radical networks during the time of radicalisation can provide an indication that peer pressure played a role in the radicalisation process. The extent to which, and how exactly these mechanisms contributed to the radicalisation process, however, often remains unclear and subject of speculation.

The five selected cases are (1) Mohammed Bouyeri, presumed leader of the Dutch Hofstad Group, (2) Samir Azzouz, another alleged member of the Hofstad Group who was, however, never prosecuted for membership of this particular group, (3) Mohammed Sidique Khan, ring leader of the first London 2005 bombings, (4) his companion Sehehzad Tanweer, and (5) Reichard Reid, also known as the 'shoe bomber'.

Essentially, these case studies do not function as empirical tests of our theoretical model. Rather, they function as a framework with which we attempt to locate the most visible similarities and discrepancies between the different cases of radicalisation. Hence, they serve only as preliminary examples of the causes and catalysts that could play a role in radicalisation processes, and of how a combination of causal factors can lead to radicalisation.

For a variety of reasons, these cases appear to be particularly interesting and suitable for close examination. First and foremost, although only two of them succeeded in doing so, all five radicals seemed motivated to sacrifice their lives for the jihad, an observation we feel legitimises the assumption that they had radicalised to the fullest extent. Second, although detailed information is rare the media have elaborated extensively on these cases, bringing forth sufficient information on which to extract some of the causal factors that seem to have been present during radicalisation. Third, the radicals involved are all home-grown in the sense that they resided and are believed to have radicalised in Europe.

Based on available documentation, mostly newspapers and court documentation, we discuss the most visible causal factors that emerge from the literature and attempt to provide a first illustration of how the underlying causal factors can initiate and contribute to radicalisation.

9.1 Mohammed Bouyeri

Mohammed Bouyeri (1978), alleged leader of the Hofstad Group and murderer of Dutch writer and filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004, was born and raised in Amsterdam. He was an eager and successful student in secondary school (Benschop, 2004) and easily advanced on to studying at college. Friends described him as a shy and intelligent man who could, although he was generally quite calm, be easily upset (Alberts, Chorus, Derix & Olgun, 2005).

Political influences appeared to have played a role in Bouyeri's life during the time when he was radicalising. In a threat letter, which he stabbed with a knife to Van Gogh's body, Bouyeri expresses anger and disgust against Western societies and their government's foreign policies. He calls the Dutch liberal party "thaghoet", which is the common Arab denotation for perceived anti-Islamic political parties and accuses MP Ayaan Hirsi Ali of terrorising Islam (Jansen, 2005).

In addition there are other causal factors that were present at the time and that might have contributed to Bouyeri's process of radicalisation. For example, relative deprivation might have played a role. Essentially, it should be noted that people differ in the extent to which they respond emotionally and physically to relative deprivation. Despite Gurr's prediction that relative

deprivation triggers feelings of frustration that subsequently increase the likelihood of rebellious behaviour (Gurr, 1970), the mere presence of relative deprivation does not inevitably trigger aggression or radicalization in everybody.

Although Bouyeri was relatively well educated himself, his parents had lived in relatively poor conditions in Morocco and after moving to the Netherlands resided in a low-income immigrant neighborhood. Although Bouyeri himself started several studies, he never finished any of them until finally, after five years, he dropped out of college all together (Vermaat, 2005).

During his radicalisation process, Bouyeri's social network appeared to have played an essential role in his life. He was embedded in a group of similar-minded peers and frequently organised meetings and discussions at his home. During these meetings, Bouyeri played videos of decapitations in the Middle East and attempted to persuade his friends to participate in violent Jihad against the West (Alberts et al., 2005). As it seems, the group was strongly influenced by the Syrian Abu Khaled, a charismatic preacher who advocated an orthodox interpretation of Islam (AIVD, 2004[3]). Khaled stayed at Bouyeri's place for a while and is often thought to be spiritual leader of the Hofstad Group (AIVD, 2005:14).

Presumably, catalysts were present that seem to have catapulted Bouyeri's radicalisation process. For example, a few trigger events can be distinguished that might have intensified his radical attitudes and behaviours. First and foremost, as Bouyeri proclaimed himself, the death of his mother had changed him considerably (Alberts et al., 2005). Secondly, over the course of a few years he frequently encountered with the police, which resulted in a twelve-week detention sentence for drawing a knife while fighting his sister's ex-lover. While imprisoned, his fascination with radical Islam grew. Thirdly, Bouyeri was involved in a series of conflicts with the community service where he volunteered as well as the authorities, when they turned down his plans for a new youth centre. Finally, the broadcast of Van Gogh's film Submission, in which Koran verses are painted at half-naked women seemed to have prompted Bouyeri to commit his atrocious crime (e.g., Benschop, 2005).

9.2 Samir Azzouz

Just like Mohammed Bouyeri, Samir Azzouz (1986) is a Dutch national of Moroccan descent who was born and raised in Amsterdam. Being grown up in an immigrant neighborhood in Amsterdam, Azzouz attended the highest attainable level in secondary school but dropped out before graduating. Allegedly, his first encounters with radical Islam occurred at high school, prior to his leave.

Since accurate and credible academic sources of information on Azzouz's life course are relatively scarce, his personal notes provide first-hand insights in his motivations and inspirations. In 2005, a video-testament was found in which Azzouz expresses his disgust with the conditions in which he perceived Muslims around the world to live, and declares his readiness to join the violent jihad. According to Azzouz, he recorded these kinds of videotapes as a 'fun' and 'relaxing' way to vent his frustration (Van Zanten, 2006).

In 2005, Azzouz was arrested and prosecuted on suspicion of attempting to procure heavy firearms and planning terrorist attacks in the Netherlands, a case that was codenamed "Piranha Group" (District Court of Rotterdam, 7 December 2006). Although he has not been prosecuted on charges of membership of terrorist network the Hofstad Group, he is believed to have close ties to most of its members, including Mohammed Bouyeri (e.g., Benschop, 2005).

From his diary, it appears that Azzouz was politically very engaged at the time of writing. He explains how he searched the Internet for answers on questions about conflicts in which Muslims around the world are involved. He started reading about the Palestine-Israeli conflict. The more he read and the more confronting images he saw, the stronger he opposed to Israel (e.g., NOVA, 2006: 4). This diary shows that he became convinced that Muslims around the world are being treated unjustly. Gradually, feelings of hate against Bush, the western allies, and also Arab leaders developed in Azzouz.

As did Bouyeri, Azzouz seemed to identify strongly with the Ummah and his fellow Muslims. In his personal statements, he refers explicitly to the faith of his 'brothers' in the Middle-East. His video testament, autobiography and statements all show feelings of frustration with the 'oppression of Islam', especially by the United States, Israel and their allies (NOS, 2007). In particular, he emphasised strongly with the Muslims involved in the conflicts in Chechnya. In 2003, he travelled together with a friend to Chechnya in order to participate in

violent jihad. The two never reached their destination, however. Once they entered the Ukraine, they were arrested and sent back to the Netherlands.

In the Netherlands, Azzouz appeared to have been embedded in a network of similar minded, radicalising youngsters. He attended the radical Tawheed mosque in Amsterdam, which was also regularly visited by Mohammed Bouyeri and other Hofstad Group members (Van den Eerenbeemt & Kranenberg, 2004). Social dynamics may have influenced him and enhanced latent or explicit radical perceptions. For instance, Azzouz stated that he copied some passages from the video testaments of the London bombers (Van Zanten, 2006), which indicates how his opinions and acts are strongly influenced by others.

Additionally, Azzouz's radicalisation process might have been accelerated by trigger events. In his diary, he explains how seeing the famous picture of Mohammed Al-Dorrah, the young Palestinian boy who could be seen dying in the arms of his father after being caught in a cross-fire, triggers him to delve into depth into the Palestinian situation (NOVA, 2006: 4). Seeing these and other footages of Muslims being shot and their homes wrecked, appeared to have increasingly heated his frustration. Accumulated with the presence of other causes and catalysts, such trigger events may have contributed significantly to Azzouz's radicalisation process.

9.3 Mohammad Siddique Khan

Mohammad Siddique Khan was the oldest of the four suicide bombers that carried out the July 7, 2005 London bombings. Born in Leeds in 1974 as a son of Pakistani immigrants, Mohammad Siddique Khan was allegedly a quiet, studious boy. Khan considered himself Western, and insisted his mainly non-Muslim friends on calling him 'Sid'. Moreover, while he was a teenager, Khan never showed interest in religion and rarely went to a mosque (BBC Radio 4, 2005; Kirby, 2007).

While studying Business at college, Khan got involved in helping disadvantaged youngsters. After college, he took on a job as a school youth worker, and became clearly serious about his faith. He told associates he had turned to religion after a far from blameless youth that had seen him involved in fights, drinking and drug-taking. However, colleagues have stated there was no

suggestion of extremism in the way he talked about his religion (BBC News, 2006[1]; Kirby, 2007).

Khan's commitment to the London bombings appears at least to a certain extent inspired by resentment against the role of western powers in conflicts in the Muslim world, and annoyance over the fact that Muslims are often victims in these conflicts. In 2005, a video emerged in which Khan declares his anger with Western governments who "continually perpetrate atrocities against my people all over the world". He goes on saying that the Muslim Ummah is at war, and he is a soldier, like "thousands like me who have forsaken everything for what we believe" (BBC News, 2005; Kirby, 2007). Khan was not the only Muslim who felt that the West is 'at war' with Islam. As noted earlier, a substantial proportion of British Muslims reported believing that the 'war on terror' is in fact a war on Islam (BC News, 2003). For Muslims who feel alienated and who resent western policies, Islam can become a framework to reject Western societies (Khosrokhavar, 2005). Frustration and resentment might motivate Muslims to delve in-depth into radical interpretations of Islam that can, in turn, serve as a legitimisation for radicalisation and radical behaviour.

Additional causal factors that appear to have been present during Khan's radicalisation process include relative deprivation and network dynamics. Khan was brought up under relatively poor circumstances; his parents lived in a low-income immigrant neighbourhood. Even after he moved, being a youth worker kept him in close contact with deprived youngsters from immigrant families in Leeds, who looked up to him and called him their 'buddy' (McGrory, Evans & Kennedy, 2005; Kirby, 2007). Further, Khan spent much of his time at his workplace, the Hamara Youth Access Point (HYAP), with other young Muslim men – later to become the other three London bombers – discussing religion and politics. The four all attended the Omar 'Stratford Street' Mosque in Leeds. Again, social networks seem to have played a large role in Khan's life during the time of his shift of thinking towards fundamentalism. Not only did these contacts reinforce his own attitudes, he is also believed to have recruited others for jihad. While a lot of the youngsters at the club looked up to their 'mentor', Khan could fairly easily influence their ideas and thoughts (Kirby, 2007).

Khan is alleged to have travelled to Pakistan and Afghanistan, where he is believed to have attended military training camps. The video that was released in 2005 was allegedly recorded during one of these trips. Although it is unsure how

these trips affected him, they might have functioned as catalysts that accelerated and intensified his process of radicalisation. For instance, he might have encountered acquaintances who inspired him to carry out a violent jihadi attack in Britain (The Stationary Office London, 2006). Given the relatively short period between Khan's last trip to Pakistan in 2004 and the July 7th attack, the trips are believed to have solidified Khan's commitment to jihad, providing him with advice and experience, and are therefore often believed to have triggered this London bomber to carry out his attack (Silber & Bhatt, 2007; The Stationary Office London, 2006).

9.4 Shehzad Tanweer

Shehzad Tanweer was one of the four men who blew up themselves in the July 7 2005 London Bombings. Born in 1982, Tanweer grew up in Leeds in a family from Pakistani descent. His father was respected locally as a prominent businessman, making the Tanweer family a relatively prosperous family (Kirby, 2007). Shehzad was a popular high school student and an outstanding sportsman whose primary passion was playing cricket (Whitlock, 2005). Tanweer is remembered as a quiet, sporty young man who seemed to take little interest in the news or political issues. Although he was religious, Tanweer had a lot of non-religious, white friends and was considered well-integrated. Being calm and humble, people did not regard him as a religious fanatic (Kirby, 2007).

As did Mohammad Siddique Khan, Shehzad Tanweer recorded a video statement late 2004, when the two were on a trip to Pakistan. His statement was released to Al-Jazeera shortly after Khan's video statement was broadcasted. Like Khan, Tanweer expresses his resentment against the foreign policies of western governments. The video included statements by Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Tanweer stating that "what you have witnessed now is only the beginning of a string of attacks that will continue and become stronger until you pull your forces out of Afghanistan and Iraq … and until you stop your financial and military support to America and Israel". Tanweer argued that the non-Muslims of Britain deserve such attacks because they voted for a government that "continues to oppress our mothers, children, brothers and sisters in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq and Chechnya" (BBC News, 2006[2]; Fresco, McGrory & Norfolk, 2006).

As with the other cases, network dynamics seem to have played a definite role in Tanweer's life during radicalisation. Tanweer frequently attended several mosques, among which the Umar 'Stratford Street' Mosque, where he met the other London bombers. Moreover, he frequently visited the Hamara Youth Access Point (HYAP), the drop-in centre for teens which was allegedly used for recruitment by Mohammad Siddique Khan, and where politics and religion were discussed extensively (Laville, Gillan & Dilpazier, 2005; Kirby, 2007). In accordance with Sageman's observations, it seems that the consolidation of the London bombers' indoctrination occurred once they came together as a group (Sageman, 2004; Kirby, 2007).

Additionally, Tanweer's participation in the Islamic pilgrimage or Hajj in 2004 seems to have accelerated his radicalisation process. After returning from the Hajj, Tanweer travelled to Pakistan where Mohammad Siddique Khan joined him. It is unclear with whom the two men met in Pakistan, but intelligence services believe Khan and Tanweer encountered several Al-Qaeda figures, or are at least heavily influenced by the Al-Qaeda ideology during this trip – and therefore it is regarded as an event that might have triggered their commitment to the London 2005 bombings (McGrory, 2005; Kirby, 2007).

9.5 Richard Reid

Richard Colvin Reid is a British convert currently serving a life sentence in the United States for attempting to detonate explosives hidden in his shoes on American Airlines flight 63 – a flight from Paris to Miami – in December 2001. Reid is often described as a 'gentle and amiable' man. However, he is also remembered as 'very, very impressionable' (BBC News, 2001) and by times 'depressed and downhearted' (Elliott, 2002).

Born in London as a son of a Jamaican immigrant and an English mother, Reid had a troubled youth with a father spending much of his childhood in jail and his parents divorcing when he was 11. Richard dropped out of school at 16 and got involved in street crime, being jailed for the first time at 17. While in prison in the 1980s, he converted to Islam. The Islam might have provided Reid with a sense of belonging and identity, as it does for many Muslim converts (Zambelis, 2006).

As with the other radicals, Reid appeared to have been resentful against Western governments for intruding in Muslim territory. In an e-mail that he sent to his mother, Reid expresses his dedication to 'defend Islam and Muslim lands' against 'American forces'. He further states that he feels it is his duty to carry out an attack in the 'ongoing war between Islam and disbelief' (US Government statement, 2002). In his e-mail, Reid expressed his solidarity with Muslims who he believes are oppressed and exploited by dominant Western forces elsewhere – a theme that is prominent in the global jihad movement (Kirby, 2007).

People differ in the degree to which they are vulnerable to social pressure, and some people are simply more prone to adapt than others. As mentioned, Reid was labelled very impressionable, which might indicate that others can have had strong influence on his radicalisation process. After leaving prison, Reid became acquainted with Habib Zacarias Moussaoui (BBC News, 2001; Sageman, 2004), a Frenchmen charged with complicity in the 9/11 attacks. Reid started visiting Finsbury Park Mosque in London, notorious for spreading radical messages (Elliott, 2002). However, it must be emphasised that the exact role of these acquaintances remains unclear and that it is unsure to which extent Reid was actually nfluenced by them.

From 1998, Reid started travelling overseas. He appears to have spent a considerable period in Pakistan, and received training in a terrorist camp in Afghanistan. There he established close ties with several Al-Qaeda officials and operatives. It is believed that Reid's involvement in the Al-Qaeda terrorist network has played a substantial role in prompting his commitment to carry out a terrorist attack (Elliott, 2002; Ressa, 2003). Hence, the training he received in Afghanistan and the encounters with extremists abroad may have triggered Reid's attempted attack.

9.6 Patterns

First and foremost, it should be emphasised that the foregoing case studies are merely examples of how causal factors can manifest themselves in the lives of people who are radicalising. The aim of these case studies has not been to test the theoretical framework. Rather, they function as preliminary illustrations of how radicalisation processes can develop and which factors can play a role in the process.

Two comments deserve further notice. First, the descriptions of the developments are probably far from complete. Radicalisation processes are complex and unique, as are their causes. For example, there are probably factors that have not been discussed but nevertheless have played a role in the radicalisation process of the relevant cases. Second, the fact that only five examples are included indicates that no generalisable conclusions can be drawn from these discussions. Studies including larger samples of cases should be conducted in order to gain insight into the factors that predominantly seem to play a role in radicalisation processes. The combinations of factors that cause radicalisation are abundant, diverse and unique for each individual, which implies that no radicalisation processes are the same. Naturally, the same holds for the cases discussed above. There are more differences than similarities between them and the extent to which causes or catalysts contributed to the radicalisation processes differ.

These comments notwithstanding, a few apparent similarities are worth mentioning. Firstly, it appears that although most of them were raised in low-income, immigrant neighbourhoods, neither of the radicals seemed severely deprived themselves. Most of them were well-educated, although some, like Bouyeri and Reid, dropped out before graduating.

Secondly, political grievances seem to be a prominent inspiration for the majority of the cases. All of them have expressed their grievances regarding western interventions in the Islamic world. Hence, social identification mechanisms might have played a substantial role in the radicalisation processes: in each and every case, the particular individual empathised strongly with Muslims in the Middle East, whom most of them referred to as their 'brothers'.

Thirdly, network dynamics and social processes appear to have been very important factors in the lives of all cases. Most individuals frequently attended mosques, were they interacted with similar minded others. Consequently, most of them seem to have been embedded in close, relatively homogeneous networks. Peer pressure, groupthink and the tendency to conform appear to have exerted substantial influence on these individuals. Samir Azzouz, for example, explained how he employed the Internet to gather information about the Israel-Palestine conflict and to chat with others whom he met online or at demonstrations.

The foregoing case studies indicate that in neither of the cases, one causal factor 'dominates' the radicalisation process. Rather, a combination of factors

appears to have been a crucial determinant of the readiness for radicalisation. In addition to causes like political factors, network dynamics and social identification issues, each individual experienced trigger events that could have accelerated the process. Whether it included the death of a relative, imprisonment or confrontation with provocative footage or literature, the lethal mixture of causal factors was divers and unique for each individual.

10. CONCLUSION

The present paper aimed to provide an overview of the most important causes and catalysts of radicalisation. From this inventory it is obvious that radicalisation is a complex phenomenon with similarly complex causes. In order to understand what makes (often young and sometimes well-integrated) Muslims in Europe radicalise we need to acknowledge that none of the causal factors discussed above suffices in explaining radicalisation. Even more so, we can conclude that academics as well as policy makers focused too strongly on finding the causes of radicalisation in externalities like political and economic conditions. Indeed, external factors like Middle Eastern conflicts and poor integration of Muslim communities in Europe appear to serve as significant inspirations for many radicalised Muslims. However, the radicalising effects of external factors should not be overestimated. Only in a complex, cross-level and cross-dimensional interaction can causal factors lead to radicalisation. We argue that external factors shape and constrain the individual's environment but do not have a direct effect on his or her behaviour.

In the present paper we suggest that radicalisation is an individual condition that is prominently caused by a combination of social and individual causal factors. In other words, dynamics in which the individual is directly involved prominently cause radicalisation, which implies that in addition to personal characteristics, the individual's (perceived) position in relation to relevant others affect his or her behaviour.

The complexity and uniqueness of causal factors of radicalisation signal that it is hard and probably undesirable to define social groups that are vulnerable to radicalisation. The proportion of potentially radical individuals is to such an extent small and diverse, that it is impossible to categorise them into groups with specified social boundaries. We can, however, predict that social

identification with allegedly harmed groups is an important indicator of vulnerability to radicalisation. In particular for people for whom group membership of the relevant group is central to the self-concept, threats of the group are likely to increase radicalisation tendencies.

The complex, multidimensional nature of the causes of radicalisation demand scientific research that investigates the underlying mechanisms that lead to individual radicalisation and radical behaviour. Under which conditions can individuals become willing to change their attitudes and behaviour to the extent that violent radicalisation is the outcome? Research should be conducted in which the individual and his or her social environment are the central focus of analysis. More specifically, we point to the necessity of empirical research that investigates the role that social identification plays in the emergence of radicalisation. This social factor appears to intervene in practically each and every relationship between external factors and radicalisation. For example, the degree to which people identify with a relevant social group determines the extent to which they are affected by political, economic, and cultural circumstances. Whereas observing an Afghan Muslim in absolute deprivation is not very likely to lead to radicalisation of a non-Muslim European, a similar observation can be a very painful and provocative experience for a European Muslim who strongly identifies with Afghan Muslims. In other words: it is the *perception* rather than the objective situation that is relevant in the emergence of radicalisation. In order to gain further insight in the relationship between direct and indirect causes of radicalisation it is essential to map the complex interactions between causal factors at different levels and dimensions.

Two frequently mentioned causes of radicalisation are western foreign policies in the Middle East and the poor integration of Muslims in European societies. Research should determine how these factors relate to other causal factors and via which mechanisms they lead to radicalisation. Two examples of testable hypotheses concerning these two causes can be derived from the foregoing discussion on the interactions between causal factors. First, we hypothesise that the relationship between western foreign policies and radicalisation is moderated by social identification and that the stronger people identify with the relevant social group, the stronger the radicalising effect of western intervention in conflicts involving Muslims will be. Second, we hypothesise that the fact that Muslims communities are poorly integrated in

European societies can lead to individual feelings of social exclusion and rejection and that in turn, these feelings can contribute to radicalisation.

Scientific testing of these and similar hypotheses could reveal that the most important causes of radicalisation are to be found more closely to the individual and his direct environment than is often thought. If we want to thoroughly understand why a very small proportion of young, western Muslims turn to radicalism we should pay close attention to what inspires and motivates them. Not only should we listen to what grieves them, we should most prominently understand what they aspire.

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