The Dutch approach towards radicalisation: prevention, detection and intervention

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Introduction²

On September the 11, 2001 four terrorist suicide attacks killed approximately 3,000 people in the United States of America. Nineteen Al Qaeda members hijacked four airplanes, took over control and flew the airplanes to their pre-selected targets. Two airplanes crashed into the New York World Trade Center, causing the Twin Towers to collapse. The third airplane hit the Pentagon building. The fourth airplane presumably on its way to the White House crashed into an urban area near Shanksville, Pennsylvania probably after a fight between the passengers and the hijackers³. The world was shocked and in disbelief. Why was the outcome of the attacks so catastrophic? There were a number of new elements in the 9-11 attacks. Firstly the number of victims. There was never a terrorist attack that had caused so many fatalities. A result of that strategy which was focussed on killing many people and creating maximum damage. Hence the use of airplanes as guided missiles. Secondly terrorist suicide attacks were not common in western countries. So police and intelligence units were not specifically looking for this type of attack indicators. Thirdly some of the terrorists had lived and studied in western countries. Members of the Al Qaida related Atta-cell⁴ who were responsible for the attacks had lived in Germany. Because they seemed to live normal student lives they did not raise any suspicion. Fourthly there were intelligence failures to take into account. Different intelligence agencies had collected intelligence on some people who were later involved as suspects in the 9-11 attacks or on suspicious preparatory actions. Because they had not shared this intelligence with other agencies the overall picture was not

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² Authors note: This article focuses on the Dutch approach towards Muslim radicalisation. This because of its high impact compared towards other forms of radicalisation like animal rights, left and right wing radicalisation.
³ http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/the_september_11th_terrorist_attacks
⁴ Mohammed Atta was the ringleader of the nineteen hijackers responsible for the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania (www.discoverthenetworks.org and The 9-11 commission report)
complete. The massive attacks resulted in many governmental actions like new security measures, better intelligence sharing and additional legislation to prevent future attacks. The United States of America started the war on terrorism to eliminate the responsible Al Qaida leaders who had ordered the attacks. The EU ordered their member states to improve their counter terrorism legislation. This resulted in improved intelligence sharing between the EU member states and other relevant countries. On one hand there were a lot of combined efforts to prevent as many terrorist attacks as possible. On the other hand there were also people who were satisfied with the outcome of the terrorist attacks. A small group of Al Qaida terrorists had been able to cause havoc to one of the world powers: the United States of America. The people who were satisfied with the 9-11 attacks mainly belonged to radical Islamic groups who regarded the United States of America as one of their main enemies. This because of the fact that to their opinion the United States of America are interfering with political and economical issues in Islamic countries. Among the people who sympathised with Atta-cell were many unhappy socially deprived feeling Muslim youngsters and some western converts. They expressed their feelings mainly on the internet, in mosques, public discussions and interviews. The members of the Atta-cell were regarded as heroes who had died as martyrs for the Islamic cause which is to promote Islam and to fight the enemies of Islam. The terrorist attacks resulted in renewed interest in the religious and political views of Islam towards the western countries. Role models like Osama Bin Laden and Ayman Al-Zawahiri who supported radical Islamic and anti-western views used the 9-11 attacks to launch their Al Qaida propaganda program. They called for an armed struggle referred to as armed Jihad against the enemies of Islam. As a result the United States of America, Israel, the western countries and leaders of Islamic countries who embraced western views became legitimate targets in the eyes of radicals. The pro-western Islamic leaders were often referred to as “false leaders”. The Al Qaida propaganda program inspired

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5 The War on Terror (also known as the Global War on Terrorism) is a term commonly applied to an international military campaign which started as a result of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. This resulted in an international military campaign to eliminate al-Qaeda and other militant organizations. The United Kingdom and many other NATO and non-NATO nations such as Pakistan participate in the conflict (Wikipedia)

6 Armed Jihad: holy war; effort to propagate Islam within society or in the world or in the world by any means; lawful by the war holy war, prescribed by the sharia against infidels (Jihad, Gilles Kepel p 432)
more people to approve and support terror attacks. Some people decided to train themselves in order to carry out terror attacks themselves. On March 2004 Madrid was struck by horrific terrorist attacks killing 191 and wounding 2050 commuters. On June 2005 terrorist suicide attacks in London killed 52 and wounded 700 commuters. Both the attacks in Madrid and London were executed by radical Muslims. The attacks were directed against easy accessible unprotected soft-targets in order to kill as many people as possible. Also many terrorist attacks could be prevented or disrupted. In all of these cases improved information and intelligence gathering and sharing resulted in the early detection of the planned terrorist plots and the subsequent arrest of the terrorists involved. It became clear that information and intelligence gathering and sharing was an important tool in the preventing terrorist attacks.

“Eyes and Ears”

On August 29, 2004 Dutch television broadcasted “Submission” a documentary about the oppression of women in some Muslim communities. “Submission” was written by a Dutch politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali from Somalian origin. She had renounced her Islamic religion and turned into an Islam critic mainly because of the disadvantaged position of women in some Islamic communities. Theo van Gogh was a controversial Dutch cineaste who was also a friend of Ayaan Hirsi Ali. As a filmmaker he became involved in the production of this documentary. “Submission” caused a lot of resentment and anger in Dutch Muslim society. This resulted in serious death threats against both. Hirsi Ali was therefore protected by the police. Van Gogh however refused police protection. It was his daily routine to go to work by bicycle. On November 2, 2004 at 08.30 a.m. he arrived by bicycle in the Linnaeusstraat in Amsterdam. There he was overtaken by a young Muslim named Mohammed Bouyeri. Still riding on his bicycle he shot Theo van Gogh with a pistol. Van Gogh got hit and fell from his bike and tried to flee to the other side of the road. Bouyeri followed him by foot and shot his

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7 [2004 Madrid train bombings (Wikipedia)]
8 7 July 2005 London bombings ([The terrorist hunters, Andy Hayman](http://dotsub.com/view/e94437e7-f991-4af0-a0f3-86a353c6c96b))
9 [Jihad in Europe, Peter Nesser](http://dotsub.com/view/e94437e7-f991-4af0-a0f3-86a353c6c96b)
10 [http://dotsub.com/view/e94437e7-f991-4af0-a0f3-86a353c6c96b](http://dotsub.com/view/e94437e7-f991-4af0-a0f3-86a353c6c96b)
victim several times. After being hit multiple times Van Gogh fell on the pavement. Bouyeri knelt down beside Van Gogh and cut his throat. He stuck two knives into the body of Van Gogh and left a letter on the body in which he threatened Ayaan Hirsi Ali. After that he reloaded his pistol and said to a shocked bystander: “So now you know what will happen to you all!” He then walked to the approaching police cars. When he was within shooting distance he aimed his pistol and fired multiple shots at the police who arrived at the crime scene. He hit several police cars and even one police officer in his bullet proof vest. The police returned fire and eventually Bouyeri was shot in his leg by the police. He later stated in court that he had been deliberately shooting at the police. He had probably wanted to die that day as a martyr. The barbaric killing of Theo van Gogh and the subsequent planned suicide by cop shooting scenario caused a shock in Dutch society. Especially when it became clear that the suspect’s name was Mohammed Bouyeri. He was known as an active Muslim youth worker. A neighbourhood cop from Amsterdam knew Bouyeri very well. They had often worked together in a neighbourhood centre. The policeman and Bouyeri used to shake hands and they had friendly talks. The policeman however had seen Bouyeri changing when he turned more and more towards a strict interpretation of Islamic rules. Bouyeri started dressing in Islamic clothing. He had grown a beard and at a certain moment Bouyeri stopped shaking hands with the policeman and even called him his enemy. In the neighbourhood centre Bouyeri claimed that it was necessary to stop serving alcoholic beverages and that Muslim men and women should not be allowed to have meetings together in the same room. There was an increasing pattern of strict interpretations of Islamic rules. Eventually this led to an unacceptable and unworkable situation. Bouyeri lost his job at the neighbourhood centre and focused more and more on promoting orthodox and even radical Islamic views. In doing so he became increasingly anti-western. He also started writing about Islam and organised so called living room meetings. Because Bouyeri was not trained by an official Islamic scholar he and his friends created their own interpretation of

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11 Terrorist attack analysis; drs. Jaap Knotter and Koos Barten 2010, Police Academy for the Netherlands
12 Living room meetings is a term used by the Dutch National Coordinator of Counter Intelligence (NCTV) for a group of Muslims who meet in private houses because they disapprove with western views as preached in many mosques
Islamic rules by using the internet as a source of knowledge. This system is also referred to as “the copy paste interpretation of Islam”. Probably Bouyeri and his friends were influenced by a Syrian man known as Abu Khaled. When the documentary “Submission” was broadcasted Bouyeri searched the internet for how to deal with this in his eyes insult and attack on Islam. He found a 14th century text of an early Islamic scholar named Ibn Taymiyya. He interpreted the text as a fatwa\textsuperscript{13} that allowed him to kill someone who insulted the Islam. In this case Theo van Gogh who was contrary to Ayaan Hirsi Ali not protected by police became an easy soft-target\textsuperscript{14}. When police tried to arrest two of Bouyeri’s friends they barricaded themselves in their home in Den Haag and threw a hand grenade at the police, wounding several police officers seriously. After a day of negotiation the police shot teargas grenades into the house. One of the two suspects acted extremely aggressive when he fled from the teargas in the house. Outside the house he challenged the police. A police sniper fired a warning shot. This did not calm him down. Instead he became more aggressive. Eventually he was incapacitated by the police sniper who shot him in his shoulder. In the post 9-11-area there are more case studies describing violent radicalisation processes with Muslim youngsters and converts. Not only in the Netherlands but also in other countries. In Germany members of the Sauerlandgruppe became active. Muslims and converts radicalised together as a result of visits to radical mosques and recruiters. They trained in Pakistan how to use weapons and explosives. After they returned to Germany they started preparing terrorist attacks against American targets in Germany\textsuperscript{15}. They were arrested in a large-scale operation by the German police when they were preparing their explosive devices in a holiday centre. Another case is the so called Yehya Kaddouri case in the Netherlands. He was a young Muslim high school student who radicalised during his high school period. He wanted to destroy the Israeli embassy in Den Haag with home made explosives. For that reason he dropped out on school and started experimenting with homemade explosives. A

\textsuperscript{13} Fatwa: a religious judgment based on the Sharia (Islam – Personen en begrippen van A tot Z)
\textsuperscript{14} De ideologische en religieuze ontwikkeling van Mohammed B. Deskundigenrapport in de straftaak tegen Mohammed B. in opdracht van het openbaar ministerie opgesteld voor de arrondissementsrechtbank Amsterdam. Door prof. dr. mr. Ruud Peeters (mei 2005)
\textsuperscript{15} www.spiegelonline.de; Sauerlandgruppe
concerned friend phoned the police\textsuperscript{16}. Then there was the Nicky Reilly case in the United Kingdom. A young British convert started building an explosive device based on internet instructions. He tried to ignite the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in a coffee shop in Exeter. He injured himself as a result of a premature detonation\textsuperscript{17}. In Iraq a young Belgium female convert named Muriel Degauque committed a terrorist suicide attack against a group of patrolling US soldiers\textsuperscript{18}. Because of the unprofessional execution of the attack she was the only fatal victim. The analyses of these case studies showed that the persons involved had radicalised in their residential area and that there had often been observable indicators. They had often displayed radicalised behaviour at home, at school, at work, in the mosque, during meetings with care chain partners and local authorities and sometimes during confrontations with the police. So many people and organizations literally saw or heard how people were radicalising. This was an important conclusion with regards to the detection of radicalisation indicators. The problem was that many people were not familiar with these “signs” and could therefore not interpret them as radicalisation indicators. There was also the freedom of speech and radicalisation paradox. In other words will you be criminally prosecuted when you are expressing different ideologies? In the Netherlands a general accepted definition of radicalisation is \textit{The (active) pursue and / or support of far-reaching changes in society, which may endanger (the survival of) the democratic legal order (target), possibly with the use of undemocratic methods (means), which may affect to the functioning of the democratic legal order (effect).}\textsuperscript{19} According to this definition within a democratic society people are allowed to have radical opinions. Radical opinions lead to new ideas and can therefore be very useful and a contribution to the social process. But in a democracy there is a limit to express radical opinions freely. Once someone starts promoting violence against objects, institutions or people because of his extreme radical political or religious views the government should intervene. This in order to fulfil the government’s main responsibility, which is to protect society. The turning point between in the radicalisation

\textsuperscript{16} Lach met de duivel, Yehya Kaddouri
\textsuperscript{17} \url{http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7859887.stm}; Nail bomber given life sentence, BBC news
\textsuperscript{18} Vrede zij met u zuster, Chris de Stoop
\textsuperscript{19} \url{www.nctv.nl} (National Coordinator for Counter Terrorism)
process is the element of violence. Therefore the monitoring of radicalisation processes is necessary to see whether people are growing towards violence. To get the required information on radicalisation processes the “eyes and ears”-policy for first line responders, neighbourhood cops and care chain partners was developed. The more people that are trained in this policy the more “eyes and ears” there are. It should be stressed that the focus of this policy is prevention and not total governmental control. Another important issue is that radicalisation indicators can only be assessed when you know the right context in which they are used. This means that in the case of an observable indicator you need further investigation to assess the meaning of the indicator. The fact that someone promotes another ideology does not automatically mean that he promotes violent action. In fact you need additional information. Sometimes this information presents itself after a certain amount of time when the person involved becomes more radicalised. In other cases there is already information in police or other administration systems because of previous incidents.

For the police this “eyes and ears”-policy resulted in the development of the radicalisation awareness training. A training session varying from half a day to one day in which the phenomena of radicalisation is explained, what are the steps in the radicalisation process, what is legal and what is illegal, how to detect radicalisation indicators and how to deal with the gathered information\textsuperscript{20}. The police officers are trained to put the information in their police administration systems. These systems are checked by police officers working on the Information Desk. They are trained on a higher level and have more facilities to make a reliable assessment on radicalisation and terrorist attack indicators\textsuperscript{21}. In the Dutch “eyes and ears”-police training there are two sets of indicators: Radicalisation indicators (3 I’s) and Terrorism indicators (6 V’s).

\textsuperscript{20} Basistraining Radicialisatie en Terrorisme, politieacademie Apeldoorn, Team Intelligence
\textsuperscript{21} 3I’s en 6 V’s NCTB, December 2005, Early Warning Indicators (combined information from AIVD, NCTB, VNG and the police).
Radicalisation indicators 3 I’s

1 Ideologie = is the new promoted Ideology
2 Identificatie = Identification with role model or a group
3 Indicaties van gedrag = Indications of behaviour

Terrorism indicators 6 V’s

1 Verblijf = Residence to stay in order to prepare the attack
2 Vervoer = Transport for reconnaissance and preparatory actions
3 Valuta = Money to pay for all the expenses involved
4 Vervalste papieren = Falsified papers to hide the real identity or purpose
5 Voorwerpen = Objects like weapons or explosives
6 Voorverkenning = The scouting of possible targets

The golden rule in this system is that “one indicator is no indicator”. The chance that someone is radicalising towards violent action increases as more indicators can be appointed. It was discovered that especially neighbourhood cops were in the position to gather a lot of the required information. They are often considered by Muslim communities as easy accessible and trusted police officers who are able to handle the problems the parents encounter with their rebellious or radical children. They can also explain to the parents that there are two main reasons for preventing their children to become violent radicals: protection for the person involved and protection of society. When there is an intervention at the beginning of the violent radicalisation process you might prevent someone from becoming more and more violent which is a problem for the person involved and society.

Multidisciplinary approach towards radicalisation

As mentioned before we learned that also school teachers, social service employees, tax employees and youth workers were sometimes confronted with radicalising persons. This led to the idea that their information should be shared in multidisciplinary meetings in order
to combine all the available information. The information is needed to determine the right context of the observed indicators in order to make the correct assessment. Because in the Dutch system local authorities are responsible for community safety matters it was proposed that the meetings were organized by local authorities. Participants were the local authority security officials, police, school board representatives and care chain partners like local mental organizations, youth and social workers. Other parties can be added if there is a specific reason. Sometimes a Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) is a co-participant in a multidisciplinary meeting. This is especially the case when the NGO has a liaison function between a minority group and the local authorities. In the multidisciplinary meetings the radicalisation information should be presented as a case study. The problem should be analyzed and the different participants should with regard to their professional background and responsibilities comment whether they can be part of the solution. This system is accepted by a number of cities in the Netherlands. Another system is developed by the Rotterdam police\textsuperscript{22}. The theory behind this system is that people in crises situations often call the always available police switchboard. The information is then coordinated by the Threat Analysis Department of the police. They know all the other relevant partners who are involved in the mental and security care chain. The police can contact one or more of these partners for a specific case profile. The Dutch Police Administrative Legislation (\textit{Wet Politie Gegevens}) has been updated to legally allow the police to share police information with relevant care chain partners, civilians or local authorities\textsuperscript{23}. This to make sure that a case specific tailor-made intervention can be made. The idea with both systems is that a specific case study is analyzed by a team of experts who will think of a tailor-made intervention. This does not mean that the police always has to be part of the intervention. This case specific tailor-made multidisciplinary approach is referred to as the Individual Oriented Approach (\textit{Persoonsgerichte Aanpak}). This means for instance that a housing cooperation is helping the person involved to find a place to stay or that the person will receive job supervision, or that a mental health coach is helping someone to get out of his psychic depression. A

\textsuperscript{22} 3A-system organized by Rotterdam police.
\textsuperscript{23} Wet Politie Gegevens art. 19 en art. 20
neighbourhood cop can establish a contact on a regular bases to the person to prevent him from making contact to the wrong persons again.

**National Coordinator for Counter Terrorism and Security (NCTV) and European projects**

After the 9-11-attacks the EU tasked its member states with the organisation of an effective counter terrorism policy. This led in the Netherlands among other things to the formation of National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (*Nationaal Coordinator voor Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid*)\(^2\). The NCTV is the organisation for the government that deals with counterterrorism, cyber security, national security and crisis management. Their focus is on preventing and minimising social disruption. On a national level the NCTV organised a so called knowledge centre on radicalisation. Everybody in the Netherlands is allowed to log in on their website [www.nctv.nl](http://www.nctv.nl) and can find a lot of information on radicalisation and how to deal with radicalisation. There is also a toolbox on extremism available where at least first line responders can train themselves with e-learning on several radicalisation related topics. For the police much additional information and training sessions are available via several European projects:

- Community Police Preventing Radicalisation and terrorism (COPPRA)
- Radicalisation Awareness Network Europe (RANPOL)
- Scientific Approach to Finding Indicators of and Responses to Radicalisation (SAFIRE)

**Conclusions and recommendations**

- Radicalisation is a complex process with many different variables
- People can radicalise by themselves or be effected by a recruiter, internet or social media

\(^2\) Since the establishment of the NCTV, central government has had a single organization that deals with counterterrorism, cyber security, national security and crisis management. Together with our partners in the security sector, we are committed to making the Netherlands a safe and stable place. Our focus is on preventing and minimizing social disruption
Radicalisation tends to become a problem once violent means are proposed or used.

Radicalisation can cause considerable problems for the person involved but also for security of the society.

To determine whether there is a problem or that a person is just expressing his freedom of speech the radicalisation process should be analyzed; therefore detection is necessary.

Many institutions / people can act as “eyes and ears” to detect radicalisation indicators; therefore first line responders should be trained on radicalisation issues.

There should always be a connection established with a radicalising or radicalised person to monitor whether the radicalisation process is growing towards (more) violence.

The approach of violent radicalisation should be analyzed in a multidisciplinary session so that the right different care chain partners can be involved in the tailor-made individual oriented approach.

**Literature**

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- Lach met de duivel; Yehya Kaddouri; ISBN10: 9461640390
- Vrede zij met u zuster; Chris de Stoop; ISBN10: 9023458168
- Jihad; Gilles Kepel; ISBN10: 0674010906
- COPPRA training guide; Federal Police
  Rue Fritz Toussaint 8, 1050 Brussels, Belgium
- The terrorist hunters; Andy Hayman ISBN10: 0552159476

**Relevant websites**

- [www.nctv.nl](http://www.nctv.nl)
  National Coordinator Counterterrorism ans Security
- [www.discoverthenetworks.org](http://www.discoverthenetworks.org)
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The Reilly case
- http://dotsub.com/view/e94437e7-f991-4af0-a0f3-86a353c6c96b
The Bouyeri case
De ideologische en religieuze ontwikkeling van Mohammed B.
Prof.Dr.Mr. Ruud Peeters

Training Sessions
- Basic Radicalisation and Terrorism - Police academy for the Netherlands Apeldoorn – Team Intelligence – Koos Barten
- Advanced Radicalisation and Terrorism – Police academy for the Netherlands, Apeldoorn – Team Intelligence – Koos Barten
- Terrorist attack analysis – Police academy Apeldoorn - Team Intelligence drs. Jaap Knotter and Koos Barten. For law enforcement only