

Islamist Radicalisation: A Root Cause Model

Tinka Veldhuis & Jørgen Staun

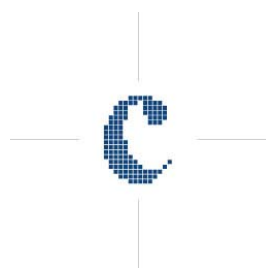
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1. Introduction

The occurrence of the terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004 and in London in 2005 introduced two new concepts to the European public debate: 'Home-grown terrorism' and 'radicalisation'. The realisation that the threat of terrorism did not come from far-away countries but originated in people living as fairly well integrated citizens on European soil shocked the public and sparked a wave of research into the processes of radicalisation that had led the perpetrators to their actions. Since then, home-grown radicalisation of young Muslims in Europe has come to constitute one of the most pressing and elusive challenges for politicians, policy makers, and scientists, who have been confronted with questions about the reasons for and the scope of radicalisation. What is it that triggered these European Muslims to radicalise to the extent that they sought refuge in extreme physical violence, sometimes even sacrificing their own lives while doing so? Which causal factors can explain why violent radicalisation occurs and, equally importantly, why some people do radicalise, while others do not or abandon the radicalisation process in a premature phase?

The urge to understand and tackle the threat of radicalisation is not only rooted in the fear of possible new terrorist attacks. The radicalisation of minority groups can have a seriously disruptive impact upon European societies and intercultural relations, even when, as in most cases, it does not lead to terrorism. As the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) notes in one of its reports 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). Radicalisation can induce social polarisation and what the AIVD refers to as 'intolerant isolationism' (AIVD, 2008: 27; 85). Violent as well as non-violent radicalisation can both threaten the integration and peaceful coexistence of different cultural groups within society. To monitor and limit such negative societal effect it is imperative to gain insights into the causal factors of radicalisation and into the circumstances under which radicalisation is more likely or less likely to occur.

Scientific and policy-related interest in the causal factors of radicalisation has resulted in numerous efforts to define and model the presumed pathways towards radicalism. Among the most prominent outcomes of such efforts has been the development of phase models, which aspire to denote the most important causes of radicalisation and to give a chronological definition of the different stages people allegedly go through in a radicalisation process. Two of the most widely applied phase models have been developed by the Danish Intelligence Services (PET, 2009) and by the New York Police Department (Silber & Bhatt, 2007). PET's model observes radicalisation as a top-down process in which an external 'radicaliser' plays an important role in influencing the individual through a process of change that involves changed behaviour, the narrowing of social life and moral hardening. In contrast, NYPD's model observes radicalisation as a bottom-up process in which the individual begins to explore radical ideologies, intensifies his beliefs and accepts his individual duty to participate in jihad. Phase models often contain different perspectives on radicalisation but their aim is the same: to capture the chronology of radicalisation. Due to a lack of alternatives, such models have been employed as the core foundation upon which policy makers build their de-radicalisation policies. In the present study, we provide an extensive critique of phase models and argue that not only do they make essential methodological errors that cast doubts on their conclusions, but that they also run the risk of implicitly discriminating against and stigmatising minority groups. Specifically, we argue that phase models suffer from a selection bias that leads them to select only those cases of observation that have a specific value on the dependent variable – cases of successful radicalisation – and that render them incapable of distinguishing between people who radicalise for ideological reasons, and people who radicalise as a product of social interaction dynamics. As a result, phase models run the risk of applying too general characteristics to attribute radical identities to people who are not necessarily radicalising, let alone planning terrorist attacks. In doing so, they stigmatise and discriminate against minority groups, which might lead to counter-productive effects and motivate rather than prevent people from radicalising.

To overcome these concerns about phase models, we suggest that it is essential to examine the *causes* rather than the *courses* of radicalisation, and in doing so to perceive radicalisation as an 'embedded individual process' that occurs in the individual within a specific social and environmental context. For that purpose, we introduce a theoretical model of the causes of radicalisation that sheds some light on the sociological and (socio-) psychological circumstances under which radicalisation is likely to occur, as well as on the circumstances under which it is less likely to occur. With our explanatory model, we aspire to provide researchers and policy makers with a solid foundation from which to further analyse the causes of radicalisation and, subsequently, to develop measures to counter their negative effects.

1.1. Questions and aims

What are the most prominent causal factors of 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 issues (Choudhury, 2007, Roy, 2004), poor political and socio-economic integration (Buijs, Demant & Hamdy, 2006), feelings of humiliation (Stern 1999, 2003; Juergensmeyer, 2000; Richardson, 2006), and other psychological factors (for an overview, see Victoroff, 2005). However, although all these factors can contribute to radicalisation, none suffices independently to explain the drastic change in attitudes and behaviour that well-integrated individuals like the 2005 London bombers and Theo van Gogh's murderer, Mohammed Bouyeri, went through.

The aim of the present study is two-fold. First, we provide a critique of the phase models that describe the alleged chronology in radicalisation processes. Second, we introduce an alternative explanatory root cause model of radicalisation. Specifically, we distinguish macro-level factors from micro-level factors and suggest that causal factors of radicalisation are interdependent in shaping the circumstances under which radicalisation is more – or less – likely to occur. The question is not only *which* factors contribute to radicalisation; the question is *when and how* they are likely to contribute to radicalisation. Hence, the present study aims to answer the following research questions:

- What are the causal factors that contribute to radicalisation among Muslims in the Western world?
- How do factors at the macro level and factors at the micro level relate to each other in contributing to radicalisation?
- How can an understanding of the causal factors of radicalisation assist in countering and preventing radicalisation?

To answer these questions, the present study outlines a theoretical framework with which the causal factors of radicalisation can be analysed. To sketch a comprehensive picture of how causal factors can lead to radicalisation we will apply this theoretical framework specifically to cases of Islamic radicalisation in post-9/11 Europe, due to the present importance to society of understanding this type of radicalisation. This does not mean, however, that the framework cannot be used to examine other types of radicalisation as well, like left-wing or right-wing extremism. On the contrary, we expect that the causal factors that contribute to different types and directions of radicalisation are to a large extent the same and that whether an individual comes to adhere to left-wing, right-wing, or religious-political ideologies is individual and context-specific. We aim to introduce a root cause model of radicalisation that can serve as a starting point to derive specific hypotheses about the underlying mechanisms that are responsible for causing radicalisation.

Moreover, it is important to stress that the causal factors that may contribute to radicalisation are abundant and may vary per individual. We do not aim to give a full, all-encompassing account of the factors that can be responsible for radicalisation. Rather, tacking stock of the literature from various disciplines, including sociology, psychology, economics, the political sciences, anthropology and international relations studies, we summarise the most frequently mentioned theories on how terrorism, radicalisation, and other related forms of behaviour (e.g., deviant behaviour, crime, and cult formation) come into being.

1.2. Radicalisation defined

Although radicalisation has increasingly been subjected to scientific studies, a universally accepted definition of the concept is still to be developed. Nevertheless, faced with pressure to tackle radicalisation, policy makers have developed a few definitions. Definitions of radicalisation most often centre around two different foci: 1) on violent radicalisation, where emphasis is put on the active pursuit or acceptance of the use of violence to attain the stated goal; 2) on a broader sense of radicalisation, where emphasis is placed on the active pursuit or acceptance of far-reaching changes in society, which may or may not constitute a danger to democracy and may or may not involve the threat of or use of violence to attain the stated goals.

In the present study we examine both ‘violent’ and ‘non-violent’ radicalisation processes, for a few methodological and theoretical reasons. First, only examining cases of violent radicalisation in the analysis leads to a selection bias that hinders the making of valid statements about causality. In order to draw conclusions about how hypothesised variables are related to

violent radicalisation one should also examine how they are related to counter-suggestive outcomes, like non-violent radicalisation.¹ Arguably, the underlying mechanisms which are responsible for causing non-violent radicalisation – an attitudinal and behavioural transformation – could also to a large extent be responsible for causing violent radicalisation. The interesting question then becomes: what is it that makes some radicals turn to violent methods and others to non-violent methods to achieve their goals? By examining how hypothesised causal factors of radicalisation relate to both violent and non-violent outcomes, one might gain an insight into the crucial ingredient – if there is any – that makes radicalisation take a violent course.

Second, uncontested empirical material stemming from radicalisation processes of known successful terrorists is very scarce. Contemporary scientific knowledge of the sociological and psychological processes that preceded these violent outbursts is too limited to draw generalisable conclusions about the core fundamentals upon which violent radicalisation processes are grounded. It is therefore advisable to broaden the scope and to look for answers in related areas – non-violent radicalisation is one such area.

To define violent radicalisation we follow the Danish intelligence services (PET) who describe violent radicalisation as ‘a process, by which a person to an increasing extent accepts the use of undemocratic or violent means, including terrorism, in an attempt to reach a specific political/ideological objective’ (PET, 2009, p. 1). In defining non-violent radicalisation we follow the Dutch intelligence services (AIVD), who apply a broader definition of radicalisation and define it as ‘the (active) pursuit of and/or support to far-reaching changes in society which may constitute a danger to (the continued existence of) the democratic legal order (aim), which may involve the use of undemocratic methods (means) that may harm the functioning of the democratic legal order (effect).’ Supplemented by: ‘a person’s (growing) willingness to pursue and/or support such changes himself (in an undemocratic way or otherwise), or his encouraging others to do so’ (AIVD, 2004, pp. 13-14). The difference between the two definitions is that the definition by the Danish intelligence services (PET) focuses more on the action taken to attain a political or other goal – that is the willingness to use violence. The definition by the Dutch intelligence services (AIVD), on the other hand, is broader in the sense that it deals with the willingness to actively support far-reaching changes in society – by any means, also but not exclusively by violent ones. Thus, it essentially focuses on the undemocratic views or opinions of radicals, which may or may not be pursued by violence.

1 A more detailed discussion of this selection bias, also referred to as ‘selection on the dependent variable’ (King, Keohane & Verba, 1994), will follow in the next chapter in light of our criticism of the use of phase models of radicalisation.

The definition by the AIVD thereby essentially resembles the definition by the European Commission, which defines violent radicalisation as follows: ‘The phenomenon of people embracing opinions, views and ideas which could lead to acts of terrorism’ (EC, 2006).

In general, definitions of radicalisation agree that radicalisation comprises a gradual process that, although it can occur very rapidly, has no specifically defined beginning or end state. Rather it is an individual development that is initiated by a combination of factors and comprises a drastic change in attitudes and behaviour. Moreover, although the threshold between radicalisation and terrorism is sometimes vague, it is important to stress that these concepts are thoroughly distinct from each other. The present study follows the Council of the European Union in defining terrorism, which refers to terrorism as ‘intentional 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’ (European Union, Council Framework Decision of 13 June 2002 on combating terrorism). Terrorism is above all a political tool that, irrespective of its success rate, is used in an attempt to bring about political or societal change. Radicalisation, on the other hand, is a process of transformation that in itself does not serve a clearly defined purpose and that does not necessarily have to be related to violence. Violent radicalisation might encompass the process of adopting a belief system that promotes violent action, but this does not imply that people who radicalise also *act* violently. As Robert Pape, one of the most influential scholars of suicide terrorism, states: ‘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). In most cases, people who radicalise refrain from engaging in terrorist activity. Terrorism is one of the worst possible, but nevertheless avoidable, outcomes of violent 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 Muslims to become committed to intense *dawa* or missionary practices or strong religious devotion. In some cases, these forms of behaviour forebode terrorist engagement. In others, they do not.

To further restrict the scope of analysis we examine only those – violent as well as non-violent – processes of radicalisation which, either through a belief system or actual behaviour, pose a threat to safety in European societies. For example, generating or distributing radical material to radicalise others, inciting jihad or recruiting for radical organisations, all involve acts that have

potentially disruptive effects on society and are therefore included in our analysis. In fact, in 2007, the Copenhagen City Court convicted Said Mansour and sentenced him to three years and six months imprisonment for the incitement of terror through the distribution of books, leaflets, CDs and DVDs on jihad and of condoning others to hold radical views. Also, alleged members of the Dutch Hofstad Group were convicted in 2005 for the mere possession and distribution of radical documents. The court judged that the network's members had incited jihad with terrorist intent, indicating that the Dutch legal system perceived these acts as potential forebodes 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, it found insufficient proof that these acts would inevitably result in terrorist engagement and that the Hofstad Group was a terrorist organisation (Jensma, 2008). This illustrates the delicate threshold between radicalisation, a transformation involving a shift in attitudes and behaviour towards radicalism, and intended or actual engagement in terrorist activity. Although the court did consider the suspects a potential threat to society, it could not be deduced that they were to become terrorists.

To conclude, although many definitions of radicalisation have been developed, they generally emphasise different relevant aspects of the process of radicalisation. In the present study we focus on radicalisation that includes every behaviour or ideological expression, including incitement, the distribution of radical material, recruitment, and persuading others to hold radical views, that potentially pose a threat to safety in Western societies, either by leading to terrorism or by threatening integration and facilitating the spread of radical, potentially violent ideologies.

1.3. The puzzle of home-grown Muslim radicalisation

Radicalisation among Muslims in the Western world, as manifested in terrorist attacks like 9/11, the 2005 London suicide bombings, and the assassination of the Dutch film director Theo van Gogh, has proved to be a puzzle for scholars of radicalisation and terrorism. First of all, it is a bewildering notion that most radicals have strikingly ordinary psychological and demographic profiles. Common suggestion often advocates that radicals, especially the terrorists they sometimes become, must be mentally ill or psychopathic. Why else would their hate-consuming attitudes and behaviour take such exorbitant, such radical proportions? However, investigations of the psychological profiles of radicals have easily refuted this proposition as a myth. In general radicals, even suicide terrorists, show no signs of mental

derangement or psychopathology (Post, 1998; Reich, 1998; Silke, 1998; Crenshaw, 2000).

In addition, the demographic profiles of radical Muslims in the Western world show that they are generally not poor, religiously fanatic, or desperate due to suffering from extreme poverty, political oppression, or other deprived circumstances. Rather, radicalisation among Muslims in the West has a home-grown dimension in the sense that many radical Muslims have been born and raised in the relative prosperity and freedom of a modern, democratic country. They are often, in fact, quite well integrated and indistinguishable from the general population. They speak European languages, have been educated in Europe and have often had a relatively normal upbringing without – as far as researchers could tell – outstanding childhood traumas or conspicuous religious practices (e.g., Roy, 2008). Indeed, research into the demographic characteristics of jihadi terrorists in Europe and around the world has shown that these radicals were generally middle-class, educated young men who often had wives and children (Sageman, 2004; Bakker, 2006).

Second, what makes radicalisation among Muslims in the Western world even more puzzling is the notion that radical Muslims often legitimise their radical convictions and acts in the perceived suffering of their ‘Muslim brothers’ in the Islamic world. Their radicalisation seems to be an objection against perceived wrongdoing against others, rather than against themselves – that is, ‘humiliation by proxy’ as Khosrokhavar (2005) argues. Video messages and other documents distributed by radicalised Muslims like Mohammad Siddique Khan (the alleged ringleader of the 2005 attacks on the London tube system) and Mohammed Bouyeri (Van Gogh's murderer) invariably refer to Middle Eastern countries like Palestine and Afghanistan, where Muslims are perceived to live in humiliation and a constant threat of war. Home-grown radicalisation therefore often seems to comprise an altruistic component in the sense that, apparently, radicalising Muslims in Europe do not necessarily have to be personally deprived or victimised in order to radicalise and turn to violence as a political tool to change the status quo.

The psychological and demographic ‘ordinariness’ of radical Muslims in the Western world, combined with the notion that their anger and frustration often seems to be a response to perceived situations in which they are not even personally involved in, inevitably raises questions about the complexity of the causal factors that are responsible for causing radicalisation. Above all, it is evident that the sociological and socio-psychological processes that determine who becomes a radical and who does not are utterly complex and that the phenomenon of home-grown radicalisation can only be understood if

we comprehend the convoluted interplay between contextual processes on the one hand, and social and psychological processes on the other.

1.4. A word of caution

‘There are probably few areas in the social science literature in which so much is written based on so little research’ Alex Schmid and Albert Jongman noted back in 1988 after making a comprehensive review of the field of terrorism studies (Schmid & Jongman, 1988). A critique shared by Andrew Silke (2001) who compared the two leading peer-reviewed journals on terrorism studies, ‘Terrorism and Political Violence’ and ‘Studies in Conflict and Terrorism’, over the period from 1995 to 1999. Here he issued a warning that there was a risk of a circular process in which researchers referred to other researchers where the ‘results’ were based on little founding knowledge (Silke, 2001). The situation has not improved a great deal since then. Much, if not all, of the research on terrorism and radicalisation has been marked by a certain lack of academic soundness, at least in the immediate period after September 11th 2001 - as Silke and other well established researchers note (Silke, 2004, Horgan, 2003, Ranstorp, 2006, Taylor & Horgan, 2006).

Furthermore, the hallmark of much of the research on radicalisation after 9/11, 2001, especially regarding violent radicalisation, is that it essentially has been a post hoc discussion: A (suicide) bomb explodes in a European city where people, who coincidentally happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, are killed. After which the public starts asking what caused the offender to blow up these passers-by and possibly him or herself. Subsequently, the authorities and researchers try to identify the steps, or phases, which led the offender and his or her possible accomplices to carry out such an activity. The attack is then compared with other past and presumed relevant (attempts at) attacks and possible commonalities are identified. Researchers thus try to determine what happened on the way by moving backwards in time from when the act was committed. This knowledge is then put into models that describe these processes. Initially, this is a necessary way to go about it, if one is to create knowledge in this field. However, especially in a research field as relatively young and delicate as radicalisation and terrorism studies, this backward reasoning is accompanied by considerable theoretical and methodological problems.

First of all, the empirical data that constitute the basis of these models are extremely sparse, at least if we are focusing on Islamist-inspired attacks in Western Europe after 11 September 2001. In order to understand why and how these terrorist attacks occurred, we need information about the developments and changes that the terrorists went through before committing the attack. This implies that we do not only need data on their demographic

characteristics, but that we also need to understand the social and psychological transformation that preceded their decision to commit a terrorist attack. It goes without saying that obtaining an accurate understanding of how and why these changes occurred is all but impossible. Thus scientists struggle with formulating and empirically testing sound theories on how radicalisation comes into being. Consequently, the lack of data raises questions about the extent to which empirical suggestions about the process of radicalisation can be generalised. For example, this problem has partly led to a fervent debate about whether and to what extent one can draw parallels between right-wing and left-wing terrorism and religiously-inspired terrorism, such as the Islamist-inspired terrorism which is the main focus of the radicalisation models that are advanced in the current debate. It has also led to an equally fervent debate about whether and to what extent we can compare the various Islamist-inspired terrorist attacks - and their previous radicalisation processes - which have hit Europe since 11 September 2001. Does it, for example, make a difference that the bombers in the attack on the London Underground and a bus route on 7 July 2005 were British citizens with a predominantly Pakistani background (one had a West Indian background and was born in Jamaica), while the Madrid bombers were overwhelmingly Moroccans or Spanish-Moroccans who had lived and worked in Spain for several years? Similarly, what is the role of the local and national context of the attacks, and thus of the radicalisation processes that the examined subjects presumably went through, and how are these contextual influences reflected in the radicalisation models that arose in the wake of these attacks?

Secondly, the fact that scholars are using terrorist attacks as a starting point to examine radicalisation processes implies that much of the attention in the research on radicalisation is placed on the violently 'successful' cases. Not only is it impossible to explain violent radicalisation by examining only cases of violent radicalisation, it is of equal theoretical importance to examine those radicals who abandoned the radicalisation process before becoming violent or who simply refrained from violence altogether. Comparing cases of violent radicalisation with people who for one reason or another refrained from using violence would enhance our understanding of when and how such processes are more or less likely to develop.

All in all, the lack of empirical data and the alleged lack of academic solidity within large parts of the field of radicalisation and terrorism studies have also had an effect on the models which the authorities in many European countries have designed to identify and tackle the phenomenon. These models, which those who developed them presumably knew, were simplifications of a complex reality. But a simplification one had to live with because there was a clear need for knowledge in this field - and an equally clear political desire for action. The most severe problem with the simple

phase models - and in fact with all other kinds of models of radicalisation processes - has been some of the real-life use thereof. For instance, phase models have been used to launch relatively large de-radicalisation programmes at the state level or by municipalities.² Furthermore, the phase models have been used in court cases to establish proof that defendants were on the brink of using terror. Thus, the phase model presented by the Danish intelligence services PET, which will be more thoroughly discussed in the next chapter, was used in court in the so-called 'Glostrup' case against the 18-year old defendant Elias Ibn Hsain who was charged with terrorism. Here the prosecutor - by referring to the large quantities of 'radical material' on the defendant's computer and by his contacts, meetings, and his repeated viewing of radical videos, such as decapitation videos and clips with wounded Muslims - tried to convince the jury that the defendant was in the so-called 'hardening' phase (phase four in the radicalisation process) and that he was thus very close to committing an act of terror. In another Danish terror case, the so-called 'Glasvej' case, the prosecution argued, without referring explicitly to the phase model, that the accused were so radicalised that it was merely a matter of time before they acted, and that it had been proved that they had the will and the capacity to commit terror.³ However, from a research point of view it is worth noting that the level of knowledge, which today exists on radicalisation processes, is far from being so clear and solid that it should be used as conclusive proof in court cases *unchallenged*.

2 In Denmark the municipalities in Copenhagen base most of their work on de-radicalisation on a combination of a model from the Danish Intelligence and Security Services (PET) and the so-called Amsterdam model, developed by Marco Zannoni from the Dutch Institute for Safety, Security and Crisis Management (COT). The Danish Ministry of Integration uses a combination of a demand-supply and breeding-ground model inspired by the Dutch NTCb. This model is furthermore the basis of the de-radicalisation initiatives by the city of Amsterdam.

3 Interview with Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen, DIIS, 17/2-09. For further reading (in Danish): 'Anklager får lov til at føre omstridte vidner', Berlingske Tidende, 7. december 2006, '01.02.07: 'Det er trist, men eneste mulige forklaring er terror', Berlingske Tidende, 14. marts, 2007, 'Anklager: Vi vil ikke dæmonisere', Information, 9. januar 2008 eller 'Anklager udpenslede halshugning', 8. januar 2008, TV2-nyhederne, <http://nyhederne-dyn.tv2.dk/krimi/article.php/id-9947929.html>.

1.5. Outline

The general outline of the present study is as follows. Chapter two discusses some of the most widely used phase models, the top-down model used by the Danish intelligence services (PET, 2009) and the bottom-up model used by the New York Police Department (NYPD) (Silber & Bhatt, 2007). We discuss the strengths and weaknesses of such phase models and argue that they suffer from a few serious methodological and substantive shortcomings. After this discussion, we introduce the root cause model as an alternative way to examine the causes of radicalisation. Here we start by defining the two measurement levels (i.e., the macro level and the micro level, the latter being further subdivided into social and individual factors), into which causal factors of radicalisation are categorised (Chapter three). We will explain how these measurement levels relate to each other and provide a framework with which these categories of factors and their contribution to radicalisation can be analysed. In the subsequent chapters, chapters four to six respectively, we will elaborate more in detail on each measurement level of causal factors and provide the most frequently mentioned theories of causal factors on each level. Specifically, Chapter four describes causal factors at the macro level, Chapter five deals with micro-level factors in the social sphere, and Chapter six describes micro-level factors in the individual sphere. Chapter seven offers some conclusions and implications. We discuss how the root cause model can assist in understanding how individuals can become vulnerable to radicalisation. Additionally, we will offer some recommendations for researchers and policy makers on how the root cause model can function as a starting point for the development of future progress in the investigation and countering of radicalisation.

2. Phase models of radicalisation

The awareness that radicalisation among Muslims in the Western world cannot be attributed to independent, straightforward causes like mental derangement, religious fanaticism, or poverty has turned scientific attention to alternative, more complex explanations of radicalisation. Most prominently, scholars have been consumed with describing the chronology of the different phases people ostensibly go through in the process of radicalisation. Stemming from the idea that once we understand every next step towards radicalism, we can find ways to prevent this next step from occurring, these efforts have resulted in synoptic process models that aim to capture the beginning and end state of a radicalisation process, and every state in between. For instance, Borum (2004) observed four phases in the process of ideological development. Accordingly, the radicalisation process starts by (1) a group or individual defining a particular event or circumstance as undesirable. Later, the undesirable condition is not only (2) framed as unfair, but also (3) attributed to the responsibility of a particular person or group, which is subsequently (4) deemed as bad, so that aggression towards that target is more easily justified. However, in the coming section we argue that these phase models suffer major methodological and substantive shortcomings that render them unsuitable as a solid foundation on which to develop de-radicalisation programmes. We will illustrate these shortcomings in a discussion of two of the most prominent phase models.

2.1. Simple phase models

One of the most widely used phase models is the so-called top-down model used by, for example, the Danish intelligence services (PET). As shown in the model (Figure 1) the PET phase model distinguishes different degrees or stages of the radicalisation process, where the person becomes more and more radicalised the more phases he or she goes through. The process starts by being ‘susceptible’ to radical ideas and meeting a ‘radicaliser’, and advances on to new religious practices and changed behaviour. Subsequently, the process involves a narrowing of the person’s circle of friends and family and results in the so-called ‘hardening phase’, which includes ‘reviewing of and interest in very violent videos’ displaying terrorists in battle and the killing of hostages.

Figure 1: PET phase model
 Danish Security and Intelligence Services (PET, 2009)

<i>Phase 1</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>	<i>Phase 3</i>	<i>Phase 4</i>
Contact between ‘radicalisator’ and a person open to radical ideas	Gradual change of behaviour – change in religious behaviour, new communication habits (internet)	Narrowing of social life to include only like-minded individuals – social bonds with family and former friends are cut off or restricted	The radical often goes through a process of (moral) hardening – by watching very violent videos and combat scenes

The greatest strength of a phase model such as the PET model is the model's ranking of the radicalisation process in distinct consecutive phases, for each of which specific de-radicalisation activities or preventative measures can be designed. In phase one it is for example possible to focus a prevention strategy on the so-called ‘radicaliser’, i.e. well known radical imams who seek to convert young Muslims either in mosques, in religious training places or in prisons. Thus, the authorities could, for example, choose to increase the monitoring of known radical imams, limit their freedom of movement, facilitate so-called ‘preventive conversations’ with them, persuade religious councils to dismiss them or transfer them from serving in mosques; the government could also exclude non-certified imams from preaching in mosques and prisons – such as is the case in France. In phase two, the authorities can try to identify young people who display ‘changed behaviour’ and try to get them back on track. In phase three, the authorities could ask social services departments, school teachers, recreation professionals and the

like to keep an eye on the young people who suddenly show changed behaviour and no longer see their old ‘non-radical friends’ but only like-minded radicals, and so on.

A second widely used model has been developed by the NYPD (Silber & Bhatt, 2007), which has distinguished four distinct phases that compose the radicalisation process of radical Muslims in the West. The NYPD model is a so-called bottom-up model, which focuses on radicalisation as a bottom-up process.

Figure 2: NYPD phase model.

<i>Pre-radicalisation</i>	<i>Self-identification</i>	<i>Indoctrination</i>	<i>Jihadization</i>
Point of departure: Mostly ‘unremarkable’, ‘ordinary jobs’, ‘little, if any criminal history’	Individuals ‘begin to explore Salafi Islam, gradually gravitate away from their old identity and begin to associate themselves with like-minded individuals’. Catalyst: cognitive opening or crisis. Triggers: economic, social (discrimination), political, personal	The individual ‘progressively intensifies his beliefs, wholly adopts Jihadi-Salafi ideology’ and concludes that militant ‘action is Required’	Group members ‘accept their individual duty to participate in jihad’. The group begins ‘operational Planning’

As can be seen in Figure 2, Phase 1, the Pre-Radicalisation phase, describes the individual’s world in terms of lifestyle, socio-economic status, and religion at the departure point towards radicalisation. Often, these Muslims are male, second or third-generation immigrants, stemming from middle-class backgrounds, having ‘ordinary’ lives and jobs, and with little, if any, criminal history (Silber & Bhatt, 2007, p. 23). Phase 2, the Self-Identification phase, describes how the individual gradually opens up to a new interpretation of the world and starts to explore radical Islam. From this point onwards, the individual begins to gravitate away from his or her former identity and to associate with like-minded individuals. In Phase 3, the Indoctrination phase, the individual wholly adopts ‘Jihadi-Salafi ideology’ and concludes that militant Jihad is required against all that contradicts the extremist agenda. It is at this stage in the radicalisation process that individuals redefine their direction in life towards achieving ‘the greater good’ (ibid., p. 36). Phase 4, lastly, the Jihadization phase, entails self-designation as holy warriors and

actual engagement in violence. That is, in the Jihadization phase, the planning, preparation and execution of violent jihad or terrorist attacks becomes the main objective (ibid., p. 43).

Although both models aim to capture the chronology of radicalisation in successive phases, the models differ considerably concerning several aspects. First, in the NYPD model, the radicalisation process is somewhat longer than the one in PET's model, since it starts before people have become radical - presumably to underline that radicals are not psychopaths or insane, but 'normal' people who have been led or have led themselves astray.

Second, the models differ in perceiving radicalisation as a top-down process (PET) or a bottom-up process (NYPD). On the one hand, PET's model emphasises the role of a 'radicaliser' - an outside person, such as a radical imam or a person from an existing terrorist network - as a top-down force who influences the individual towards radicalisation. However, this role model assigned to the 'radicaliser' is a problematic feature of PET's model. The model presumes that a person involved in a radicalisation process has been inspired or persuaded to do so by an outside force, a person or an organisation - rather than this being of his or her own doing. The institutional person, as it were, 'entices' a person astray, or even 'brainwashes' an otherwise normally functioning person to enrol in a radicalisation process - not unlike the classic role in top-down intelligence service models assigned to the 'recruitment officer'. Such a role probably reflects the process of radicalisation in some cases, especially in cases involving top-down recruitment for radical or terrorist organisations. However, it does not necessarily fully reflect the joining process, which Mark Sageman (2004) describes with his 'bunch of guys' concept: 'The process of joining the jihad ... is more of a bottom-up than a top-down activity'. This bottom-up process is better explained in the NYPD model than in the PET model⁴, which perceives radicalisation as a process of 'self-radicalisation' in which factors such as a cognitive opening or a personal crisis are assumed to be susceptible to a radicalisation process.

A further difference between the models is the emphasis in the NYPD model on the shift between phases three and four from generality (somebody should do something) to specificity (I should do something), as well as the focus on operational planning, which is also included in the model's final phase. That a

4 The difference between the PET and the NYPD model has also been at the centre of a heated academic controversy between Mark Sageman, who advocates a bottom-up process, and another American terror scholar, Bruce Hoffman, who argues for a top-down process. See Sageman, 2008; Hoffman, 2008a; 2008b, Hoffman & Sageman, 2008.

person accepts that he or she personally must take responsibility for getting 'something done' - rather than doing nothing and hoping that somebody else 'does something' - is likely to play a pivotal role in relation to the question of what happens in the so-called process 'from thought to action'.

2.2. A critique of phase models

Phase models of radicalisation like those discussed by Borum (2004), the PET (2009), the NYPD (Silber & Bhatt, 2007), and many others (see, for example, Inaba, 2004; Sageman, 2004; Taarnby, 2005), aspire to define the chronology of radicalisation. These models were among the first that aimed to capture the radicalisation process in consecutive phases. The fact that scientific knowledge about the causal factors of radicalisation is still limited imposes an important constraint on developing such models. As such, it should be acknowledged that these models provide important insights into the phases which people can go through on the path towards radicalisation.⁵ However, it can be argued that all these models suffer from major methodological and substantive shortcomings, of which two of the most severe ones will be discussed in the coming section.

First, simple phase models make a methodological error referred to as 'selection on the dependent variable' (e.g., King, Keohane & Verba, 1994; Geddes, 2003), which leads the researcher to select cases with a particular value on the dependent variable to find patterns that result in the same outcome. Just as it is impossible to explain the outbreak of revolutions by studying only revolutions, or to explain why books become bestsellers by examining only bestsellers, it is impossible to explain radicalisation only by cases of radicalisation. Phase models, however, do exactly this. They select observations of 'successful' radicalisation and start reasoning backwards to describe the radicalisation process which these radicals have presumably gone through. This selection procedure will produce biased results and is therefore unsuitable for deducing or testing hypotheses about causal inferences. To examine how hypothesised variables relate to a particular outcome on the dependent variable, we should allow for at least some variation on the dependent variable. That is, we also have to examine how they relate to counter-suggestive outcomes. For example, if we hypothesise that deprivation leads to violent radicalisation, we also need to know whether it sometimes leads to a) no radicalisation at all, b) non-violent radicalisation, or c) other counter-suggestive outcomes, like peaceful demonstrations. Phase models cannot explain why some people radicalise in a non-violent direction,

5 For a look at other examples of phase models, see for example Wiktorowicz, 2004; Lofland & Stark, 1965.

abandon the radicalisation process at a premature stage, or do not radicalise at all. Hence they assume that radicalisation is a linear process that follows more or less slavishly a development from phase one to phase two, three, and four, regardless of background, political, cultural and social conditions in the country or region at the given time, and regardless of the individual's personal history and life path. Thus simple phase models assume that if a person performs acts which are categorised as phase four behaviour – the so-called ‘hardening’ phase in PET's model where the person for example watches extremely violent videos of warring terrorists and the beheadings of hostages – he has then been through the three earlier phases and is to be considered as a highly radicalised person, who could be on the brink of committing terror. This assumption, however, is quite unrealistic; the fact that one is in a particular phase of the radicalisation process – assuming that one is indeed in that phase – does not imply that one will automatically move on to the next phase. As soon as people follow a different track as described in the phase models, these models lose every explanatory power.

The second critique of phase models is of a more substantive nature. Phase models run the risk of applying ‘statistical discrimination’ due to their inability to prove that the phases they describe apply only to successful cases of (violent) radicalisation. Statistical discrimination occurs in this context when general traits are used as a signal of other unobserved traits that relate to radicalisation. In phase models, people who appear to be in a particular phase of the model will be suspected of radicalising towards violent outcomes, even though people who are not radicalising at all, or who are radicalising but not in a violent direction, might display similar behaviour – phase models at least cannot prove otherwise. Consequently, innocent people might be singled out on the basis of race, religion, or particular behaviour and suspected of radicalisation.

Statistical discrimination is often accepted when the probability of ‘success’ is large, or when the targeted group is large enough and not a sensitive minority. Consider, for instance, how it is generally tolerated that smokers are charged more for life insurance, even though many smokers outlive many non-smokers (e.g., Posner, 2005). Indeed, identifying high-risk groups based on characteristics that people in a process of radicalisation seem to have in common seems optimal from a counter-radicalisation perspective because it maximises the expected rate of rightfully identifying radicals among the investigated individuals. However, when statistical discrimination is aimed at small or sensitive groups it becomes controversial. Here is where phase models go wrong: by using rather general traits (e.g., cues that one is in a particular phase of the radicalisation process) to identify potentially violent radicals they do not only target a group that is politically very sensitive, but also incredibly small. Only a very small percentage of the population radicalise, and of those an even smaller percentage is willing to engage in

terrorism. The majority never reach that point. They might abandon the process at different time points or fail to join a radical movement that facilitates them with the opportunity to plan and commit an attack. Phase models, however, point out rather unspecific characteristics such as ‘adopting new religious behaviour’ or ‘changed behaviour’ as a signal that one is on the brink of becoming a terrorist. Such characteristics might also very well be related to other, non-violent outcomes. Hence, if we follow phase models, many individuals will have a relatively high possibility of being perceived as a potential threat, even when they are not radical at all. Doing so might have counter-productive results because it limits people’s right to be free of discrimination. People generally resent being pointed out as a potentially violent radical based on rather unspecific characteristics. The perception of being discriminated against could undermine loyalty to society and the authorities, and intensify rather than diminish motivations for radicalisation. The cause of the suffering of many moderate Muslims is not the policy makers, but the few individuals who are radical and who make all other people who share certain characteristics look bad. By pointing out these, rather general, characteristics as a signal of radicalisation, phase models risk creating radical identities for people who do not necessarily have to be radical, and might result in self-fulfilling prophecies.

To overcome difficulties related to selection bias and statistical discrimination, explanations of radicalisation should be more attuned to individual circumstances that contribute to radicalisation. Phase models cannot explain such individual differences, because they cannot explain the circumstances under which people are more – or less – likely to move to the next phase, or under what circumstances they are more or less likely to abandon the process or move in a completely different direction. In fact, the distinct ‘phases’ that these models describe are nothing more than the materialised outcomes of much more complex and often invisible underlying processes that cause and feed radicalisation. This point becomes clearer if we take a closer look at the four phases of radicalisation described by the NYPD (Silber & Bhatt, 2007). Why do people move from phase 2, the Self-identification stage, to phase 3, the Indoctrination stage? Which sociological and psychological explanations can we give for the observation that these people, who are apparently struggling with their identity, so rigorously adopt a violent world view and use violence in an attempt to change the status quo, while others respond very differently and turn to democratic means to express their frustration? Simple phase models can only account for those cases that do turn to violence, but not for the cases that do not.

In order to understand who radicalises, it cannot suffice to analyse only the macro-level context in which radicalisation takes place. Rather, we need to examine the causes of radicalisation from the perspective of the radical and examine how a combination of macro-level and micro-level factors influences

the individual's behaviour. Only if we account for the dependencies between the individual and his environment can we begin to explain why some people do radicalise, while others do not.

Consider the varying responses to public events like the Danish cartoons. For most citizens of Western democratic countries, the cartoons represented a more or less innocent expression of the right to freedom of speech. However, for many Muslims around the world the cartoons represented a well-aimed attack on their religion and identity. Some of them did not respond to the cartoons at all. Some used non-violent, democratic means to object to the cartoons. Some Muslims were prompted to adopt more violent responses and took to the streets to engage in violent demonstrations, boycotts, and the burning of flags. For others, the cartoons may even have ignited a process of radicalisation and the legitimisation of terrorist attacks.

Similarly, when the Dutch Member of Parliament Geert Wilders released his anti-Islam film 'Fitna' in 2008, Muslims around the world showed varying reactions to the provocation. In the Islamic world, many Muslims responded with anger and frustration, sometimes with violence. In Indonesia, students attacked the Dutch consulate and protesters in Afghanistan took to the streets and burned the Dutch flag. In the Netherlands, however, the Muslim population responded relatively calmly. In contrast to the expected aggressive reactions, eloquent young Muslims stepped forward as spokesmen for their communities and for Islam and explicitly distanced themselves from any radical, violent action by Muslims in answer to the film.

The cartoon crisis and the reactions to Fitna illustrate that how people respond to potential catalysts of radicalisation (e.g., cartoons or a provocative anti-Islam film) depends on several factors of which political atmosphere, media coverage, reactions by influential figures or peers, norms, personal experiences and background, and individual characteristics are only a few. It is important, in other words, to recognise that potential causal factors are not directly linked to radicalisation, but that whether and how they do contribute to radicalisation is influenced by context and individual circumstances that affect how people perceive and respond to their environment and every element therein, including political or economic events, group dynamics, or identity issues. The present study sets out to explore the most prominent causal factors of radicalisation and the underlying dynamics through which they can contribute to radicalisation.

3. A root cause model of radicalisation

There is no single explanation for radicalisation. The causes of radicalisation are as diverse as they are abundant (for overviews, see Hudson, 1999; Borum, 2004¹; 2004²; Nesser, 2004; Bjørge, 2005; Victoroff, 2005; Slooman & Tillie, 2006; Loza, 2007; Silber & Bhatt, 2007). In this chapter we introduce the root cause model with which we analyse the factors that are responsible for causing radicalisation among Muslims in the Western world. To do so we categorise the most frequently mentioned causal factors into different measurement levels, which vary in the extent to and the way in which they contribute to radicalisation. In the model, 'root causes' refer to causal factors without which the radicalisation process would not have occurred. This does not mean to say that every causal factor mentioned in the coming overview is a necessary condition in every radicalisation process. Which factors contribute to radicalisation and at which point in time might differ per individual.

The root cause model provides a framework with which to analyse how causal variables at different levels relate to each other and how they shape the circumstances under which radicalisation is more – or less – likely to occur. Hence the model serves as a starting point from which to further investigate and counter radicalisation processes. From this, testable hypotheses can be deduced about how explanatory variables are associated with violent as well as non-violent radicalisation and with no radicalisation at all.

The focal point of the analysis is the ‘embedded individual’. That is, the present study departs from the notion that radicalisation is above all an individual process that can only be understood in relation to the individual’s social environment. Studies of radicalisation, like phase models, often focus on groups with shared characteristics as the main unit of analysis. They focus prominently on group-level characteristics as explanations for radicalisation while paying little attention to individual circumstances. These studies, as mentioned before, run the risk of applying statistical discrimination and mistakenly attributing radical identities to people who share certain characteristics. To prevent this, it is imperative to understand radicalisation as an individual circumstance that occurs within a social context. This implies that in order to make predictions about radicalisation at the group level, we first need to specify micro-level theories that allow us to deduce predictions about radicalisation at the individual level. Thus we need to examine the characteristics of individuals as well as of their social environment, ranging from their direct social networks to wider social contexts. To examine the roots of Islamist radicalisation in Western Europe, it makes sense to start by explaining the roots of individual radicalisation and then, based on individual-level theories, to formulate expectations about radicalisation at the collective level. In the present study the individual is therefore the focal point of analysis.

The root cause model distinguishes causal factors at the macro level and the micro level, and argues that macro-level factors are preconditions for radicalisation, but that in order to explain why some people do radicalise, and other people do not do so, a scrutiny of micro-level variables is essential. To study the individual as an embedded unit, micro-level factors are in turn subdivided into *social* factors on the one hand, which describe the individual’s position in relation to others, and *individual* factors on the other, which describe personal circumstances and processes that explain how people interpret situations they are in, give meaning to them, and respond to them.

After having categorised the causal factors into macro-level and micro-level factors, we further differentiate between *causes*, which set the foundation for radicalisation, and *catalysts*, which abruptly accelerate the radicalisation process. Together, these categorisations define the dimensions of a simple model with which we study the different dimensions and aspects of radicalisation (see Figure 3).

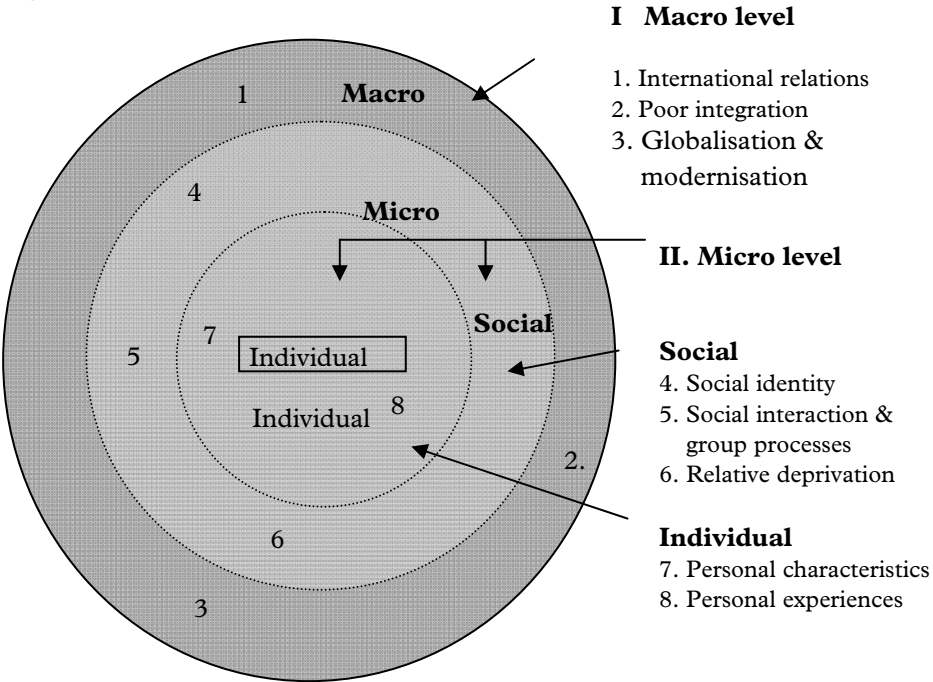
Figure 3. Categorisation of causal factors of radicalisation.

	Types of causes*		<i>Types of catalysts*</i>
Macro level		Political Economic Cultural	Trigger Events
Micro level	Social	Social identification Social interaction & group processes Relative deprivation	Recruitment Trigger Events
	Individual	Psychological characteristics Personal experiences	Recruitment Trigger Events

* The factors in the model illustrate the type of causal factors categorised at each level, and can be complemented and extended by related factors.

The central question in this paper is how causal factors at different measurement levels relate to each other and how they, when combined, can contribute to radicalisation. The following section discusses the model in more detail and explains how different levels and types of factors are interdependent in affecting the individual’s behaviour. To illustrate these relationships, Figure 4 denotes a graphical representation of the theoretical framework of causal factors of radicalisation.

Figure 4: Causal factors of radicalisation.



At the centre of the spectrum is the individual, whose attitudes and behaviour are gradually subjected to a variety of influences at different measurement levels. From the outside inwards, the outside layer represents causes at the *macro* level. Macro-level factors are related to social structures and include, among other factors, demographic changes, political, economic, and cultural alterations, educational attainment, and labour market participation. Such contextual factors are generally accepted as preconditions for crime and deviant behaviour. Shaw and McKay (1969) for example argued that crime was a product of cultural, structural, and social characteristics of society, and that deviant behaviour among lower-class, urban males was a normal response to contextual factors.

Similarly, Durkheim (e.g., 1966 [1895]; 1979 [1897]) examined connections between the individual and society and postulated that disrupted social structures can elicit the erosion of social regulation and a state of anomie, which subsequently opens the way to deviance or, in some cases, even suicide. Macro-level factors thus constitute preconditions for a climate that is conducive to radicalism. They can explain how frustration or discontent can emerge among societal groups, for instance among young Muslims who experience difficulties entering the labour market. However, even in

conducive climates only a minority will be induced to radicalise, let alone engage in terrorism (e.g., ITAC, 2006). Macro-level factors cannot explain a phenomenon as specific and rare as radicalisation. To infer causal relationships between macro-level features of society and radicalisation, it is essential to account for the micro level – as defined by the individual and the way he or she is embedded within social structures.

The micro level is represented by the two inside layers of the model. To emphasise the focus on the individual as an embedded unit, the micro level is further categorised into social and individual factors. Social factors, represented by the second or middle layer (see Figure 4), define the individual's relation to relevant others. As we will show in the chapter on social factors, these 'others' do not only include people with whom we interact or form a group, but can also include people from other groups. How people perceive and respond to macro-level factors depends, among other things, on who they are, where they live, what they believe, whom their friends and family are and what their friends and family believe, whom they compare themselves to, etcetera. For example, social science has long recognised the importance of social identification in the emergence of individual behaviour (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1982; 1984). Struch and Schwartz (1989) investigated perceived conflict between religious groups in Israel and found that the extent to which people perceived that their own religious group was in conflict with other religious groups predicted aggression towards other groups. Even more so, the authors found that this effect was even stronger for people who identified strongly with their religious group. In other words, the more people felt related to their own group, the more likely they were to behave aggressively and justified aggressive behaviour towards other groups. In the chapter on social factors we will elaborate more on how social identification processes can play a role in the emergence of intergroup conflicts and how group membership can help us predict individual behaviour.

The third and last layer in the model represents causal factors at the *individual* level. Like social factors, individual factors are a subcategory of micro-level factors. At the individual level are factors like psychological characteristics, personal experiences, and personal beliefs and convictions. A straightforward example of how individual characteristics influence our behaviour can be found in the biological differences between men and women and the subsequent behavioural consequences of such biological differences. In general, men are, for instance, more aggressive than women (Damon & Eisenberg, 1998; Zeichner, Parrott & Frey, 2003), and are also more likely to display physical aggression, while women tend to employ indirect and verbal forms of aggression (Osterman, Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, Kaukiainen, Landau, Fraczek, & Caprara, 1998). Moreover, in contrast to women, men have been found to consider some acts of aggression as positive, desirable, and even

heroic (Campbell & Muncer, 1987). As such, research into gender differences provides a clear illustration of how individual characteristics can influence what type of reaction people are likely to display in particular circumstances.

In the model, individual causal factors are positioned closest to the individual. This does not mean, however, that we expect that individual factors exert the strongest influence on the individual's behaviour. Rather, macro-level factors play an important role as preconditions that create a radicalisation-prone environment, while social and individual factors at the micro-level factors account for individual responses and behaviour. As the individual is the main focus of analysis in the present theoretical framework, the different levels represent their relative distance to the individual. This explains why the macro factors denote the outside layer and individual factors are found at the core.

In addition to categorising causal factors into different measurement levels, we also distinguish between *causes* and *catalysts*. Martha Crenshaw (1981) was one of the first to distinguish between deep intermediate and direct causes. She distinguishes root causes or preconditions, which are factors that 'set the stage for terrorism over the long run' (p. 381) from trigger causes or precipitants, which are specific events that chronologically precede violent group activity. Following this line of reasoning, we argue that *causes* facilitate and contribute to radicalisation. These factors gradually influence the individual in the sense that they steadily, although perhaps at times more intensely than at others, press the individual. People are always subjected to influence from causes at different levels. This does not mean, however, that these factors never change. On the contrary, political and economic conditions alter over time, social networks are dynamic, and new personal experiences can change the way we perceive and respond to the world. By the same token, causes do not necessarily always have a *radicalising* effect on the individual. Rather, we argue that the most interesting and pressing question that scholars of radicalisation need to answer is not the question of which factors are responsible for radicalisation, but *when and how* these factors are responsible.

Compared to causes, *catalysts* are often unpredictable and volatile. Catalysts can occur at the macro as well as the micro level and often penetrate across both levels. They vary per individual; others can discard as irrelevant what can be a trigger for one person, like provoking statements by public figures. Moreover, catalysts accelerate or catapult radicalisation processes but they cannot initiate a radicalisation process by themselves. Again, only in interaction with other causal factors are catalysts capable of igniting 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 the macro level as well as to the micro level, and then in turn often at the social as well as individual level. Many macro-level factors have a social or individual element to them. Consider, for example, how poor socio-economic integration not only manifests itself at the macro level, but also in the social and individual sphere if groups or individuals experience social exclusion or rejection when, for example, entering the labour market. Similarly, the aforementioned concept of gender comprises more than a strictly biological (and hence individual) aspect. Gender also has a social connotation: men and women represent distinct social groups that prescribe different roles in various culturally dependent ways, and hence also contribute to our social identity. Or, as Rubin (1975) argues, the biological aspects of the concept of gender are culturally transformed into symbols that define and emphasise the differences between men and women. Gender, as such, can be seen to have an individual as well as a social component.

To a large extent the levels and causal factors overlap. Nevertheless, without claiming that the classification presented in the present study is exhaustive, we believe that it is a comprehensive way of integrating and organising the most frequently mentioned contributors to radicalisation.

4. Causal factors at the macro level

In this chapter, we will discuss some of the most frequently mentioned theories about macro-level determinants of radicalisation among Muslims in the West. We will discuss how macro-level factors can influence the embedded individual and how they contribute to radicalisation.

The question of how individuals are influenced by macro-level structures is firmly rooted in the scientific debate about the emergence of deviant and violent behaviour. Social scientists have long moved away from the assumption that the source of deviancy is to be found in individual pathologies alone, and have integrated social and environmental contexts in explanations for deviancy, at the collective as well as at the individual level. For instance, several scholars have taken a macro contextual point of view when examining the emergence of political mass violence at a collective (e.g., the national or the cultural) level. Douglas Hibbs (1973), for example, provided a cross-national analysis of the institutional determinants of mass political violence. He offered a model consisting of system-level variables like, among others, political development indexes, regime coercive capability, sanctions and repression, to explain internal war and protest. In the following decades, researchers examined how macro-level variables (e.g., the type of government and the electoral system) influence the occurrence of political collective actions like protests and mass violence. For instance, both Powell (1981) and Kyung-Min Yoo (2005) concluded from their investigations that systems with proportional representation are most successful in limiting the number of protests because minority interests are generally better represented

through political parties. Among many others, these investigations illustrate the role that macro factors can play in the emergence of collective political behaviour and expose potential relationships between macro-level phenomena.

Other scholars of deviancy have pointed to the importance of examining the individual's position in relation to macro contexts. Building on Durkheim's conception of anomie, Robert Merton (1938) set out to explore why the rates and types of deviant behaviour differ so dramatically from one country to the next. In answer, he formulated his anomie theory (also known as the strain theory), which claims that the source of deviance should be found in the ways societies are organised. Embedded in social and cultural structure are culturally-defined goals, purposes, and interests on the one hand, and the institutionally permissible and required procedures for attaining these goals on the other. When incongruence exists between these culturally defined goals and the appropriate institutional structure to achieve these goals, a situation of anomie emerges. Merton defined five modes of adaptations as to how people can respond to such discrepancies between goals and means: (1) Conformity, (2) Innovation, (3) Ritualism, (4) Retreatism, and (5) Rebellion. Which type of reaction people are more likely to adopt depends on their particular social and individual background, Merton argued (*ibid.* p. 678).

Merton, like Durkheim, examined the emergence of deviant behaviour from a contextual point of view. Starting from the observation that deviance rates vary over cultures and countries, Merton sought explanations in the cultural, institutional, and normative context in which the individual is embedded. In the following chapter, we will discuss how macro-level variables can provide a better understanding of the conditions under which radicalisation is more or less likely to occur. For that purpose, we will provide a few of many examples of factors that are frequently mentioned as prominent causes of radicalisation and that can be measured at the macro level. At the end of the chapter, we will come back to Merton's elaborations on deviancy and further illustrate why social and individual factors are imperative in determining which mode of adaptations individuals adopt in response to anomie. First, however, we will take a closer look at how macro conditions can shape an environment that is conducive to radicalism.

4.1. Causes

4.1.1. Poor integration

Over the last few decades, many European countries have had large influxes of immigrants from a wide variety of countries and continents that yielded considerably large communities of ethnic minorities settling in Western

Europe. A large proportion of these immigrants stemmed from Muslim countries, to the extent that Muslims nowadays comprise a significant proportion of the population of most countries (e.g., Hollifield, 1992; Bade, 2003; Geddes, 2003). Naturally the time, reasons, and circumstances under which Muslim communities emigrated to the West have had an effect on their perceptions of and attitudes toward their host societies.

The demographic transformations in Europe brought about a change in the political and public discourse on immigration issues. Governments have been forced to shape and adjust their policies to facilitate the integration of a continuously expanding Muslim community (see, for example, Doomerink, 2005; Vasta, 2007). Interventions were developed that aimed to improve the social and economic participation of minority groups, for instance by positive discrimination or by subjecting immigrants to obligatory integration programmes that included history courses, language courses and a final examination which should be passed in order to be entitled to permanent residence. Whether effective or not, such measures influence local public opinion on integration and minority-related matters and, vice versa, affect the immigrants' perception of the host society. The question can be asked, however, to what extent have integration courses been successful and, if not, why and how has the integration of Muslims into Western societies failed and what the consequences of such failures are?

How well are Muslims integrated into Western societies? In general, research suggests that in many European countries the socio-economic profiles of Muslims differ considerably from the overall population. They have lower educational levels, often live in low socio-economic status neighbourhoods and, if they enter the labour market at all, they are confronted with difficulties in getting proper-paid jobs. The lack of integration is not limited to the socio-economic dimension, however. In many EU countries, Muslims are also poorly integrated in the political domain. In 2006, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUCM¹) published a study on the discrimination of Muslims in the Member States of the European Union, which included a report consisting of interviews with European Muslims (2006²). In general, respondents felt that Muslims are underrepresented in public institutions and organisations and that the needs of Muslims are not a priority for policy makers and public authorities. As a consequence, they did not identify with the institutions that meant to represent them in the political spectrum. Most of the respondents were of the opinion that institutional support for Muslims challenging religious discrimination is lacking, and that at times, invitations to Muslims to participate in public debates do not represent genuine attempts to get Muslims involved (2006²). 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.

The EUCM report illustrates how the poor integration of Muslims in the socio-economic and political domains reflects the (perceived) discrimination of Muslims at the macro level. Simultaneously, it illustrates how macro-level variables can have social and individual-level implications. Whether intended or not, the institutional discrimination of Muslims not only poses a serious threat to the economic and political integration of Muslims: the perception that they are discriminated against and rejected by society also has social and psychological consequences and threatens cultural and social integration. The EUCM concludes by saying 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' (2006¹: 110), and that these issues considerably hinder integration processes in several dimensions.

4.1.2. *International relations*

Contemporary political systems and their attitudes towards other systems play an important role in determining international relations. How political systems and their international policies relate to radicalism and terrorist activity has long been the subject of scholarly debate. In a comprehensive study, Li (2007) investigates how characteristics of democratic governments affect transnational terrorism. After examining 119 countries on a broad set of attributes, including democratic participation, press freedom, institutional constraint and the type of electoral system, Li concludes that democratic participation reduces incidents of transnational terrorism, among other reasons because it raises satisfaction and public tolerance of counterterrorism policies, while simultaneously reducing public grievances and thwarting terrorist recruitment. Moreover, Li concludes that presumed positive relationships between democracy and transnational terrorism are due to institutional constraints imposed on governments, who have limited possibilities to counter terrorism while protecting their civilians and respecting human rights. The way states are organised thus affects the likelihood of being confronted with terrorism.

International relations and states' foreign policies 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 threatening 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,

2004²; Kepel, 2004), argues in a series of publications (e.g. Pape, 2003; 2005¹; 2005² 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. Similarly, Rik Coolsaet (2005) warns that Western support for the repressive tactics of local governments in the struggle against terrorism can be perceived as support for a repressive regime and fuel anti-Western sentiments. To limit spill-over effects from Western foreign policies to radicalisation and terrorism (in the West as well as in other parts of the world), it is therefore imperative that Western counterterrorism assistance is seen as legitimate. Again, it is important to state that policy in itself does not radicalise people; whether and to which extent it contributes to radicalisation depends on social and individual dynamics that are determinant for people's perception of and response to global political events.

4.1.3. Poverty

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, 20041; 20042; Bravo & Dias, 2006; Franz, 2007). The question arises, however, whether such a causal relationship actually exists. Research has shown that although the majority of Europe's 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 (20041; 20042) 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) produced 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 scrutinised public opinion polls from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in order to determine which segments of society express higher levels of support for armed attacks on Israeli civilians. Their findings show that higher educational outcomes and better paid jobs do not necessarily lead to lower levels of support for violence against the Israelis. In fact, violence was most strongly supported among people in higher socio-economic strata. In addition, they found that when compared to people in similar age groups, the educational level of Hezbollah participants was slightly above average. According to the authors, their findings suggest little direct

association between poverty or educational level and participation in violence against Israelis (Krueger & Malečková, 2003, p 141). In fact, they suggest an indirect relationship between national-level poverty and terrorism through the 'apparent connection between economic conditions and the proclivity for countries to undergo civil wars' (Ibid., p 141). In other words, according to the authors it might be the case that the relationship between economic conditions and violence is interceded by civil war and that once civil liberties are taken into account, national-level incomes are unrelated to terrorism.

Although scholars do not agree as to whether a causal relationship between poverty and radicalisation exists, in line with Krueger and Malečková (2003) we argue that such a relation would in any case not be a direct one, but would be 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 of 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.

4.1.4. Globalisation and modernisation

The awareness that the world is going through a process of globalisation and modernisation that increasingly facilitates connections between people around the world, is far from new. Already in 1848 Marx and Engels in their Communist Manifesto pointed out how capitalism increasingly spreads across the globe and how this ever expanding market goes hand in hand with the spread of people, who have to settle and establish connections around the world. Globalisation received another boost with the advance of technological innovations in the twentieth century. Especially after the introduction of the personal computer and the World Wide Web, most barriers that possibly hindered global relations and transactions have practically disappeared. New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman metaphorically refers to this process as the 'flattening of the world', where the excess supply of connectivity means that anybody from anywhere in the world can now connect with each other and compete on the global market (Friedman, 2005; 2007). The process of globalisation, as such, constitutes a multidimensional, global convergence that has institutional-level implications in the political, the economic, as well as the cultural domain.

Globalisation is not only beneficial for entrepreneurs who now have the opportunity to compete on the global market. One other outcome of globalisation is that it facilitates the emergence of transnational ideological movements that can easily reach large communities to spread their messages, recruit new followers, and organise collective activities. In a discussion of

global Salafism, Quintan Wiktorowicz (2001) outlines how the 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 movement and has a profound influence on Islamic practice and ideological orientations of Muslims throughout the world (Wiktorowicz, 2001). Such extensive diffusion of radical interpretations of Islam is a by-product of globalisation and symbolises 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 is often mentioned as a source of conflict between ethnically, culturally, or religiously diverse groups around the world. For instance, globalisation is often believed to be a thrusting force behind conflicts between the Islamic world and the Western world. Benjamin Barber (1995) for instance 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'. As a result, Muslims all over the world are now confronted with consumerism, modern technologies and emancipation. Globalisation increases economic deprivation for lower-class societies and globally confronts Muslims with values and events that were 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 by the Western world to gain control over the Islamic world.

At the same time, however, globalisation and modernisation are also believed to cause conflicts within the Islamic world and contribute to Islamist fundamentalism through these conflicts. Gilles Kepel (2002), for example, suggests that the 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 is rather adaptable to different environments (Roy, 2004). This universal Islam particularly attracts young Muslims who feel 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 the Westernisation of Middle-Eastern societies. As such, an interesting paradox arises: The states and societies that radical Islamist movements reject and vilify the most, are the same states and societies that shaped these movements.

4.2. Catalysts

4.2.1. *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 Danish cartoon affair, the launch of the anti-Islam film FITNA, and the malpractices in Guantanamo Bay, are all examples of trigger events that occurred at the institutional level. One such other event is the Abu Ghraib scandal, which is often mentioned as one of the most disruptive trigger events in inflaming Islamist fundamentalism. In 2004, the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad made international headlines when word came out that U.S. military personnel had been abusing and torturing Iraqi prisoners. Shocking photographs were published internationally and sparked an immense international outcry – by Muslims as well as non-Muslims – which was sometimes accompanied by violent reactions.

4.3. Conclusion

In the foregoing chapter we have provided an overview of theories on how macro-level factors can facilitate the emergence of radicalisation. By means of these theories we have aimed to show that macro-level conditions are preconditions of radicalisation but that they cannot explain why some individuals radicalise, while others do not. Explanations of radicalisation should account for individual and social conditions.

Whether and how macro-level factors lead to radicalisation thus depends on causal factors that manifest themselves at the social and the individual level. This line of reasoning becomes clearer if we return to our discussion of

Merton's (1938) anomie theory of deviant behaviour. Merton sought an explanation for the varying deviance rates in different countries in the discrepancy between culturally-defined norms and the institutionally legitimate means to achieve these goals. If such discrepancies exist, Merton argued, anomie arises. He offered a categorisation of five different modes of adaptation to such a state of anomie: (1) Conformity, (2) Innovation, (3) Ritualism, (4) Retreatism, and (5) Rebellion. The question becomes under which circumstances do people resort to one or the other mode of adaptation? According to Merton, how people respond to such discrepancies between the goals that culture sets for them and the institutional opportunities and constraints to achieve them, will be determined by the particular personality and the individual's background (Merton, 1938, p. 678), although he - unfortunately - did not explain these concepts in great detail. There are, however, some comments to be made on Merton's elaborations. Albert Cohen (1955; Cohen & Short, 1958) suggested that one thing the anomie theory lacked was that it overlooked the role that social interaction and group processes play in the emergence of deviant behaviour. Building on Merton's model, Cohen formulated his subculture theory. Simply put, subculture theory suggests that the inability to obtain social status and acceptance (rather than economic success, as Merton claimed) can cause frustration and strain in people, often among lower-class youths. Due to social processes a delinquent subculture can arise in reaction to this perceived strain. Cohen, in other words, recognised the importance that social factors and group processes play in the emergence of deviant behaviour. Macro conditions alone cannot explain the emergence of deviant behaviour; only in relation to social and individual-level factors do they trigger such behaviour. In line with that argument, in the next chapter we will take a closer look at the social factors that can play a role in causing radicalisation to occur.

5. Causal factors at the Micro level: Social factors

That individuals are strongly influenced by their environment is not a new presumption. Whereas sociologists focus primarily on system or macro-level variables and interactions, the analytical primate of social-psychologists lies on the interaction between individuals and their social environment. Shocking experiments like Milgram's obedience experiments (Milgram, 1964), Zimbardo's Stanford Prison experiment (Zimbardo, Haney, Banks & Jaffe, 1973)⁶, tell us that behavioural settings and social contexts are more powerful in shaping our behaviour. Real-life examples of ordinary people who can, under certain social and institutional conditions, turn evil can be found in the Abu Ghraib (Strasser, 2004; Zimbardo, 2008) and Guantanamo Bay (Ratner & Ray, 2004; Saar & Novak, 2005) scandals.

If we thus aim to understand how - changes in - individual behaviour come(s) into being, we need to examine how individuals are affected by their social context on the one hand, and, vice versa, how individuals can affect their

6 Zimbardo (1973) designed a functional simulation of a prison in which participants role-played prisoners and guards, with disastrous effects. Within days, the guards started displaying sadistic behaviour, while the prisoners became depressed and extremely stressed. The experiment, which was ended prematurely after six days, showed that contextual factors and social mechanisms can have extensive effects on individuals' behaviour.

social context on the other. In the following section, we will briefly describe a few examples of social mechanisms that can help us understand the underlying processes that might be responsible for causing radicalisation.

5.1. Causes

5.1.1. *Self-categorisation and social identity*

The relevance of groups and (self-perceived) group membership for individuals has been among the most intensely scrutinised subjects by social-psychological researchers. Research has conclusively shown that identification with social groups is a particularly accurate predictor of social behaviour and is, as such, probably one of the most important factors at the social level. To a large extent, how we behave depends on with whom we identify.

Social identity approaches like self-categorisation theory (Turner, 1982; 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Ellemers, Van Knippenberg, De Vries & Wilke, 1988, Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 2002) suggest that, to a large extent, people define themselves in terms of group membership rather than in terms of self. The social identity that we derive from such self-perceived group membership allows us to differentiate between our own group, also referred to as the *in-group*, and other groups, also referred to as *out-groups*. According to social identity theory, people achieve self-esteem by identifying with an in-group. We can have as many social identities as groups with which we identify. For example, people can identify themselves on the basis of gender, ethnicity, profession, religion, or based on the football club they support. Which identity becomes salient or prominent depends on the context. When we are spectators at a (local) football match, our social identity as a supporter of 'our' team is much more relevant to us than our national or religious identity. When a particular social identity is salient this social identity provides a framework through which we interpret and analyse the world around us, and which determines how we think, feel, and act (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 2002). Simply put, self-perceived group membership is of such importance to our self-concept that we only feel good about ourselves if we feel good about the group.

Self-perceived group membership and identification with the group and its grievances presumably lies at the heart of Islamist radicalisation and the collective actions it produces (e.g., Murshed & Pavan, 2009). This becomes apparent when we consider the consequences of *not* having a satisfactory social identity. What happens if people struggle with an identity crisis, for instance because they feel rejected by the group(s) they desire to affiliate with, or because they are not quite sure which group they wish to affiliate with at

all? Young, second and subsequent generations of Muslims in the Western world are often believed to struggle with such issues. They are thought to face an identity crisis that is rooted in conflicts with their ethnic or cultural background on the one hand, while simultaneously having feelings of being rejected by society on the other (e.g., Coolsaet, 2005; Choudhury, 2007; Malik, 2007).

For example, research in the Netherlands has shown that many young Moroccans feel discriminated against and unaccepted in Dutch society (Hermans, 2006; Kamans, Gordijn, Oldenhuis & Otten, 2008).⁷ Buijs and his colleagues (2006) 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. Indeed, many scholars have postulated that young Muslims in the West increasingly define themselves in terms of religion – as Muslims – rather than in terms of ethnicity (e.g., Ballard, 1996; Saeed, Blain & Forbes, 1999)⁸. Following identity approaches, the stronger the religious aspect of their identity becomes, the stronger they are likely to respond to potential threats or attacks against their Muslim identity. Whether or not these young Muslims also feel Dutch, or Danish, British, Moroccan, or Pakistani thus becomes irrelevant; they feel they are Muslim and they feel threatened as Muslims. Threats to a valued identity – irrespective of whether these threats are real or perceived – will generally lead to favouritism for the in-group (e.g., Smurda, Wittig and Gokalp, 2006) and a derogation of out-groups (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In line with this suggestion, Olivier Roy (2004) signalled that a threat to their religious identity can prompt Muslims to withdraw into a strictly specified, inward-focused community that is obsessed by its own borders.

7 People hold certain beliefs about the stereotypes that members of out-groups hold about their in-group. Irrespective of how true these so-called *meta-stereotypes* (Vorauer, Main & O'Connell, 1998) are, they often act as self-fulfilling prophecies: individuals have a tendency to act so as to fulfil their beliefs about how others perceive them (Jones & Panitch, 1971; Word, Zanna & Cooper, 1974; Snyder, Tanke & Berscheid, 1977). Indeed, Dutch Moroccan teenagers were found to be more willing to legitimise criminal behaviour and Muslim terrorism when they believed that the Dutch majority held corresponding negative stereotype views about them (Kamans et al., 2008).

8 However, as Roy (2004) has shown, the Muslim identity has for many Muslims taken on characteristics not unlike that of ethnic identities.

Simultaneously, Islam might become an increasingly appealing and useful vehicle for social and political mobilisation (Ballard, 1996).

5.1.1.1. Collective Emotions

Since the self-categorisation theory and the social identity theory entered the scientific debate on the emergence of attitudes and behaviour, sociologists and social-psychologists have increasingly acknowledged the importance of (self-perceived) group membership in explanations for social action. Consequently, many researchers have used these social identity approaches as a platform from which to further investigate intergroup relations and their implications for groups and individuals. Vice versa, theories on mechanisms that were initially believed to be typically individual-related now served as the basis for the formulation of theories and hypotheses about group-based action.

One of the research fields that benefited greatly from the introduction of social identity approaches has been the field of emotion studies. Building on the self-categorisation theory and the social identity theory, an entirely new line of research has emerged that examines emotions at the social rather than at the individual level. Elliot Smith introduced the intergroup emotions theory (1993) which argues that people can experience intergroup emotions based on appraisals of conditions that do not affect them personally, but that concern other members of the in-group. In other words, people can experience emotions based on events in which they are not personally involved but which affect members of their in-group (Mackie, Devos & Smith, 2000; Smith, Seger, & Mackie, 2007). For example, immediately after the terrorist attacks of September 2001, Mackie, Silver, and Smith (2004) set out to investigate whether the degree to which they valued their identity as an American predicted the degree to which they experienced feelings of fear and anger in response to the attacks. As they predicted, the authors found that people for whom being an American was very important, reported stronger emotional responses than people for whom being an American was not so important. Similarly, other research has shown that people who observed an in-group member being victimised or treated unjustly responded more angrily and aggressively. The stronger they felt related to the victim, the stronger their emotional and behavioural reactions were (e.g., Gordijn, Wigboldus & Yzerbyt, 2001; Yzerbyt, Dumont, Wigboldus & Gordijn, 2003).

5.1.2. *Social interactions and group processes*

Radicals, like everybody else, are embedded in complex interaction systems that generate the circumstances under which their attitudes and behaviour are shaped. What people believe, how they feel, and how they behave is strongly influenced by with whom they interact. By taking social networks into

account when examining radicalisation we can learn more about how ideologies spread, how radical communities are formed, and how groups of people sometimes come to engage in rather deviant – e.g., radical or terrorist – activity. Moreover, by examining social interactions and their embeddedness within social networks we can infer information about which persons have strategic positions within the network, about who is influenced by whom, who are the ‘brains’ and who are foot soldiers (Festinger, Schachter & Back, 1963 [1950]; Blau, 1964; Coles, 2001)⁹. In the following section we will tap into some network dynamics and how they can prevent or contribute to radicalisation.

First, similarity breeds connection. In their analyses of terrorist networks both Sageman (2004) and Bakker (2006) found that the members of these networks often shared demographic characteristics. Indeed, networks are often internally homogeneous 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 reflects the tendency to seek out as companions others who share our beliefs and interests. People tend to invest in relationships with others who are similar to them, so that social values precede rather than follow from social interactions (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Concerning the propensity to join a radical group, Quintan Wiktorowicz in his study of Al-Muhajiroun (Wiktorowicz, 2004) argues that so-called ‘frame-alignment’ of values is a prerequisite for joining. That is, only if the ideological representation of the radical group fits the seeker’s initial interest will he or she be motivated to join the group. This thesis is however contested by research carried out by John Lofland and Rodney Stark (1965), who in their study on the radical Millenarian group Divine Precepts argued that factors such as social affection, friendship and love, which establishes bonds between members of a radical group and newcomers, comes before so-called ‘frame-alignment’.

Second, social influence prompts people to adopt attitudes and forms of behaviour of others in the network (Festinger, Schachter & Back, 1963 [1950]; Marsden & Friedkin, 1993; Valente, Gallaher & Mouttapa, 2004; Valente, Ritt-Olson, Stacy, Unger, Okamoto & Sussman, 2007). People’s behaviour is strongly influenced by the social context in which it occurs. The mere presence of an authority figure, for instance, can have profound consequences for the decisions people make. Among the most illustrious examples of people’s susceptibility to authority can be found with Milgram’s obedience experiments (Milgram 1963; 1974 [2004], 1992). He found that

9 See for an extensive introduction to the analysis of social networks: Wasserman and Faust (1994).

an astonishing 65 percent of his subjects obeyed an order, commanded to them by a scientist authority, to administer electric shocks up to 450 volts to another person.

In Milgram's studies, people obeyed an order given to them by an individual authority figure. However, individual behaviour is also affected by group-level characteristics. James Coleman (1990) argues that in networks where network members share opinions and attitudes, social norms develop at a macro-social level but affect the individual at micro-social level. 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 being punished, individual group members can make considerable sacrifices on behalf of the group (Coleman, 1990). Indeed, studies on conformity have shown that people have a tendency to conform to the norms and opinions of the majority. In a series of experiments, Asch (1951; 1955; 1965) showed that people often conform to the majority, even when they do not really believe their conforming behaviour or attitudes. They would rather conform than rebel and be ridiculed or perceived as odd or peculiar. Groups, as such, can exert a profound influence over the individual's behaviour.

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. In addition, Renée van der Hulst (2009) conducted a social network analysis of the Hofstad group. Among other results, she identified three individuals (among whom was Theo van Gogh's murderer, Mohammed Bouyeri) who held very influential positions in the network, for instance because they had many connections, because they could link two other people to each other, or because they could easily connect with all the other members of the network. Although Van der Hulst's study consisted mainly of an explanatory analysis which was based on relatively scarce information, it illustrates how social network analysis can help scholars of radical or terrorist networks to identify the most important characteristics (and their implications) of the network.

Hence, in social networks radical ideologies and attitudes can easily develop and spread through well-documented social mechanisms like social influence and homophily. By the same token, these same mechanisms can produce positive network effects that could hinder rather than foster radicalisation. For instance, social networks can be important sources of moral support and information, for example when finding a job (e.g., Granovetter, 1973; 1974). Majorities, 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 the refutation of any Western value interacts with the radicalisation of thought by producing an increased pressure and willingness to act on behalf of one's religious convictions. Similarly, under the influence of positively-oriented, peace-minded leaders and peers, networks can not only prevent radicalisation from occurring, but can simultaneously promote social bonding, integration, and well-being. Two network 'environments' deserve further mention in the discussion on the effects of networks on radicalisation.

5.1.2.1. The role of the Internet

Increasingly, attention is being paid to the role that the Internet plays in the radicalisation of young Muslims. In the present study, the Internet is perceived as a causal factor at the social level rather than at the macro level. The rise of the Internet has offered new opportunities for contact between people from different cultural, ethnic, or religious backgrounds anywhere in the world (e.g., Katz, Rice, & Aspden, 2001). As such, it is a prominent facilitator of network formation and interpersonal or intergroup interaction, and can offer possibilities for mobilisation and social involvement in collective action (Postmes & Brunsting, 2002). For terrorist movements, the beneficial characteristics of the Internet include, for example, that it offers easy access to a large potential audience, anonymity of communication, and multimedia tools to spread texts and videos (Weimann, 2006). As such, the Internet facilitates the emergence of virtual radical movements consisting of people who have never met but are connected through a virtual environment of shared attitudes and ideology. People who are physically isolated from each other can communicate relatively anonymously (Postmes & Baym, 2005), which makes it a perfect instrument to establish a 'deterritorialised' virtual network of believers (Roy, 2004). As such, the Internet 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 contact with relevant others. Not only does the Internet facilitate opinion formation and interaction possibilities between similar-minded individuals or groups, it also contains a substantial library of publicly accessible documentation (e.g., Mandaville, 1999; 2005; Anderson, 2000). The AIVD states that the Internet plays an

important role in radicalisation processes and that radical documentation is widely spread online. The AIVD even goes so far as to refer to the Internet as ‘a turbo propelling the global violent jihad movement’ (2006: 43). On the other hand, processes of radicalisation mostly take place in social settings in the ‘real world’, where the role of the Internet is more that of an auxiliary instrument than a root cause. So even if it seems obvious that the Internet could intensify and accelerate radicalisation, ‘there is little evidence to support the contention that the internet plays a dominant role in the process of radicalisation’ (Neumann & Stevens, 2009, p. 12).

5.1.2.2. The role of prisons

Prisons are often thought to be a fertile environment for radicalisation (e.g., Silber & Bhatt, 2007). A few accounts of prison radicalisation are known. For example, Richard Reid, the ‘shoe bomber’ who attempted to destroy a commercial aircraft 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 being imprisoned (Benschop, 2005). Prisons are hostile environments where membership of a morally and physically supportive and protective group can be essential for inmates. Such groups are often formed along ethnic and religious lines and can be vulnerable to radicalisation and recruitment (e.g., Trujillo, Jordan, Gutierrez, Gonzalez-Cabrera, 2009). Under such conditions, 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 them to adopt the attitudes and actions of influential others. Imams, be they contractors 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. On the other hand, as research by Marranci (2007) and Olsen (2008) shows, prison imams can also have the function of strengthening inmates’ ability to stand up to potential recruiters in prisons – and for convicts’ ability to function in society after the prison term has been served. In an environment that is conducive to radicalism, like prisons are, imams can thus exert strong influence on inmates and induce them towards radicalisation, as well as towards a more positive direction.

5.1.3. *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 defined 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 to 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 suggested 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 a 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).

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 from a few major weaknesses. First and foremost, Gurr used 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 from 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 who have advocated that terrorists are, in general, not poor or from lower socio-economic strata.

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). Indeed, it has been suggested that hostility and fundamentalism is prevalent among seemingly well-integrated and highly educated Muslim minority members (e.g., Buijs et al., 2006; Tolsma, 2009), and that societal minorities in higher socio-economic strata more often feel that they or their group are rejected and discriminated against within society (e.g., Jaspers & Lubbers, 2005). Presumably, particularly those minority members who come from higher

socio-economic strata have high expectations about integration and socio-economic prosperity. At the same time, however, they are also more likely to be confronted with (real or perceived) institutional discrimination which hinders integration and social mobility. In particular, those who seem to have perfectly integrated, might find their expectations frustrated and they experience rejection and exclusion from society (e.g., EUCEM, 2006; Franz, 2007).

5.2. Catalysts

5.2.1. Recruitment

Recruitment into a radical movement is driven by social and individual forces, including identity-related matters, network dynamics and individual motivations, and ultimately leads to the actual joining of a radical movement. In the present study we assume that recruitment always requires an interaction between the potential recruit and the recruiting system. Presumably, individuals who catch the eye of top-down recruiters have displayed at least some interest in the movement's ideology – or some susceptibility towards radical attitudes. As a consequence, the implication arises that before recruitment into a radical movement occurs, minor advances towards radicalisation can be expected to have been at least latently present. Hence the recruitment process should be perceived as a process in itself that to a great extent overlaps with the process of radicalisation. Therefore, we assume that recruitment cannot initiate a radicalisation process, but that it can only accelerate it.

On the one hand, recruitment involves a top-down component in which radical groups actively take up new members in their midst. Scholars are still debating about the extent to which terrorist organisations actively pursue potential recruits. Giles Kepel (2004) is only one of many authors (AIVD, 2002; 2004; Taarnby, 2005) who points to the possibility that al-Qaeda leaders are recruiting new supporters in Europe for their anti-Western jihad. 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, serves to illustrate this phenomenon. Demagauque was allegedly recruited by several men who went on trial in October 2007 for attempting to also recruit several other people in Belgium (Reuters, 2007). In particular, mosques and prisons are infamous for facilitating the top-down recruitment of potential adherers to radical Islam.

On the other hand, scholars point to a growing tendency of self-recruitment (e.g., Coolsaet, 2005). 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 their attractiveness for potential members. Marc Sageman (2004) describes how recruitment is often a bottom-up process and that the threat of jihad has shifted from hierarchically organised terrorist networks to self-organising ‘bunches of guys’ who are inspired by the al-Qaeda ideology and who actively seek to join the terrorist organisation rather than being recruited by an outside force. He illustrates his argument with a case study of the Hamburg Cell, accomplices in the ‘9/11’ attack in New York, who radicalised as a group of friends. During the radicalisation process, the majority travelled to Afghanistan where they collectively joined al-Qaeda. Most members of the Hamburg Cell actively participated in al-Qaeda’s ‘9/11’ mission. The question whether bottom-up radicalisation (such as Sageman’s ‘bunch of guys’ theory) is more predominant than top-down radicalisation, where the process of joining a terrorist organisation is assumed to be a more controlled top-down process in which an organisation actively picks out potential radicals for further involvement in their organisation, has long been at the centre of a scholarly dispute between Marc Sageman and Bruce Hoffman, both of whom are prominent terrorism researchers within the American debate (see Sageman, 2008; Hoffman, 2008a; 2008b, or Hoffman & Sageman, 2008). We argue that both top-down as well as bottom-up processes are important ways into a radicalisation process and that they are not mutually exclusive – as the heated debate between Sageman and Hoffman seems to suggest. In fact, in his argumentation Marc Sageman makes a relevant point that dovetails with our assumption that the mechanisms that constitute recruitment always comprise an interaction between the recruit and the recruiters. Sageman (2004) emphasises that for individuals or groups who aim to join a radical movement, 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 the relevant acquaintances.

5.2.2. Trigger events

Networks and personal relationships can be affected by unexpectedly occurring events that can manifest themselves at institutional, social, and individual level. In general, provocative events that call for revenge or action can trigger or accelerate radicalisation to violence (e.g., Crenshaw, 1981). For instance, disturbed group processes like the arrest of a group member or the repeated failure of friends to find a job or achieve goals can ignite a feeling of general discontent and contribute to radicalisation. Attending a religious retreat (e.g., Silber & Bhatt, 2007) or other group processes like watching violent films (e.g., PET, 2004) can provide the trigger to justify violent acts.

The effect of such trigger events on radicalisation will be stronger if preconditions are met.

5.3. Conclusion

The extent to and the way in which the individual is embedded in social structures is thus an important influence on how he or she will perceive and respond to his environment. Social identity approaches and theories on social dynamics shed some light on how individuals interact with their social environment, and vice versa. The following question then arises: what are the implications of these notions for understanding the causes of radicalisation among Muslims in the West? For one thing, empirical research should scrutinise the role that social identification plays in contributing to and preventing radicalisation or terrorist engagement. The effect of social identification might be much more pressing and complex than presumed. Radical attitudes and behaviour are likely to be variable to the extent that the degree of identification and the importance to the self concept also vary to a salient degree. In an important study of social identification and support for violence in Lebanon, for example, Levin, Henry, Pratto and Sidanius (2003) found that identification with Arabs was a strong predictor of support for terrorist organisations and a justification for the September 11 attack, while Lebanese identification was not. Moreover, Arab group membership was less important a predictor than Arab identification, a result that indicates that group membership – being a Muslim – only contributes to radicalisation to the extent that such group membership entails a psychological identification (Lenin et al., 2003; p. 365). It could be hypothesized that young Western Muslims who feel threatened as to their social identity are more likely to radicalise towards violence when being a Muslim comprises a key feature of their self concept, as compared to when their identity is to a lesser extent defined by their Muslim identity and to a greater extent by other identities, like being European or Moroccan. Experimental and survey research should scrutinise the subtle varieties within and between ethnic or religious social identities and their implications for susceptibility towards violent, non-violent, and no radicalisation.

Moreover, findings from collective emotions literature (e.g., Smith, 1993) suggest that events that do not directly influence the self but others with whom one identifies, can bring about relevant emotional and behavioural reactions. As such, psychological mechanisms can explain how events that affect Muslims in the Islamic world, which have no direct implications for the well-being of Muslims in the Western world, can nevertheless induce strong emotions in them and can even induce them to take action. Here again it becomes clear how macro-level factors on the one hand, and social and individual-level factors on the other, interact in their relationship with

radicalisation. As mentioned before, a remarkable feature of home-grown radicalisation lies in the fact that many radicalised Muslims in Europe point to the victimisation of their fellow Muslims around the world (Juergensmeyer, 2000). From social identity approaches it follows that the Muslims who identify most strongly with their in-group group – the Ummah: the community of believers, are also the ones most likely to respond strongly to the perceived suffering of their in-group members. In other words, these would be the people for whom being a Muslim is most important to their sense of self. (Note that this does not necessarily imply that these are also the people who attend mosques most frequently or who seem most religiously devoted; self-categorisation and identification do not necessarily reflect prototypical behaviour.)

A second implication lies in the awareness that how people think, feel, or act, is to a large extent determined by their social environment. With whom we interact, with whom we identify, and with whom we compare ourselves to a large extent influences the reference cadre through which we interpret and respond to the world around us. When groups are formed, collective norms come into being which drive the behaviour of individual group members (e.g. Coleman, 1990). The most influential actors in the network can influence whether such norms favour radical interpretations or violent reactions to social circumstances. In that way, charismatic imams can influence an entire network to adopt violent radicalism, but can also influence the norms towards more moderate or democratic perceptions and reactions. Similarly, social networks can be used as sources for radical as well as moderate information flows, and just as network members can influence each other towards radicalisation they can provide each other with assistance and moral support.

If we are to gain a more thorough understanding of the way in which social identification and network dynamics advance – and regress – radicalisation, we should formulate and test specific hypotheses that aim to capture the relationship between institutional factors (e.g., foreign policies) and radicalisation through social processes involving group membership, social identification, and collective emotions.

6. Causal factors at the Micro level: Individual factors

Lastly, this section discusses individual-level factors that describe how differences between individuals can help us to explain why some people are more – or less – likely to radicalise than others. Psychologists have long investigated individual differences in temperament, opinions, behaviour, intelligence, and other individual characteristics.

In the present study, we perceive radicalisation and involvement in terrorism in psychological terms as a process rather than as a state. This implies that we always consider the individual as embedded in a social interaction system. The focus shifts away from identifying presumed individual psychological characteristics or moral qualities and instead focus is put on process characteristics which are variable, such as the changing context, in which the individual lives and operates, and also the ‘relationships between events and the individual as they affect behaviour’ (Taylor & Horgan, 2006, p. 586). As in the other chapters, we will give a few examples of how individual-level features can help us explain how people respond to their environment and how some individual characteristics make certain responses (e.g., radicalisation) more likely than others.

6.1. Causes

6.1.1. *Personality 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. As a result, scholars have developed a wide range of theories on the psychology of terrorism (e.g., Victoroff, 2005).

Decades have been spent on investigating whether particular personality types are more or less likely to engage in criminal or terrorist behaviour. After the Second World War, Adorno and his colleagues (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950) set out to explore whether some personalities are more susceptible to fascist or authoritarian belief systems than others. Grounded on interviews, they conceptualized the ‘authoritarian personality’, which is supposedly rooted in personal conflict and childhood experiences. People with an authoritarian personality, as Adorno et al. described, have a strong need for security and stability and tend to become anxious and insecure under conditions that contradict their conventional world view. They prefer to take rather than to give orders and are submissive to acknowledged authority¹⁰ (Adorno et al., 1950). Other researchers later applied the concept of the authoritarian personality to explain adherence to other ideologies, like left-wing belief systems (e.g., Altemeyer, 1988). In fact, in his shock-experiments Stanley Milgram (1974) found that participants who scored high on Adorno’s F-scale (i.e. the Fascism questionnaire, designed to identify authoritarian personalities; Adorno et al., 1950) were more obedient to an authority figure – they administered stronger shocks after being ordered to do so – than participants who scored low on the F-scale. This suggests that personality characteristics can indeed affect obedience to authority figures. However, it must be noted that this relationship should not be overestimated: irrespective of their scores on Adorno’s F-scale, an incredibly large proportion of Milgram’s participants (approximately two-thirds) completely obeyed the experimenter.

10 Adorno et al. (1950) identified nine traits that define the authoritarian personality type: conventionalism, authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, anti-intraception, superstition and stereotypy, power and ‘toughness’, ‘destructiveness and cynicism, projectivity, and preoccupation with violence and sex.

Other scholars have attempted to relate narcissism to terrorism (e.g., Crayton, 1983; Post; 1998). Narcissism, when pathological, is a maladaptive self-obsession, to the exclusion of all others, and the egoistic and ruthless pursuit of one's gratification, dominance and ambition. People with narcissistic personality traits are vulnerable to threats to their grandiose sense of self. Consequently, they need an external enemy to blame for their own weaknesses (Post, 1998). Narcissistic personalities are easily drawn to charismatic leaders and terrorist organisations that nourish such us-versus-them views (e.g., Crayton, 1983). However, the notion that radicals and terrorists are often well-educated and stem from middle-class strata seems to contradict the presumption that narcissism is a prominent cause of radicalism. Indeed, not much empirical support was found for the narcissism-terrorism hypothesis (e.g., Borum, 2004). On this point, no research has confirmed that radicals indeed have strikingly different psychological characteristics (e.g., Sageman, 2004; Bakker 2006). Simply put, radicals do not seem to be in any way different from other people.

6.1.2. Personal experiences

The decisions people make are often based on personal experiences, and major life events can contribute 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 rigorously claims 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).

Experiences of perceived discrimination or exclusion are likely to trigger anger and aggression in individuals. Baumeister and Twenge discussed the effects of social exclusion and rejection on social behavior (e.g., Baumeister, Twenge, & Nuss, 2002; Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, 2002). The core assumption of their work is that people attach great value to stable, lasting social relationships and that the need to belong is essential to human beings (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001). The authors found that social exclusion and rejection resulted in threatened egotism, yielding feelings of anger and aggression (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). In addition, they found that social exclusion decreases pro-social behaviour (Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, Bartels, 2007), and increases aggressive behaviour (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001), even if the target of aggression was not the source of the rejection. This finding may seem counterintuitive but implies that being excluded fosters the urge for general retaliation (Twenge et al., 2001).

Kruglanski, Chen, Dechesne, Fishman and Orek (2009) postulated that the quest for significance is an important underlying motivation for suicide

terrorism. Suicide bombing, they argue, might be a response to lost significance due to personal traumas and frustrations. In response to such lost significance, people might turn to terrorism justifying ideologies that provide a means for restoring significance. Committing a suicide attack on behalf of the group is rewarded by the promise of martyrdom and immortality, both in paradise and in the group's collective memory. Sacrifice for the group and the greater cause brings honour to the individual and provides a means of restoring dignity and personal significance.

6.1.2.1. Cognitions

Individuals interact with their environment. How they perceive and respond to the world around them is affected by what they know and have learned about it. These perceptions of reality, however accurate they are, influence their behaviour (e.g., Bandura, 1990). People's subjective interpretation of society, rather than the objective reality, can thus lead to radicalisation and terrorism (Crenshaw, 1988). However, adherence to radical ideologies or radical interpretations of religions is in itself a signal rather than a cause of radicalisation. Webster and Kruglanski (1994; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996) argued that individuals differ in the extent to which they are in need of cognitive closure, which refers to the preference for definitive order and structure, and a desire for firm and stable knowledge. Individuals with a stronger need for closure were found to be less tolerant of ambiguity, less open to experience, more inclined to authoritarianism and dogmatism (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), and more inclined to adopt conservative ideology (Kossowska & Van Hiel, 2003). In intergroup settings, the need for closure was found to be positively related to the desire for consensus within in-groups and the rejection of people holding deviate opinions (e.g., Kruglanski & Webster, 1991). When the need for closure is strong, people turn to the in-group for gratification and satisfaction. Thus in-group favouritism and out-group derogation increases with the desire for immediate and permanent information. Indeed Shah, Kruglanski and Thompson (1998) found that a need for closure was positively related to identification with the in-group and the acceptance of in-group members' beliefs and attitudes. In a more recent publication, Kruglanski, Pierro, Mannetti and De Grada (2006) suggested that the need for cognitive closure contributes to 'group-centrism', a behavioural pattern that includes in-group favouritism, rejection of deviates, the perpetuation of group norms, pressures to opinion uniformity and the encouragement of autocratic leadership. Importantly, more than just being an individual trait, the need for closure also varies as a function of the situation. Certain specific conditions, like disorder, time pressure or mental fatigue, can induce the motivation for cognitive closure. In a similar account Mohammed Bouyeri, Theo van Gogh's murderer, proclaimed that he merely became attracted to radical interpretations of Islam after he had been imprisoned and his mother had died (Benschop, 2005). Thus, underlying grievances preceded

Bouyeri's radicalisation of thought, indicating that his radical interpretation of Islam was a contributing rather than a root cause of radicalisation. Nevertheless, 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 up with an extensive, convincing overview of psychological theories of radicalisation. 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 Festinger's (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 accuracy 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 their 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.

6.1.2.2. Emotions

Emotions are often seen as driving forces behind social behaviour. As we have seen in the chapter on social factors, people do not even have to be personally involved in an emotion-evoking event to experience the corresponding emotions (e.g., Smith, 1993). Some scholars have focused explicitly on the role that emotions play in aggressive or collective action. For instance, in-depth elaborations emerged about hate (Sternberg, 2005), disgust (Haidt, 2001), contempt (Fischer & Roseman, 2007), and the urge for revenge (Frijda, 2007). Other scholars have pointed to the important role that emotions play in radicalisation and terrorism. 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.

6.1.3. Radicalisation as a strategic choice

Individuals turn to radicalism for different reasons, some of which are more conscious than others. Some people join radical 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 strategic choice, where actors are assumed to be fully informed and utility-maximising. The application of the concept of rationality in social sciences stems from economics, and amounts to the suggestion that individuals face a set of behavioural alternatives that each has a particular utility or value for him or her, and that he/she always chooses the action that will give him or her the most value (see, for example, Becker 1962; 1976). 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.¹¹ The standard theory of rational choice often faces problems in explaining social behaviour, however. For example, Tversky and Kahneman (1974) and Kahneman, Slovic, and Tversky (1982) have used experimental research in which they showed that when in situations that require rational decision making, people have systematic biases in their evaluations of potential losses and gains that make them deviate from rationality. In other words, people often fail to act rationally when they intend to do so. In explaining radicalisation and terrorism, rational choice approaches seem to face similar difficulties. Gutpa (2004) for example suggests that rational choice theories cannot overcome Olson's (1965) collective action problem where individual actors do not have sufficient incentives to engage in terrorist activity.

In the light of the debate on rational choice explanations for radical and terrorist behaviour, it is appropriate to emphasise once again how radicalisation and terrorism are thoroughly distinct. Irrespective of its

11 For a more detailed description of Crenshaw's (1981) deliberations on the causes of terrorism see the TTSRL working paper 'Exploring root and trigger causes of terrorism.'

successfulness, terrorism should be perceived as a tool or an instrument that people can employ to achieve political 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 (transforming) state of mind that yields a shift in attitudes and behaviour and serves, as such, a less specified function. Hence, although rational choice approaches can shed some light on the potential strategic benefits of terrorism (see, for example, Lake, 2002; Ferrero, 2002), we suggest that the theory cannot suffice in explaining radicalisation.

6.2. Catalysts

6.2.1. 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. Disruptive events like a frustrated attempt to find a job, the sudden death of a relative or friend, personal experiences with discrimination, or imprisonment could accelerate radicalisation, as appeared to be the case with Mohammed Bouyeri (Benschop, 2005). Moreover, macro-level or social phenomena can be translated into trigger events by the individual's perception of reality. A particular speech by the prime minister or the publication of a particular article can be perceived as provocation by one and as a less hurtful expression by the other. Trigger events at the individual level are plentiful and unique for each and every individual, depending on how he or she perceives and interacts with the environment (e.g., Bandura, 1998).

7. Conclusions and implications

The aim of the present study was two-fold. First, it discussed the strengths and weaknesses of some of the most widely used ‘phase models’ of radicalisation processes. Secondly, it provided an alternative model to examine the causal factors of radicalisation and in doing so provided an overview of available theories on causes and catalysts of radicalisation. In the following we will briefly highlight the most important arguments and derive the most important conclusions stemming from the underlying research. We will discuss the implications for the identification of vulnerable groups and offer suggestions for policy makers and researchers on how to apply the present study as a launching pad to further counter and investigate radicalisation.

The theoretical wellspring of the present study can be found in the literature on phase models of radicalisation, which aim to give a chronological overview of the phases through which people progress in a process of radicalisation. We argued that phase models are inadequate explanations for radicalisation because they suffer from two major shortcomings. First, phase models suffer from a selection bias due to the fact that they focus only on successful cases of radicalisation. The phases they describe are presumed to be related only to violent radicalisation, but can also be associated with other, counter-suggestive outcomes like non-violent radicalisation or no radicalisation at all. Phase models do not distinguish between people who radicalise following the phases located in the models, and those who take deviant routes or become

involved in later phases of the process. These latter cases cannot be explained by phase models.

Second, as a result of this selection bias with regard to only cases of violent radicalisation, phase models run the risk of wrongfully categorising groups of people who share certain characteristics or forms of behaviour as potentially dangerous radicals. The phases are identified by vaguely defined features (e.g., ‘changed behaviour’, ‘new religious practices’, and ‘watching violent videos’), which can be interpreted in different ways and do not necessarily have to be a cue for radicalisation, let alone for upcoming violence. By the same token, people who are in a process of radicalisation but who do not fit the described features of the phases will not be noticed. Considering that the number of potential radicals is extremely small and that the targeted group is a societal minority – in many Western countries a very sensitive one – applying such statistical discrimination is highly problematic. Wrongfully categorising individuals as potentially violent radicals is likely to diminish loyalty to society and the state and, hence, can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Crucially, the distinct ‘phases’ that phase models describe reflect only the materialised outcomes of much more complex and often invisible underlying mechanisms responsible for causing radicalisation. Therefore, it is imperative to examine the causal factors that influence whether people move from one phase in the radicalisation process to the other. Essentially, we argue that radicalisation should be understood as an ‘embedded individual process’, which means that the causes of radicalisation should be examined from the perspective of the individual who is in constant interaction with his social environment. For that purpose, we introduced a root cause model of radicalisation in which the most important causal factors are categorised into macro-level factors and micro-level factors. First, macro-level factors are distinguished that can be seen as preconditions that shape an environment conducive to radicalisation. These factors, however, can only explain why general discontent can emerge among members of societal groups; they cannot explain a phenomenon as rare and specific as radicalisation. For that, we need to examine micro-level factors, the second measurement level at which causal factors of radicalisation can be distinguished. To stress the focus on the individual as an embedded actor, micro-level factors are further subdivided into social and individual factors. Social factors describe how individuals are embedded within social structures that relate people through social interactions and identification. They explain by whom the individual is influenced, where he receives information from, with whom he identifies and to whom he compares himself. Individual factors describe how individual experiences and characteristics affect how people perceive and respond to their social and environmental context. Micro-level factors, rather than macro-level factors, shape the individual circumstances responsible for

radicalisation. Which causal factors contribute to radicalisation and when they do so can differ per situation and per individual.

7.1. Different types of radicalisation

Based on our analyses of the causal factors of radicalisation we conclude that there are broadly two different types of radicalisation: the first resulting from identity concerns that are solved by accepting a belief system that does – or does not – provide violence as a solution, and the second resulting from social interaction dynamics.

The first type of radicalisation process resembles the processes described by the simple phase models. These radicalisation processes are generally rooted in concerns about macro-level conditions like integration, foreign policy, or global political, cultural, and economic developments. These processes start by the formation of a – not yet radical – social identity during which people categorise themselves into a social group and identify with other members of that group (e.g., the self-categorisation theory, Turner, 1982; 1984; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Factors like discrimination, poor integration, a perceived ‘War against Islam’ or other perceived unjust circumstances can ignite a sense that one’s social identity is being threatened. The situation now becomes an intergroup context in which an out-group (e.g., society, Western governments, or non-Muslims) is specified as a potential threat. Social identity threats usually lead to favouritism for the in-group and derogation, sometimes even violence towards out-groups (the social identity theory, Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Ellemers, Van Knippenberg, De Vries & Wilke, 1988, Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 2002). For those who experience an identity threat several factors, like disorder, pressure, or strained personal experiences, can affect whether cognitive closure occurs, which yields the desire for immediate and permanent information, to a strengthened relation with the in-group and the rejection of those who deviate from group opinions (Kruglanski & Webster, 1991, Shah, Kruglanski & Thompson, 1998). Influenced by the media, peers, imams, or family members, one might thus develop or accept a belief system that something can be done and must be done against the threat. Whether people subsequently come to the conclusion that they themselves can and must do something can again depend on several social and individual factors, like social pressure, personal beliefs, and emotions. In some cases, people might have adopted a belief system that provides violence as an appropriate tool to confront the threat and achieve a desired social state. In other cases, the belief system might promote non-violent solutions. Which belief system one adheres to depends, among other things, on where one obtains information from, by whom one is influenced and on individual character traits. Moreover, there might also be a coincidence factor involved. To a certain extent, whom we

meet and with whom we interact is subject to chance, rather than causality. Lastly, trigger events in the public, social, and individual sphere might play an important role in determining whether or not one actually engages in violence. Crenshaw (1981) described how situational factors that call for revenge or action or provoking acts by hostile out-groups can immediately precede the occurrence of terrorism.

Such processes, in which an identity threat is followed by an ideological transformation and the adoption of a solution-providing belief system, can be seen as the core process of radicalisation, in which people go through an attitudinal and behavioural change towards radicalism. The social contexts that develop around individuals who have followed such tracks allow other individuals to be sucked in at different stages of the radicalisation process. These types of radicalisation processes constitute the second type, which is primarily driven by social interaction dynamics.

At the periphery of a social context in which radicalisation occurs, people can become involved for different reasons, like affection, group norms, social pressure, and social identification (see Lofland & Stark, 1965). For these people, social identity concerns or radical ideologies do not have to be present; rather, they are affected by group processes and interactions with people who do radicalise according to core processes. Rather than in macro-level conditions, these processes are rooted in micro-level factors in the social and individual sphere. Radicalisation does not start with ideological concerns, but might – or might not – start as a product of social interactions. Once embedded in a radical context, different causal factors might influence whether they start radicalising in thought – that is, whether they develop identity concerns that lead them to adopt a radical belief system – or whether they drop out or proceed along those lines. As such, these processes result from social interaction dynamics that explain how people can step in at later phases of a radicalisation process. If the individual is embedded within a social context that involves at least one individual who did go through the entire process of radicalisation, radicalisation is more likely to occur and possibly at faster rate.

7.2. Vulnerability

Researchers as well as policy makers are pressed to define segments of society that are most vulnerable to radicalisation. However, based on our analysis of the causal factors of radicalisation we conclude that it might be as unwise as it is difficult to point out societal groups as being more susceptible to radicalisation than others.

First, the proportion of Muslims who radicalise is too small to be categorised into social – vulnerable – groups. Statistically, Islamist terrorists in the West have been young, male, and relatively well educated (e.g., Bakker, 2006). This does not mean that young, male, well-educated Muslims are more vulnerable to radicalisation, let alone that policy makers should target this group on which to focus counter-radicalisation policy. As discussed above, applying such statistical discrimination is ethically controversial and might produce counter-effective results in that young Muslim men who are falsely pointed out as potential terrorists will probably resent the government for doing so. Moreover, the effects of such policy will fail to target people who do not fit these characteristics but who are in fact radicalising. The proportion of young, male, well-educated Muslims in the West who radicalise is simply too small to draw such generalised conclusions. Research in the Netherlands, for example, revealed that of the estimated 857,000 Muslims who are currently living in the Netherlands (approximately five percent of the total population; CBS, 2007) between 20,000 and 30,000 Muslims are believed to feel attracted to Salafi ideologies. Moreover, according to the Dutch Minister of Integration approximately 2,500 are potentially susceptible to violent radicalisation (Kloor, 2007). All in all, not even 0.3 percent of the total Muslim population in the Netherlands should be considered potentially dangerous, and only about a dozen Muslims have been sentenced for radical or terrorist activities, including the murder of the Dutch film director Theo van Gogh. This is not to understate the seriousness of the problem of radicalisation and terror – if 2,500 Dutch Muslims are susceptible to radicalisation it is potentially an immense problem – but that does not mean that Dutch Muslims, or even young, male, well-educated Dutch Muslims, should be labelled as a social group which is conducive to radicalisation.

Second, applying statistical discrimination to define vulnerable groups leads to the stigmatisation of societal groups. We have aimed to point out that the intensity of the readiness to become involved in radicalisation is strongly associated with micro-level, rather than macro-level factors. The circumstances that promote radicalisation are not only relevant for Islamist radicalisation, but can likewise apply to other types and directions of radicalisation; again it is a combination of factors (e.g., cultural background, personal experience, social influence) that determines why people are drawn to, for instance, extreme right or religious ideologies. Consequently, by a lack of common factors concerning other characteristics, distinctions can only be made according to demographic characteristics like ethnic, cultural, or religious background. Assessing the vulnerability of social groups based on these collective-level features and subsequently developing counter-radicalisation measures that target these specific groups enhance the risk that groups receive biased and unequal treatment by governmental and societal institutions. Such measures accentuate boundaries between different societal groups and can as such have a counter-productive effect on the integration

and de-radicalisation policies that aim to improve the relationships between social groups.

Applying statistical discrimination in defining vulnerable segments of society thus risks bringing about undesirable effects. Nevertheless, policy makers are under pressure to develop measures that curb the reasons for radicalisation and counter its negative effects on society. We argue that it is crucial for policy makers to move away from the question of which groups are likely to radicalise, but instead ask under what conditions individuals become more likely to radicalise. This means that one should first ask how macro-level factors can create general discontent among societal groups, for instance for groups who are in general less integrated than others, or who have, when compared to the average population, fewer economic and social resources to participate in society. Subsequently, however, it is essential to further ask how individual conditions that can contribute to discontent, like identity issues or strong influence by peers or charismatic leaders, can be addressed.

7.3. Implications for policy makers

So far, policy makers have to a large extent based their policy on the aforementioned phase models of radicalisation. However, these models not only suffer from methodological and substantive shortcomings. An additional problem is that they can only produce negatively formulated policy. From these models it follows that in order to counter radicalisation we need to prevent people from moving from one phase to the next. That is, people have to be prevented from taking certain actions and refrain from engaging in behaviour that is described by these models to fit the process of radicalisation. In contrast, one of the main strengths of the root cause model is that it encourages positively formulated policy. Instead of restricting people in their behaviour, policy should aim to shape the circumstances that encourage the desired behaviour. More to the point, restricting policies essentially come too late. At the macro level, preconditions should be met that create a societal climate that discourage radicalism and encourage positive intergroup relations. For example, phase models often deduce that having a strong Muslim identity might indicate being in a process of radicalisation and posing a potential threat to society. The root cause model, on the other hand, deduces that having a strong Muslim identity can be very beneficial for the individual in that it is likely to be a source of self-esteem and facilitates a sense of relatedness with like-minded individuals (e.g., the social identity theory, Tajfel & Turner, 1982; Ellemers et al., 2002). Only when one perceives one's social identity to be threatened, for instance due to experiences with discrimination or hostile out-groups, does the likelihood of out-group resentment and out-group derogation increase (Tajfel & Turner, 1982; Ellemers et al., 2002). If policy could aim to encourage members of

society to understand and respect different social identities – and associated forms of behaviour – within society, strong religious identities might become a positive feature, rather than a negative one. The aim should be to create an environment in which the mere sight of a bearded Muslim man wearing traditional clothing does not inspire feelings of fear among the majority, and in which Muslims do not have to feel feared and threatened. For instance, the media and policy makers could combine forces to get Muslims more actively involved in the public and political discourse. It is important to raise awareness among Muslims that they are respected as part of society and that democratic citizenship also implies that people have the right – or the duty – to represent themselves. The media should encourage eloquent, moderate Muslims to speak up and embody the Muslim community in the public and political domain. Simultaneously, governmental institutions should facilitate political citizenship among Muslims. For instance, school programmes could be developed that point to the importance of civil political participation. If they feel they are properly represented and that represented institutions are legitimate, they will feel that they are being taken seriously.

Crucially, policy makers need to realise that the mechanisms that affect radicalisation also work the other way around: they can also facilitate positive behaviour. How people perceive and respond to macro-level conditions is to a large extent influenced by social and individual conditions. As such, governments need to realise that policy that is implemented at the macro level only has an effect on people's attitudes and behaviour if social and individual circumstances are taken into account. It will not help to assist Muslims in organising themselves within the political domain if Muslims latently still believe that these representations are not legitimate. Implementations at the institutional level should be supported and guided by implementations at the social level. When measures are taken to encourage Muslims to organise themselves and to participate actively in the political domain, these measures should be accompanied by measures at the social level. For instance, information sessions and debates at a municipality or neighbourhood level could be organised that raise awareness of the implemented measures.

7.4. De-radicalisation and disengagement programmes

Above, we have criticised the fact that simple phase models inaccurately assume that violence or terrorism always results from a fully-fledged radicalisation process. This notion stems in our view from the fact that phase models, like many other studies of radicalisation, are post hoc studies that suffer from selection biases. These studies do not cover the processes of individuals who for social or individual reasons stepped in at later phases, aborted radicalisation prematurely, or were radicalising in a non-violent direction all along. To understand why radicalisation occurs and why it

sometimes evolves towards violence it is therefore essential to broaden the research agenda and to take into account other possible causes and (counter-suggestive) outcomes of radicalisation.

Supplementing this line of argumentation we also strongly believe that it is worthwhile to bring in experience and knowledge from types of radicalisation processes other than Islamist radicalisation. One area to gain inspiration concerning disengagement programmes is from right or left-wing radical groups who – at least in Europe – have a longer history than radical Islamists. The possible similarities between radical right and left-wing groups and radical Islamists should of course be weighed against the obvious differences. However, micro-level causal factors such as personal (individual) motivation for wanting to join a radical group could likely be the same. And thus also the lessons learned on how, why and when radicals leave their radical group.

Second, we criticised the logic of necessity that is located in simple phase models, which stems from the underlying assumption that ‘thought’ comes before action. Thus, one widespread feature of many de-radicalisation programmes is the focus on either preventing people from becoming radicalised – understood as sharing anti-democratic views and a belief in the necessity and usefulness of employing violence to reach a stated goal – or, if they already are ‘radical of mind’, in the necessity and usefulness of de-radicalising these individuals. However, as studies on right-wing and left-wing radicals and successful disengagement programmes for these groups of radicals have shown, it is not a necessary precondition to de-radicalise radical individuals’ minds in order to have them exit radical groups. From a counterterrorism point of view it is more important to ensure that they are not engaged in violent activities than that they have become non-radical of mind. Furthermore, when they have left the radical group most of them become less radical day by day. Thus, much more focus should be placed on disengagement programmes rather than the present one-sided focus on de-radicalisation programmes. Ideally, there should be equal focus on de-radicalisation and disengagement.

Thirdly, as argued above, radicalisation processes should be perceived as embedded individual processes. Therefore, de-radicalisation and disengagement programmes for radicals must be flexible, adaptable and attuned to the individual differences between radicals. Essentially, they should be targeted bottom-up approaches rather than broad-masked fish-net approaches that are assigned to large ethnic or religious segments of society and that run the risk of stigmatising ethnic and/or religious minorities and potentially radicalise more people than they de-radicalise.

One important lesson learned from the history of right and left-wing radicalisation is that most members of radical groups at some point in time

leave their group. The reasons vary from becoming too old (many radical groups are essentially a youth phenomenon), getting a job, being involved in a new relationship with a (non-radical) girlfriend or boyfriend, becoming a parent, and so on (e.g., Reinares, 2004). As life changes, so do the interests and outlooks of most people. The goal of exit or disengagement programmes must be to help individuals leave sooner rather than later and help them overcome the obstacles of leaving a radical group. Thus, studies on right and left-wing radicals show that one of the prime reasons for not leaving is a 'fear of standing alone without protection from the group' (Bjørge 2005, p. 64; see also Bjørge et al. 2001; Bjørge & Horgan, 2009). Defectors are often punished for leaving the group since they are viewed as 'traitors'. Or they risk being physically attacked by former opponents or enemies. Thus, disengagement programmes for right and left-wing radicals often focus on reducing the level of threat of serious bodily harm by, for example, removing dangerous weapons, knives and guns from the street and the immediate radical environment. This could be ensured by bans on knives and other weapons followed by routine searches of known group members and their followers. It is not clear whether the same is needed vis-à-vis Islamist radicalisation; however, this must be assessed at local or street level by people with an intimate knowledge of the group and the immediate environment of the individual in question. As a follow-up to this, disengagement programmes should also support possible victims of violence so that other possible defectors experience that the radical groups are not the only ones who can provide support and security. Another often mentioned hindrance for defectors is the threat of negative sanctions from authorities resulting from old 'friends' tipping off the police concerning possible criminal activities, which the defecting individual may have committed as a member of the radical group. Here, authorities should weigh the advantages of disengagement against those of the legal prosecution of the defecting individual.

A central point is that disengagement programmes must provide possible exits – ways out of the radical environment, places to go. Thus, the authorities should consider providing practical assistance such as helping defectors to find accommodation far away from their former friends, helping the individual to move, to pay the deposit and/or the rent for the new home for a certain period of time, helping with all other practicalities, finding a suitable job, embarking on an education, and other practical problems.

Individually designed disengagement programmes should furthermore employ parents to provide support for the defecting young person and parental support groups should be established. Furthermore, youth workers, teachers and police officers as well as other professionals dealing with juvenile affairs should be informed and trained in ways to help disengaging youths. Hotlines, role models, information points and the sharing of best practices

should be geared towards designing tailor-made disengagement programmes for individuals who want to or might want to defect.

7.5. Implications for future research

The complex, multidimensional nature of the causes of radicalisation demands 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 is because the micro-level factor appears to intervene in practically each relationship between macro-level conditions and radicalisation.

Research should therefore examine whether people who identify most strongly with the group that is affected by macro-level factors are also the ones whose attitudes and behaviour are most strongly affected by this particular factor. For example, both Muslim and non-Muslim citizens of Europe can be angry about and responsive to perceiving Muslims around the world as being humiliated. However, social identification approaches (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Ellemers et al., 2002) predict that in such particular events, the observation is likely to be more painful for Muslims than for non-Muslims. Even more so, among Muslims there will also be a variety in their responses: the more they feel that being a Muslim is important to their self-concept, and the stronger they identify with other Muslims, the more they are likely to be drawn to radicalism when they perceive their in-group to be threatened – especially if and when they are in a situation in their lives where more factors than social indignation lead them towards radicalisation (like the death of a family member, etc.). In other words: it is the perception rather than the objective situation that is relevant in the emergence of radicalisation. In order to gain a further insight into 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.

Moreover, the importance of social identification in predicting human behaviour implies that individuals who are in search of a satisfactory identity might be particularly likely to be drawn to radical groups and ideologies that provide an identity as well as behavioural guidelines. For instance, second-generation Muslims who feel that they are not completely accepted by their parents' generation as well as their 'autochthonous' peers often turn to a strong identification with the Ummah (e.g., Buijs et al., 2006). The stronger

the need to belong 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 the 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. Future research should formulate specific hypotheses about the circumstances under which identity crises are more or less likely to result in radicalisation, and how, for instance, authority figures can play a role in this process.

Lastly, more research is required to scrutinise the differences between radicalisation processes that find their wellspring in ideological concerns about macro-level conditions, and radicalisation processes that are products of social dynamics in which individuals become embedded within a social context that is conducive to radicalism. Which social processes are essential in shaping an environment that is conducive to radicalisation? To which extent are such social contexts for instance the result of peer pressure or of homophily – the tendency to interact with those who share similar beliefs, and which social processes determine whether norms develop that encourage violence rather than democratic solutions to perceived concerns? Future research should examine the differences and similarities regarding the causal factors that are responsible for these different types of radicalisation processes, and under which circumstances people become more vulnerable to negative influence from social interaction dynamics, and under which circumstances they are more likely to resist negative social influence. The question arises, for example, whether it is essential that at least one individual in the direct environment is or has been involved in a process of ideological radicalisation, to shape a social context that allows others to step in at later phases of the radicalisation process.

To conclude, the present study aimed to show that in order to understand a phenomenon as rare and specific as radicalisation, it is essential to examine radicalisation as an embedded individual process in which the individual is constantly interacting with his social environment. Macro-level conditions alone cannot explain radicalisation; specific social and individual circumstances determine how people interpret and react to their environment. If we aim to understand the very few who radicalise we thus need to take a social and individual approach and examine radicalisation from the perspective of the radical.

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