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## الندوة العلمية

استعمال الإنترنت في تمويل الإرهاب وتجنيد الإرهابيين

التطرف في أوروبا وما بعدها

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## *Abstract*

Radicalisation processes in European diaspora communities are subject to different causation clusters. Private motivations such as the need for public attention; an identity crisis or feelings of discrimination in the country of residence; the special role of religion in diaspora situations and certain radical religious currents play a determining role. Special relevance can be observed regarding political conflicts in the diaspora community countries of origin or in countries with Muslim majorities in general. These conflicts seem to contribute to radicalisation processes in Europe via different channels.

## *Conflict and diaspora*

Until recently the dominating argument was the inverse i.e. the focus was on members of the diaspora as a source of revenue and political support for the armed struggles within their home countries which in turn fuels the conflict there.<sup>1</sup> They can send money and guns, circulate propaganda, and build virtual information exchange networks, all of which can have incalculable consequences in the zones of their ultimate destinations. One can also not rule out the possibility that occasionally some young man in the diaspora decides to temporarily return to his country of origin in order to participate directly in the fight. This involvement does not present a direct danger for the host country left behind. Nevertheless, the immediate participation in an armed conflict regularly results in an intensification of radical tendencies if the individual returns causing a feedback effect as war veteran. In Europe it seems that these fighters from various Muslim countries were crucial in the establishment and maintenance of Jihadist networks all over the continent.

This paper concentrates on conflicts taking place outside Europe as a pre-eminent source of violent radicalisation processes within Europe, mainly within its diaspora communities, whilst

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<sup>1</sup> “Diasporas sometimes harbour rather romanticized attachments to their group of origin and may nurse grievances as a form of asserting continued belonging. They are much richer than the people in their country of origin and so can afford to finance vengeance. Above all, they do not have to suffer any of the awful consequences of renewed conflict because they do not live in the country. Hence, they are a ready market for rebel groups touting vengeance and a source of finance for renewed conflict.” (Collier 2000:14) This support is not necessarily made public, because diaspora populations have a status to lose in their new countries of residence. While for example in the Palestinian territories large manifestations took place during the cartoon debate, European sympathisers did not participate in this kind of protest.

keeping in mind that feedback-processes in the above mentioned direction further contribute to a deepening radicalisation.

### *Radical movements in the Muslim world*

The strengthening of Islamist movements in the Muslim world began in the late 1970s as a result of a crisis in secular postcolonial development projects in Arab countries. Lack of political participation; repression of the opposition; social injustice resulting in high youth unemployment and a conflict over values between a Western-oriented elite and the majority population created a fertile ground for the rise of Islamist mass movements. External factors like the Arab defeats in the Israeli-Arab wars; the Islamic revolution in Iran and the war in Afghanistan also contributed to a boost in Islamist opposition.

The regimes in these countries reacted with rather inconsistent policies resulting in a playing off of the Islamist perpetrators against left wing parties alternating with waves of repression which led to them losing credibility in the eyes of the Islamists (Werenfels 2005). At the beginning of the 1990s, numerous volunteers from Afghanistan returned to their home countries. Militarily and ideologically trained with an Islamist orientation they attempted to intensify the armed conflict against their regimes raising the oppositional conflict potential that, for its part, was reason enough for an increase in security systems in Arab countries. Even though the conflicts were artificially pacified through massive repression in the late the 1990s, the underlying constellation of contrary societal concepts has not yet been overcome.

Conflicts were triggered by groups claiming the unity of state and religion (Islam) and pursuing the postulate “Islam is the solution” via military means. The target of these actions was the, in their eyes, heretic state whose unIslamic and secular structures should be overcome through an Islamic “society project”. Islamist groups have succeeded in mobilising the socio-economic-grievances of large parts of the populations in Tunisia (since 1986), Algeria (since 1991), Egypt (since 1992), presaged by single events such as the occupation of the Grand Mosque in Mecca (November 1979); the revolt of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syrian Hama (1981/82) and the armed actions of the Bouiali-group in Algeria (1984/85).

These conflicts did not only affect the countries where they took place, but they also shaped the mindset of many (important) figures in international radical networks thus creating political consciousness (Sirseldoudi 2007). Also, many “common” radicals, such as the

interviewees of Farhad Khosrokhavar (Khosrokhavar 2006) in French prisons had their “cognitive opening”<sup>2</sup> during the events in Algeria following the electoral successes of the Islamist FIS 1991. Even Osama bin Laden, known for his international orientation with special focus on Saudi Arabia as the heartland of Islam, and centre of gravity for Jihad, states that his attention was drawn to the struggle of Islam by the difficult situation of oppositional Islamists in his mother’s country of origin, Syria. He was already supporting them financially by the beginning of the 1980s (Kepel and Milelli 2006:30).

It needs to be considered however that the radical thoughts motivating young Muslims today often emerged under those very special conditions. Sayyid Qutb was writing whilst in prison, and an important element of Al-Zawahiri’s outlook is ascribed to his experience in prison. When he left Egypt experts assume that he hated the whole world as a direct result of his experiences in prison.<sup>3</sup>

A very special case is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which has dominated media coverage for decades and which Islamist radicals all over the world refer to as paradigmatic for the treatment of Muslims. For many of today’s radical thinkers, the Arab-Israeli wars were the traumatic events at the beginning of their careers as leaders of radical Islamism. This is as true for the Palestinian, Abdullah Azzam, al Qai’dah’s former guiding voice in Afghanistan<sup>4</sup>, as for the Palestinian, Abu Qatada, the formerly London based religious leader who was known as the Al-Qa’idah ambassador in European radical circles. Abu-Musab al-Zarqawi, founder of Ansar al Islam<sup>5</sup> and Al-Tawhid was born and socialised in Al-Zarqa, Jordan. He was a major

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<sup>2</sup> Khosrokhavar calls it an archetypical event in a person’s life (Khosrokhavar 2006:384ff.). It can be a political event with a great impact on the individual, or an event in every day life with symbolic significance where he reaches a decision about the antagonism of West towards the Islamic world. An oft-cited trigger event to join radical or Jihadi movements, even when the person was not particularly religious, was the 1992 military coup in Algeria which represented violence against Islam, jeopardising Islam and the Ummah by the impious West. The concept of “cognitive opening” as coined by Wiktorowicz can be a traumatic biographical event, but it can also be produced intentionally. In order to attract new recruits, groups can bring about a cognitive opening through discussions and enlightening Muslims about conflicts in places such as the Palestinian territories, Kashmir and Bosnia (Wiktorowicz 2005:20f.). This is needed because it shakes certainty in previously accepted beliefs and renders an individual more receptive to the possibility of alternative views and perspectives. It also generates a sense of crisis and urgency. One common method used in bringing about a cognitive opening is the use of „moral shock“; fostering the participation of previously unconnected, concerned citizens with similar ideologies (Wiktorowicz 2005:21).

<sup>3</sup> In his “Black Book” Zawahiri presents a large number of reports describing (often in the first person) acts of torture and abuse (McCants, Brachman et al. 2006).

<sup>4</sup> He called Jihad in Afghanistan a mere prelude to regaining the first Qibla (i.e. Jerusalem), and believed that most mujaheddin, when asked, would claim that the path of Jihad must lead to "Bayt al-Maqdis" (i.e. the holy site of Jerusalem) (McCants, Brachman et al. 2006:38).

<sup>5</sup> The group was first known by its original name, Jund al-Islam (Soldiers of Islam). In 2002 it was renamed in Ansar al-Islam (Partisans of Islam). In September 2003, in its inaugural declaration on the internet, the new

figure in campaigns against the US and its allies in Iraq and he also maintained recruitment networks in Europe before being killed in 2006. Al-Zarqawi was a stronghold for the PLO and Palestinian refugees and it is said that Zarqawi spent a lot of time during his youth reading the inscriptions on gravestones of the fallen Palestinian heroes in the wars against Israel (Costin 2006; Kepel and Milelli 2006:444). The international radical network Hizb ut-Tahrir, which aims to undermine governments by spreading its message through education and non-violent means was established in 1953 in East Jerusalem under the leadership of Taqi-al-Din al-Nabhani al-Filistini, a Palestinian who fought Israel and wanted to restore a pure caliphate under a unified Islamic authority. Its original members were principally diaspora Palestinians from Jordan, Syria, Egypt and other North African countries. Hizb ut-Tahrir rejects democracy entirely and is known for profound anti-Semitism which reflects the experiences of the founding members with Israel.<sup>6</sup> Today, the group has representation all over the world and maintains a headquarters in Europe with a large organisational base in London. It is a popular radical organisation among young and intellectual Muslims and in Western Europe.

As we can see, Palestinians, for example from their Jordan diaspora, continue to represent a guiding intellectual force of transnational radical Islamism. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the high number of Palestinian refugees all over the Muslim world enjoys special attention in Islamist radical thought also because of its long duration. According to recent studies, most Jihad ideologues are of either Saudi or Palestinian origin, replacing, to a large extent, the former dominance of Egyptians (Kepel and Milelli 2006; McCants, Brachman et al. 2006). The framing of the conflict as religiously motivated, is reinforced by Israel's self-definition as a "Jewish state", and the rise of new religiously motivated Palestinian organisations like Hamas, evoking the idea of a Judaeo-Christian conspiracy against Muslims. The difficult progress of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and its de facto standstill since September 2000, with ensuing trans-Arabic consequences, has also contributed to the conflictiveness of the whole region.<sup>7</sup> The current developments indicate a worsening of the situation and has an important impact on radical Islamist propaganda.

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radical Sunni movement, Ansar al-Sunna, (Partisans of the Sunna) indicated that it was made up of veteran Jihadists who had fought as members of Ansar al-Islam. In October 2004, Zarqawi issued an online statement pledging allegiance to al Qai'dah and to Bin Laden, and changing the name of his organisation from Al Tawhid wal-Jihad to Tanzim Qai'dat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (al Qai'dah in Mesopotamia/Iraq) (Binnie 2005).

<sup>6</sup> As the name "Islamic Liberation Party" still testifies, the fight of Hizb ut-Tahrir was originally waged against Israel by expelled Palestinians for the liberation of Palestine (Steinberg 2005:39f.).

<sup>7</sup> Deaths (combatants and civilians) related to the conflict since September 2000: 4,500 Palestinians and 1,024 Israeli (The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, [www.btselem.org](http://www.btselem.org)).

In general armed conflicts directly feed the propaganda<sup>8</sup> machinery in two ways: firstly, by showing victims such as Palestinian children killed by Israeli soldiers inducing what Wiktorowicz calls a “cognitive opening” rendering individuals more receptive to extreme views (Wiktorowicz 2005). Secondly, by showing the defeat of Western soldiers, their humiliation or beheadings in order to underline the certain victory of the Jihad cause. Conflicts where Muslims fight directly against the West, are best suited for this kind of pre-constructed good-evil differentiation.

### *Conflicts and the radicalisation in diaspora communities*

In the diaspora only a very small percentage of immigrants are directly affected by the conflicts. Namely refugees or those persecuted in their repressive home countries on the basis of their Islamist political opinion and activity. In liberal Western societies under freedom of speech, heated religio-political discussions that would not have been allowed to take place in the countries of origin, increase and sometimes escalate into different kinds of radicalisation processes. In the worst case these arguments turn against the very same country of residence as the assumed backer of “infidel” Arab regimes.

When it comes to international conflicts, e.g. conflicts between the country of origin and the Muslim migrants’ country of residence different dynamics do evolve – as might be the case in international interventions. A Norwegian study analysing international interventions as triggers for terrorist campaigns, which can be interpreted as violent culmination of radicalisation processes<sup>9</sup>, showed a very interesting result (Kjøk, Hegghammer et al. 2003:30). The majority of the terrorist attacks reacting to international interventions such as the Gulf War, Operation Desert Storm or the Multinational Forces in Lebanon, 1982-84, were actually carried out by groups that had no apparent stake in the conflict.<sup>10</sup> Indirectly involved

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Territorial questions, or such concerning sovereignty or the distribution of natural resources (esp. water) are not on the agenda yet. The discourse remains dominated by security issues, while facts gain normativity.

<sup>8</sup> Armed conflicts present opportunities to produce propaganda videos; creating heroes and presenting clear-cut friend and foe distinctions. At the same time, shootings are not only a valuable instrument for propaganda projects necessary for radicalisation and recruitment, they also play an important role in fundraising activities for militant groups, nurturing the conflict and contributing indirectly to the radicalising effects. Mr. Gharib, a Kurdish militant and Ansar media chief, commented in an interview on the value of shootings recorded on video during battle: “These CDs were extremely important, because they were our source of income; we sent them back up the cash chain to our donors,” “After one successful attack, funding came in like rain ... from everywhere.” (Peterson 2003)

<sup>9</sup> Another possible trajectory of radicalisation might, for example, also lead to high scale violence such as the Paris banlieue riots in autumn 2005.

<sup>10</sup> See also Petter Nesser on the impact of Iraq war on Jihadist terrorism in Europe (Nesser 2006).

groups and individuals rather than stake-holders are mainly the radicalised ones. For many of these groups, the interventions epitomised the imperialist oppression of defenceless Third World states and justified a violent protest against this imperialism. It seems that global and manichaeian ideologies – in this respect “Jihad” and “takfir”<sup>11</sup> narratives exhibit great similarities – are prone to this quasi-imperialist argumentation. Furthermore, it has to be considered that the intensity of reactive radicalisation processes depends on the perceived political legitimacy and the use of force during the intervention. Apart from that there is a tendency that large powers suspected of having imperialist ambitions and/or countries that keep a high profile during the intervention are also suspected of pursuing their own interests, whereas lesser powers participating in the effort are often shielded.

These conflicts can be exploited by violence-prone perpetrators in their search for legitimating their own hate campaigns without taking the risk to be drawn into the original conflict. In this arena Islamists are taking over the dominant role that radical leftists used to occupy in the 1970s and 1980s (Sirscloudi 2004).

From a psychological point of view, radicalisation towards an international orientation allows a psychologically satisfying solution for second generation diaspora members who feel rejected by the majority society and at the same time want to distance themselves from the culture of their parents which is shaped by the country of origin. By turning towards global Jihad, they manage to differentiate themselves from their parents without betraying their roots; taking revenge for own sufferings whilst fighting in the name of a higher cause by defending brothers in faith where they appear to be threatened by Western powers (Sirscloudi 2008). In this way conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslim parties serve to legitimise aggression against the West in general and the country of residence in concreto.

Concerning the intellectual embedment of local conflicts in Jihadi narratives, there are two kinds of contextualisation of the broader picture of a dualistic worldview. One is the political, quasi-imperialistic, the other is a purely religious though, of course, we will also find forms

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<sup>11</sup> The concept of “al-takfir” means the act of denouncing someone as an “infidel” or something as “impious”. This includes Muslims perceived to have adopted beliefs deemed antithetical to the Islamist cause, including the Shia and all Muslims who willingly accept or collaborate with pro-democratic protagonists. Subscribers to this particular ideology or mindset tend to brand Muslims who do not convert to ‘pure’ Islam or Muslims who in their eyes have lapsed as “infidels” against whom the use of violence is justified. They also regard the violent Jihad as a duty for Muslims.

straddling these two poles.<sup>12</sup> Political manichaeism is the logical extrapolation of the fight against corrupt regimes in a global(ised) context. We assume that Muslims of different countries become aware of similar problems in their home countries which truly exist as a matter of regional similarities and blame Westernised elites as well as the Western powers that back them. The common grievances give rise to a growing consciousness of a coherent exploited “Muslim world”.<sup>13</sup> In militant networks, this perception of shared fate is further deepened by the participation in military campaigns. “Brothers in arms” are bound together through the common war experience (Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya and now Iraq) by strong bonds of blood and sweat created in battle under the omnipresent danger of death.

Abdullah Azzam, former spiritual leader of the mujaheddin in Afghanistan, was already pursuing the goal of creating a brotherhood that would obliterate any ethnic or regional distinctions consisting of holy Muslim warriors trained in waging military campaigns and instructed in religion and unity.<sup>14</sup> The continuing fight of this vanguard is necessary for the creation as well as for the maintenance of the imagined community of a global Ummah.<sup>15</sup> It even creates its own martyrs who fulfil the role of quasi-saints in the new religion of takfir and Jihad. In the absence of other satisfying alternatives in collective identities as differentiated from the rest of society, diaspora Muslims with different national origin developing a common identity are the most vulnerable to this kind of thought.

The purely religious framing of local conflicts legitimises the armed struggle against the West as a personal or collective religious duty to liberate Arab lands. This can mean overcoming current foreign repression in countries with a majority of the Muslim population (defensive), but it can also be interpreted in a broader sense as the reconquest of all the land that ever lay under Muslim rule such as large areas of Spain, Turkey, the Balkans and of course Jerusalem (offensive). The most radical approach is represented by the will to subjugate the whole world to the glory of Allah. An example of this was former Hizb ut-Tahrir member and founder of al-Muhajiroun Omar Bakri Mohammed calling for Queen Elizabeth II to convert to Islam and

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<sup>12</sup> Osama Bin Laden, for example, often oscillates between a religious, a national and a universal argumentation (Kepel and Milelli 2006:110).

<sup>13</sup> On a more elaborated approach towards the social causes of terrorism in the Arab Society see (Al-Badayneh 2007).

<sup>14</sup> According to the “Militant Ideology Atlas” Abdullah Azzam is still one of the most cited authors in Jihadi ideological texts (McCants, Brachman et al. 2006).

<sup>15</sup> The term “imagined community” - here adapted to a global collective identity - was first coined and elaborated by Benedict Anderson in his lucid analysis on the emergence of national identities in Europe (Anderson 1983).

threatening that Muslims would not rest until “the black flag of Islam flies over Downing Street” (Wiktorowicz 2005:9).

For all these kinds of religious duties to fight, participation in Jihad is the test for true commitment in establishing Islam at any cost. Abdullah Azzam believed that only by continued armed struggle the unified strength of Muslims is brought to bear on their supposed enemies. It is also a crude attempt to mimic the early struggles of the Prophet Mohammed, preparing for a promised apocalyptic holy war against the excommunicated “infidel regimes”, Jews, Hindus, and anyone else who might stand in the way of creating a global Islamic empire.

The internationalised conflicts, such as Iraq or Afghanistan, keep Jihad going and offer a fertile environment for roaming fighters who cannot return anywhere, but who are well trained and interlinked throughout the Muslim world. These veterans who build the impenetrable backbone of transnational radical networks and who contribute to the perpetuation of armed struggle mainly as recruitment authorities, are admired as heroes by young and vulnerable Muslims all over the world.<sup>16</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Although we first assumed that domestic conflicts in the Muslim world have a very large impact on radicalisation processes in Europe, this is only half the truth. These conflicts – sometimes fought out in armed struggles; sometimes suppressed by local regimes – have contributed and still contribute to radicalisation worldwide.<sup>17</sup> However, regarding the direct radicalisation of Muslim diaspora communities, it seems that international interventions in countries with Muslim majorities also play a significant role, especially because they give the opportunity of open battle, i.e. the chance to wage an individual Jihad. Conflicts in the countries of origin of the diaspora populations fill the reservoirs of international Jihad many of the members of radical transnational networks have been members of radical groups in their home countries – possibly striking back at their countries of origin via the

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<sup>16</sup> More than a military contest, the Jihadist campaign is above all a missionary enterprise. Jihadist terrorist operations are intended to attract attention, demonstrate capability, and harm the Jihadists’ enemies, although they are also aimed at galvanizing the Muslim community and, above all, inciting and attracting recruits to the cause. Recruiting is not merely meant to fill operational needs. It is an end in itself: It aims at creating a new mindset (Jenkins 2007).

<sup>17</sup> Most of the new recruits and followers of militant radical groups in the Arab world come from other Islamist movements (Escobar Stemmann 2006:5).

internationalist detour. This seems to have been the case in the Casablanca bombings, 16 May 2003, in which Moroccans radicalised in Europe or through transnational radical networks, attacked their country of origin (Mekhennet, Sautter et al. 2006). Nowadays most of the broader conflicts in North Africa have been partly transferred to the socio-political arena (see Morocco or Egypt for example) whilst pure repression remains the exception. Of course, many individuals who left their countries for Europe because of persecution keep their resentment. However, rather than waging their war against their own regime alone, we observe that the ones willing to act take more and more advantage of the synergy effects of transnational networks and in doing so they also adopt broader enemy concepts. It also seems easier to act as a diffuse network in a global multi perpetrator-scenario with complex conflict-lines than as a visible opposition group of an Arab regime.<sup>18</sup>

But a de-contextualised Jihad-ideology, paired with the interpretation of Jihad as an individual duty, often also appeals directly to Muslims (and not infrequently converts) in Europe. Ideology as radicalisation vehicle is gaining ground against direct involvement, which, for its part, often ends up leading to direct engagement. International conflicts, in which Western parties fight against Muslims are globally perceived as a defensive Jihad, and attract young fighters from all over the world to fulfil their personal Jihadi duty; be this as frustrated diaspora members identifying with the global Ummah, or as a people who feel betrayed and oppressed by the regimes in their respective Muslim countries.

Armed conflicts give these individuals the opportunity to create cohesive networks of people who trust and help each other in any given situation, provided that the (often un-trained) warriors survive the fights. Fighting shoulder to shoulder against the worlds most powerful armies, in, for example, Afghanistan, Iraq, and partially in the occupied Palestinian territories, brings the radical militant brotherhood, Abdullah Azzam dreamt of, closer to realisation. This global network, integrating all conflicts involving Muslims, and especially the ones in which powerful Western armies can be fought with guerrilla tactics, attrition and terrorist attacks, will gain in importance and strength, because a pacification of the main conflicts of this genre Afghanistan, Iraq and Israel is nowhere in sight. Furthermore, these conflicts – apart from enjoying greater religious legitimacy as defensive Jihad, as opposed to simply fighting the political regimes in Muslim countries – are producing pictures and myths for a self-

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<sup>18</sup> For a further elaboration on the differences between transnational radical networks, national radical subcultures and sub-national radical communities see (Waldmann, Sirseloudi et al. 2009).

perpetuating ideological justification of the fight. In a globalised mass media world, where people have access to the same contents, regardless of their actual location, this strengthening of Jihadi ideology will contribute more than anything else to the radicalisation of people searching for faith and hold in a radical narrative; be they in Europe or anywhere else in the world.

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