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## **The Nexus Between Salafism and Jihadism in the Netherlands.**

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COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT

# CTC SENTINEL

OBJECTIVE . RELEVANT . RIGOROUS

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## About the CTC Sentinel

The Combating Terrorism Center is an independent educational and research institution based in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy, West Point. The CTC Sentinel harnesses the Center's global network of scholars and practitioners to understand and confront contemporary threats posed by terrorism and other forms of political violence.

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

## The Nexus Between Salafism and Jihadism in the Netherlands

By Beatrice de Graaf

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE 9/11 attacks, CNN displayed images from the Dutch city of Ede where groups of youth of Moroccan descent gleefully cheered and shouted over the apparent blow dealt to the United States. Two years later, Shaykh Fawaz Jneid, a well-known imam from a Salafist mosque in the Netherlands, cursed president George W. Bush, Ariel Sharon, Dutch parliamentarian Hirsi Ali and filmmaker Theo van Gogh and begged Allah “to destroy the enemies of Islam.”<sup>1</sup> Another imam refused to shake hands with a Dutch female minister, and a third advised his followers to throw homosexuals from the roof.<sup>2</sup> On November 2, 2004, two months after Fawaz had cursed Theo van Gogh, a young Dutch Muslim, Mohammed Bouyeri, murdered and slaughtered Van Gogh, quoting passages from the medieval Salafist cleric Ibn Taymiyya.<sup>3</sup> These incidents, and especially the terrorist attack committed by Bouyeri, brought the Salafist movement to the center of Dutch public outrage and debate, and prompted the Dutch Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) to warn against the damaging influence of Salafist ideology on the Dutch Muslim community.<sup>4</sup>

An authoritative or exhaustive history of the emergence of Salafism in the Netherlands does not exist, nor has the Salafist population in the country been mapped out meticulously.<sup>5</sup> To

1 “Imam beticht van opruiing tegen Van Gogh,” *NRC Handelsblad*, October 31, 2006.

2 Jaco Alberts and Steven Derix, “Laveren tussen de wet en Allah,” *NRC Handelsblad*, September 19, 2005.

3 Ibid.

4 “De radicale da’wa: De opkomst van het neo-radicalisme in Nederland,” Dutch Intelligence and Security Service, 2007; “Weerstand en tegenkracht: Actuele trends en ontwikkelingen van het salafisme in Nederland,” Dutch Intelligence and Security Service, December 2009.

5 Salafism is a relatively new phenomenon in the Netherlands. As a movement, it is very closed to the outside world. Therefore, the author does not pretend to give an in-depth analysis, but presents this article as a well-informed snapshot of the present situation, taken instead from a security studies’ point of view, rather than a theological or anthropological one. The first in-depth

provide insight on this community, it is necessary to rely on reports by the Netherlands’ National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb) and the AIVD, newspaper clippings and the extensive field work of anthropologists and social scientists who carried out research projects among Salafist youths in the Netherlands in recent years.<sup>6</sup> Based on this information, this article will explain why Salafism<sup>7</sup> gained popularity in the Netherlands, and then examine the three stages through which it has passed since the 9/11 attacks on the United States.

### 1986-2001: The Creation of a Salafist Infrastructure in the Netherlands

The Saudi non-governmental missionary organization al-Haramain was responsible for the creation of the El Tawheed Foundation in Amsterdam

field study of the Salafist movement in the Netherlands is soon to be published, however: Ineke Roex, Sief van Stiphout and Jean Tillie, *Salafisme in Nederland. Aard, omvang en dreiging* (Amsterdam: IMES, 2010). Another good overview is “Salafisme in Nederland: Een voorbijaand fenomeen of een blijvende factor van belang?” Netherlands’ National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb), 2008. Also see Martijn de Koning, *Zoeken naar een ‘zuivere’ islam: Geloofsbeleving en identiteitsvorming van jonge Marokkaans-Nederlandse moslims* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2008).

6 Most notably, Frank J. Buijs, Froukje Demant and Atef Hamdy, *Strijders van eigen bodem. Radicale en democratische moslims in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006) and De Koning, *Zoeken naar een ‘zuivere’ islam*.

7 Salafism is not a unified movement, as it displays various currents, historical trajectories and genealogies. Many Salafists are non-violent, and various strains are apolitical. Moreover, it is often used as a normative self-descriptor, used by religious factions to claim religious and political legitimacy, than as an objectifying term. Salafists claim adherence to the first three generations of exemplary followers of the Prophet Muhammad. As Quintan Wiktorowicz has described in his seminal text from 2006, Salafists are united around the strict adherence to the concept of *tawhid* (the oneness of God, or monotheism), the rejection of innovations (*bid’at*) of the Islamic creed and practice, the condemnation of polytheism (*shirk*) and all other forms of venerating humans or objects. Salafists maintain that theirs is the only legitimate interpretation of the Qur’an and sunna. To them, Islamic pluralism, let alone subjective individual interpretation without being an accepted authority, does not exist. For an overview of Salafism, see Roel Meijer ed., *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement* (London: Hurst & Company, 2009), pp. 1-32; Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29:3 (2006): pp. 207-239.

in 1986 (led since the mid-1990s by the Egyptian imam Mahmoud Shershaby), thereby laying the foundations of the Salafist infrastructure in the Netherlands as a whole.<sup>8</sup> Three years later, another Saudi private missionary organization with headquarters in Riyadh, al-Waqf, initiated the establishment of the foundation al-Waqf al-Islami in Eindhoven. The al-Fourqaan mosque in Eindhoven, led by the Sudanese imam Eisha Bersham, became the center of this foundation’s activities. In 1990, also with Saudi support, the Foundation Sounna was created in The Hague (in 1998 renamed as the Foundation As-Soennah/Centrum Sheikh al-Islam Ibn Taymia), led by the Syrian imam Fawaz Jneid and preacher Jamal Ahajjaj (Abu Ismail), who both play an important part in the dissemination of Salafism in the Netherlands.<sup>9</sup> The Foundation ISOOK<sup>10</sup> in Tilburg (led by the Syrian imam Ahmed Salaam) was created in 2000, through indirect assistance from Saudi Arabia. Salam is considered a highly educated cleric, who has published many religious works; Fawaz Jneid and Mahmoud Shershaby are said to be his pupils.

Other organizations came into existence as well, such as the Foundation for Islamic Youths in Breda, founded in March 1990, or the al-Haramain Humanitarian Aid Amsterdam (which was dissolved in 2006). The Salafist movement, however, was still a minor current within the Muslim community in the Netherlands during this time period, according to an AIVD report from 1998.<sup>11</sup>

The above-mentioned foundations and mosques in Amsterdam, Eindhoven, The Hague and Tilburg constitute the most prominent Salafist hubs in the Netherlands, drawing some 1,500 (As-Soennah) or even 2,000 visitors (al-Fourqaan) each Friday (of a population of about 850,000 Muslims in the Netherlands).<sup>12</sup> In comparison with other

8 NCTb, “Salafisme in Nederland”; De Koning, *Zoeken naar een ‘zuivere’ islam*, pp. 373-377.

9 Ibid.

10 ISOOK stands for the Islamitische Stichting voor Opvoeding en Overdracht van Kennis (Islamic Foundation for Education and Dissemination of Knowledge).

11 “De politieke islam in Nederland,” Dutch Intelligence and Security Service, 1998.

12 NCTb, “Salafisme in Nederland.”

countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany or France, these Salafist groups became more popular and rooted within the Muslim communities than other related radical Islamist currents such as Hizb al-Tahrir (Hizb ut-Tahrir) or Takfir wal-Hijra.<sup>13</sup>

The Salafist mosques also mobilize a multinational crowd of visitors. Muslims from the Maghreb, the Horn of Africa, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, the Middle East and Dutch converts are among the attendants.<sup>14</sup> Although the Salafist movement in general consists of Saudi, Egyptian or Syrian members, Dutch Moroccans constitute the predominant group, in particular Muslim youth of Moroccan descent (40% of the Dutch Moroccan population is under 30).<sup>15</sup> The Moroccan community was also responsible for the establishment of the As-Soennah and al-Fourqaan mosques.

#### 2001-2002: Salafism as Empowerment

In the Netherlands, Salafi-jihadism is a latecomer compared to the other Salafist communities in Europe, where political refugees from the Middle East and veterans from the wars in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya imported militant experiences to the West as early as the late 1980s, such as in France and in the United Kingdom. From the late 1990s, but especially after 9/11, these Salafist groups extended their religious infrastructure in the Netherlands: they built new mosques, websites and informal networks. Martijn de Koning discerns three groups among them: "Selefies," politically involved Salafists

13 Hizb al-Tahrir is a very hierarchical organization, but lacks infrastructure and cadre in the Netherlands. This can be explained by the absence of a large immigrant community from Pakistan or India in the Netherlands. The first activities of radical Salafist and jihadist groups in the Netherlands were initiated by immigrants from Algeria, Morocco or Syria, all countries where Hizb al-Tahrir is less active. Immigration history and coincidence played a part in this.

14 NCTb, "Salafisme in Nederland."

15 Ten percent of the immigrant population is Moroccan (approximately 345,000 in 2009), whereas the Turkish minority stands at 11%. See the Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek located at <http://statline.cbs.nl>; V. van den Maagdenberg, "Jaarrapport Integratie," in *Onderzoek vericht in opdracht van het Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (SCP)* (Rotterdam: Instituut voor Sociologisch-Economisch Onderzoek, 2004), pp. 13-14.

and the jihadi/*takfiri* Salafists (or Salafi-jihadists).<sup>16</sup>

Selefies, as they label themselves, are the most apolitical, pious group, and claim to be non-violent. Their main preacher is Abdillah Bouchta, a Salafist teacher from Tilburg. The second group includes more politically-oriented Salafists who are non-violent as well, but engage more in local and international politics. This strand develops its mobilizing power through central nodes within the Muslim community, most of them financed or inspired by Saudi organizations.<sup>17</sup> A third, very marginal strand can be described as the jihadi/*takfiri* branch of Salafism, according to De Koning, and comprises a small number of Muslims, especially those connected to the former Hofstad Group.<sup>18</sup>

These groups differ, for example, regarding the status of Islamic clerics, attitudes toward parliamentary democracy and the desirability of the resurrection of a caliphate.<sup>19</sup> Although the first two branches of Salafism are non-violent, they nevertheless imported theological doctrines on the war against infidels, the search for a pure Islam and the tools for a radical form of Muslim empowerment to the Netherlands. These radical ideas grew in popularity within the Muslim community after 2001, when the so-called "Fortuyn-revolt" in the Netherlands gained momentum and started to attack "Muslim immigration." The charismatic right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn and his effervescent populist party entered the political stage in August 2001 and linked Islam, immigration, integration and terrorism together, discursively framing them into a security issue, which of course made an impression immediately after 9/11. The Salafist movement in particular became the focus of political and public attention, since the Salafists—with their emphasis on purity, hatred against "infidels" and revulsion against supposedly low moral standards in the West—posed the mirror image to the

16 Martijn de Koning, "Changing Worldviews and Friendship: An Exploration of the Life Stories of Two Female Salafis in the Netherlands," in Meijer, *Global Salafism*, pp. 408-410.

17 NCTb, "Salafisme in Nederland."

18 De Koning, "Changing Worldviews," p. 410.

19 Buijs et al.

Dutch defenders of national security, Western liberalism and secularization.

Therefore, after years of benign neglect, Moroccans, Turks and other immigrants were now framed as "Muslims" and were held responsible for jihadist attacks elsewhere. The consequence of this application of religious frames of identity in mainstream Dutch discourse was that youth with Moroccan parents, but born and raised in the Netherlands, embraced this stigmatization and fell back on this new collective, post-ethnic Muslim identity. They adopted the same set of mechanisms that can be found within other youth cultures: they appropriated a negative identity that frightened and provoked the mainstream population by incorporating violent and dangerous symbols and discourses in their group identity.<sup>20</sup> They adopted symbols and discourses from the Salafi-jihadi movement since this provided them with the tools to transform themselves into superior and militant human beings with direct access to the "Truth."<sup>21</sup>

From 2002-2003 onward, a small number of these alienated second-generation immigrants of Moroccan descent entered the path of violent radicalization. Among them were the members of the so-called "Hofstad Group."

#### 2002-2004: Salafism as a Hotbed for Homegrown Jihadism<sup>22</sup>

In late 2001 to early 2002, the AIVD began monitoring Salafist centers, such as the al-Fourqaan mosque in Eindhoven that was suspected of recruiting young Muslims for the international jihad.<sup>23</sup> In 2002, two Dutch Moroccans were killed in Kashmir, Khalid el-Hasnoui and Ahmed el-Bakiouli, both supposedly

20 Martijn de Koning, "Een wekelijks portie burgerschap 8 - Wat meer radicalisering graag," February 22, 2010, available at [www.religionresearch.org/martijn/2010/02/22/een-wekelijks-portie-burgerschap-8-wat-meer-radicalisering-graag](http://www.religionresearch.org/martijn/2010/02/22/een-wekelijks-portie-burgerschap-8-wat-meer-radicalisering-graag).

21 De Koning, "Changing Worldviews," pp. 404-423.

22 This paragraph is partly based on the chapter "The Van Gogh Murder: A New Threat from Homegrown Terrorism in The Netherlands," to be published in the forthcoming book, Bruce Hoffman and Fernando Reinares, *Leader-led Jihad* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

23 "OM: moskee Eindhoven werft strijders," *NRC Handelsblad*, May 3, 2003.

recruited in the al-Fourqaan mosque.<sup>24</sup> Months later, 13 individuals were arrested for terrorist activities, some of whom were regular visitors of al-Fourqaan.<sup>25</sup>

Beginning in December 2001, the AIVD also monitored the radical Salafist El Tawheed mosque in the north of Amsterdam for suspicion of Egyptian and Saudi influences, since the mosque had financial relations to a Saudi non-governmental organization, al-Haramain International.<sup>26</sup> In the summer of 2002, the service identified a group of Muslim youth, who met in and around the mosque and gathered around Redouan al-Issar (also named “Abu Khaled” or “the Shaykh”) who had ties to radical Muslims in Spain and Belgium.<sup>27</sup> Abu Khaled was an illegal immigrant from Syria, a former member of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and a Takfir wal-Hijra adherent who came to the Netherlands in 1995.<sup>28</sup> For a number of radical Muslims, he became a mentor.<sup>29</sup>

He inspired, among others, 17-year-old high school student Samir Azzouz, of Moroccan origin but born and raised in the Netherlands.<sup>30</sup> Samir Azzouz came

to the notice of the AIVD in January 2003, when he took the train to Berlin, bound for Chechnya, to join local jihadists in their fight against Russian forces together with his friend Khalid (or Hussam, who was 17-years-old), but they were arrested and put back on a train to the Netherlands.<sup>31</sup> After his return, Azzouz’s status rose; he started his own Islamic book company and began only associating with Moroccan youth.<sup>32</sup>

Ismail Akhnikh was another Hofstad Group member with international aspirations. Akhnikh, born in Amsterdam in 1982 from Moroccan immigrants, regularly attended the El Tawheed mosque in Amsterdam where he became acquainted with Azzouz and helped to form the Hofstad Group in the fall of 2002.<sup>33</sup> In the summer of 2003, he traveled with Azzouz to Barcelona to meet with Abdeladim Akoudad for guidance and instructions.<sup>34</sup> Abdeladim Akoudad (or “Naoufel”), a Moroccan living in Spain, was suspected by the Moroccan security services of involvement in the Casablanca attacks of May 16, 2003.<sup>35</sup>

After temporary arrests in October 2003, Akhnikh, Azzouz and Jason Walters further developed their skills as jihadists and urged other Muslims to go abroad to wage jihad.<sup>36</sup> Akhnikh went to Pakistan that year, as did “Zakaria T.” and Walters (who even went twice, in July and December 2003).<sup>37</sup> Walters and

Akhnikh even bragged about contacts with Maulana Masood Azhar, the founder of Jaysh-i-Muhammad, which they later downplayed in court—but no evidence of concrete preparations was found.<sup>38</sup>

Then, on the early morning of November 2, 2004, Mohammed Bouyeri, a 26-year-old Dutch Moroccan, born and raised in Amsterdam, awaited publicist Theo van Gogh in an Amsterdam street, shot him off his bicycle and slaughtered him with a ritual knife in the street in front of many witnesses.<sup>39</sup> Under the new Dutch anti-terrorism laws passed in August 2004, Bouyeri was arrested and tried for murder with “terrorist intent.”<sup>40</sup> On July 26, 2005, he received a life sentence, without parole—unusually harsh in Dutch judicial history.<sup>41</sup>

Bouyeri’s action took the security services by surprise. From 2002, the AIVD had monitored a group of jihadist radicals with whom Bouyeri was acquainted, a network the service internally dubbed as the “Hofstad Group” since it operated in the nation’s capital, Amsterdam (Hofstad translates as “capital city”).<sup>42</sup> Its core members were under surveillance, but Bouyeri did not belong to them. He did not take part in the foreign trips some of the members made and was not considered a

24 Siem Eikelenboom, *Jihad in de polder: De radicale islam in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Veen, 2004), p. 63.

25 Eikelenboom, *Jihad in de polder*; “Annual Report 2002,” Dutch Intelligence and Security Service, 2003; “Saoedische invloeden in Nederland. Verbanden tussen salafistische missie. Radicaliseringsprocessen en islamistisch terrorisme,” Dutch Intelligence and Security Service, June 2004.

26 NCTb, “Salafisme in Nederland”; “De omstreden El Tawheed-Moskee,” NOVA broadcast, November 9, 2004. According to NOVA, Saudi businessman Aqeel Alaqeel financed the El Tawheed mosque with 1.3 million euros. Al-Haramain was blacklisted as an al-Qa’ida charity, but the accusations were not substantiated and the mosque continued to operate. Thanks to Dennis de Widt for these references.

27 “Letter to Parliament,” Netherlands’ ministers of the interior and justice, *Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer*, No. 5319045, November 10, 2004, pp. 20-24.

28 Ibid.

29 “Feitenrelaas,” attachment to the “Letter to Parliament,” Netherlands’ ministers of the interior and justice, *Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer*, No. 29854, November 10, 2004.

30 For an account of this story, see “Samir A. First Enemy of the State,” *KRO Reporter*, October 1, 2006. The documentary includes interviews with Azzouz and his wife. Also see Eric Vrijzen, “Van Samir A tot Marad J,” *Elsevier*, December 1, 2005; Arjan Erkel, *Samir* (Amster-

dam: Uitgeverij Balans, 2007).

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 “Verdict in the Hofstad-case,” Court of Rotterdam, The Hague, March 10, 2006. Also see Emerson Vermaat, *De Hofstadgroep. Portret van een radicaal-islamitisch netwerk* (Soesterberg: Aspekt, 2005), pp. 55-77.

34 Ibid.

35 Petter Nesser, *The Slaying of the Dutch Filmmaker: Religiously Motivated Violence or Islamist Terrorism in the Name of Global Jihad?* (Kjeller: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, 2005), pp. 17-19.

36 “Repliek van de officier van justitie in de strafzaken tegen Nadir A. etc.,” National Prosecutor’s Office (Landelijk Parket), Amsterdam, February 6, 2005, pp. 7, 13.

37 “Dutch Radical Islamic Group Planned Euro 2004 Attack in Portugal,” *Agence France-Presse*, November 15, 2004; “Dutch Islamists Planned Barroso Attack,” Reuters, November 15, 2004; “Letter to Parliament,” Netherlands’ minister of justice, November 10, 2004, *Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer*, 2004-2005. Also see the parliamentary debate on this report on November 11,

2004, *Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer*, 2004-2005. 38 Ibid.

39 A highly informative account of the assassination of Van Gogh and the development of the Hofstad Group can be found in: Albert Benschop, “Jihad in the Netherlands. Chronicle of a Political Murder Foretold,” available at [www.sociosite.org/jihad\\_nl\\_en.php](http://www.sociosite.org/jihad_nl_en.php).

40 See the verdict against Bouyeri, Court of Amsterdam, July 26, 2005.

41 In the Netherlands, life sentences are rare. Bouyeri was the 28th person to receive such a sentence since 1945, war criminals included. Capital felonies, such as murder, usually result in sentences of 10-15 years. The new terrorism law, however, states that if there is a terrorist motive for a crime, the sentence can be increased by half. Imprisonments ordinarily in excess of 15 years can be upgraded to life imprisonment, as was the case with Bouyeri.

42 Description of this case is based, among others, on the requisitory of the National Prosecution in the Hofstad Group case. See “Requisitoir van de officier van Justitie,” part I, National Prosecutor’s Office, January 23, 2006 and part II, January 25, 2006; District Court of Rotterdam, verdict in the Hofstad Group case, March 10, 2006; “The ‘Hofstadgroep,’” working paper, Transnational Terrorism, Security & the Rule of Law, April 2008.

main actor in the Dutch jihadist scene.<sup>43</sup> Bouyeri's radical texts calling for violent jihad, disseminated under the name "Abu Zubair," were only noticed after the police and the AIVD stepped up their investigation into the Hofstad Group after the murder of Van Gogh on November 2, 2004.<sup>44</sup>

After the attack, it became clear that Bouyeri sought legitimacy for his atrocity in religious arguments. With him, he had a farewell letter titled "Drenched in Blood." This versed text read as an incitement to holy war and was signed Saifu Deen al-Muwahhied. According to Ruud Peters, a Dutch Islam expert and witness for the prosecution, this alias was a combination of two Arabic terms—"sword of religion" (*Saif al-Din*) and "confessor of Tawhid" (*al-Muwahhid*).<sup>45</sup> In the "open letter," Bouyeri directly threatened Dutch-Somali liberal politician Hirsi Ali, and blamed politicians for allowing Jewish influences in politics. According to Norwegian researcher Petter Nesser, the conclusion of the letter shows "the essence of 'al-Qaidaism,'" by foreseeing the defeat of the enemy on the individual, local, regional and global levels in order of priority:

And like a great prophet once said: "I deem thee lost, O Pharaoh." (17:102) And so we want to use similar words and send these before us, so that the heavens and the stars will gather this news and spread it over the corners of the universe like a tidal wave. "I deem thee lost, O America." "I deem thee lost, O Europe." "I deem thee lost, O Holland." "I deem thee lost,

43 The Review Committee on the Intelligence and Security Services officially established in March 2008 that this had been a serious intelligence failure, as evidence surfaced prior to the attack that Bouyeri was at least affiliated with Dutch jihadist groups. See "Toezichtsrapport inzake de afwegingsprocessen van de AIVD met betrekking tot Mohammed B.," Commissie van Toezicht betreffende de Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdiensten (CTIVD), March 2008.

44 Siem Eikelenboom, *Niet bang om te sterven: Dertig jaar terrorisme in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Nieuw Amsterdam, 2007), pp. 23-27; "Repliek van de officier van justitie in de strafzaken tegen Nadir A. etc.," National Prosecutor's Office (Landelijk Parket), Amsterdam, February 6, 2005, pp. 4-5, 9-10, 17-23.

45 "Repliek van de officier van justitie in de strafzaken tegen Nadir A. etc.," pp. 4-5.

O Hirshi Ali." "I deem thee lost, O unbelieving fundamentalist."<sup>46</sup>

These two texts showed that Bouyeri's attack was the outcome of an ideological turn to violent jihad that evolved from the Hofstad Group, since Bouyeri wrote these texts in spiritual support for this network.<sup>47</sup> In one of Bouyeri's last writings, an "Open Letter to the Dutch Population" dated August 12, 2004 (which he left on a USB-stick for other Hofstad Group members to disseminate within "the *umma*"),<sup>48</sup> he announced attacks against Dutch public places, justifying them due to the support of the Dutch government for the United States and Israel. His argument echoed a *fatwa* announced by dissident Saudi Shaykh Hamud Ibn `Uqla al-Shu'aybi, legitimizing the September 11 attacks.<sup>49</sup> A translation of this *fatwa* was found on computers of other Hofstad Group members.<sup>50</sup>

Bouyeri and the Hofstad Group drew inspiration from several Salafist sources. They took the principle of *al-wala' wa'l-bara'* (loyalty and disavowal) from the Salafist cleric Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, which dictates that true jihadists should isolate themselves from the non-Muslim world and hate those who threaten Islam.<sup>51</sup> From the London-based Salafist imam Abu Hamza al-Masri, they took the principle of *takfir* (declaring fellow Muslims infidels).<sup>52</sup>

46 Nesser, p. 25.

47 "Requisitoir van de officier van Justitie."

48 "Repliek van de officier van justitie in de strafzaken tegen Nadir A. etc.," pp. 31-32.

49 A biography of this shaykh is available on a website called "Marokko Community," in which references to the September 11 *fatwa* are found. For the biography, see "Sheikh Hamoud bin Uqla as-Shu'aybi: De levensloop van een groot geleerde," July 24, 2008, available at [www.forums.marokko.nl/showthread.php?t=2092457](http://www.forums.marokko.nl/showthread.php?t=2092457). Al-Shu'aybi's *fatwa* in English can be found at [www.tawhed.net/a.php?a=hmodUkla](http://www.tawhed.net/a.php?a=hmodUkla).

50 "Requisitoir van de officier van Justitie."

51 Al-Maqdisi has revolutionized this theme in Salafijihadism. For details, see Joas Wagemakers, "A Purist Jihadi-Salafi: The Ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36:2 (2009): pp. 287-297; Joas Wagemakers, "Framing the 'Threat to Islam': al-wala' wa al-bara' in Salafi Discourse," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30:4 (2008): pp. 1-22; Joas Wagemakers, "Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi: A Counter-Terrorism Asset?" *CTC Sentinel* 1:6 (2008): pp. 7-9.

52 De Koning, *Zoeken naar een 'zuivere' islam*, p. 374; See also R. Peters, "De religieuze en ideologische ontwik-

Finally, it is argued that Bouyeri acted in line with Fawaz Jneid's malediction of Theo van Gogh and Hirsi Ali.<sup>53</sup>

After these connections became public, the whole Salafist movement was put on trial in the eyes of the Dutch population. The members of the Hofstad Group had been visitors of the As-Soennah and El Tawheed mosques in The Hague and Amsterdam.<sup>54</sup> The al-Fourqaan mosque in Eindhoven was accused of recruitment activities and radical Salafist imams had on many occasions lashed out against the Netherlands, homosexuals and liberal intellectuals such as Hirsi Ali or Theo van Gogh.<sup>55</sup> In the perception of large parts of the Dutch population, the November attack showed that every orthodox Muslim could be a potential terrorist,<sup>56</sup> and opinion polls said that 80% of the population wanted "tougher policies against immigrants."<sup>57</sup> Jihadist terrorism became a public nightmare. In 2005, the Dutch population listed it as the most important issue facing the country.<sup>58</sup>

#### 2004-2010: Salafist Resilience Against Jihadists

After the murder of Van Gogh and the public outrage that followed suit, a process of reorientation seemed to set in within the Salafist movement in the Netherlands, partly due to the increased monitoring and control activities conducted against them

keling van Mohammed Bouyeri. Deskundigenrapport opgesteld op verzoek van het Openbaar Ministerie voor de Arrondissementsrechtbank Amsterdam," May 2005; R. Peters, "Overzicht teksten geschreven of vertaald door Mohammed B.," attachment to the report mentioned above.

53 "Imam beticht van opruiing tegen Van Gogh."

54 NCTb, "Salafisme in Nederland."

55 Ibid.

56 Ron Eyerman, *The Assassination of Theo van Gogh. From Social Drama to Cultural Trauma* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 11. In reality, research revealed that probably less than 2% of the Dutch Muslim population of Amsterdam was susceptible for "radicalization." See Marieke Sloodman and Jean Tillie, *Processen van radicalisering: Waarom sommige Amsterdamse moslims radicaal worden* (Amsterdam: IMES, 2006).

57 Justin Sparks, "Muslim Mole Panics Dutch Secret Service," *Times*, November 14, 2004.

58 "Kwantitatief onderzoek risicobeleving terrorisme 2008," Netherlands' National Coordinator for Counterterrorism & Netherlands' Government Information Service, September 2008, p. 5. Fear of terrorism was mentioned spontaneously by 40% of the respondents. The economy ranked second with 25%.

by the security services and local authorities. In February 2005, Minister for Immigration and Integration Rita Verdonk, for example, declared three imams from the al-Fourqaan mosque in Eindhoven as unwanted aliens, and started procedures to expel them from the country.<sup>59</sup> These more repressive measures were flanked by other central and local deradicalization programs, directed against so-called “hotbeds of radicalization.”<sup>60</sup>

Consequently, due to these forms of external pressure, Muslim resilience against jihadism increased.<sup>61</sup> Immediately after the murder of Van Gogh, various Salafist leaders warned their followers against interpreting radical texts without consulting clerics.<sup>62</sup> In 2005, it was revealed that the Amsterdam imam Fawaz had urged some young Muslim women that were under the influence of the Hofstad Group to report to the police.<sup>63</sup> As a result of their statements, the case against the Hofstad Group in 2005-2006 became stronger. Moreover, in 2006 the Islamic Foundation for Culture and Welfare in Tilburg, headed by the apolitical Selefie imam Bouchta, published a booklet in which it condemned suicide attacks, warned against preachers of hate and accused Salafists who turned to violence of sinful aberrations.<sup>64</sup>

Indeed, Salafist leaders such as Fawaz realized that jihadist activities such as the murder of Van Gogh could only backfire against Muslims in the Netherlands. His warnings against the *takfiri*-ideology of Bouyeri and the other members of the Hofstad Group were, however, not only inspired by strategic musings; to some Salafist clerics, individual *takfiri*-activities are a

real danger and an aberration from Islam since they ignite *fitna* (chaos and sedition) within the Muslim community itself.<sup>65</sup>

In 2007, the AIVD signaled that more unity had been achieved among the different Salafist branches, among which the strand of political, non-violent Salafism was gaining the upper hand.<sup>66</sup> The NCTb underlined this estimate and identified trends of moderation and adaptation to the outside world. The increasing resilience against jihadist-thinking within the Salafist movement was supported by a decreasing fear of homegrown terrorism within the broader Dutch society that felt more at ease since there had been no further jihadist attacks since November 2004 and no other substantial homegrown networks uncovered.<sup>67</sup>

In its 2008 annual report (published in April 2009), the AIVD concluded that “the terrorist threat increasingly emanates from transnational and local networks with an international orientation, but less from local-autonomous networks.”<sup>68</sup> Activities of “homegrown” radicals and their networks had been effectively disrupted.<sup>69</sup> In December 2009, the level of security alertness regarding terrorism was therefore lowered from “substantial” to “restricted” since terrorist attacks against the Netherlands no longer seemed imminent.<sup>70</sup>

Radicalization of Moroccan youth is still taking place, according to the AIVD, certainly if compared to the Turkish community.<sup>71</sup> These young

Muslims meet on the internet or during sermons of traveling youth preachers, and they translate and exchange jihadist texts.<sup>72</sup> Radicalization has remained marginal, however, and should be viewed more as part of a radical Islamist youth counterculture and a way of expressing identity within the Dutch context. Moreover, the service noticed that Dutch Moroccan Muslims increasingly found ways of articulating their grievances and frustrations through democratic and activist channels. The anti-Islam movies of right-wing parliamentarian Geert Wilders (*Fitna*, 2008) and the politician/publicist Ehsan Jami (*An Interview with Mohammed*, 2008) attracted a weaker response from the Muslim community than anticipated. Additionally, the Israeli bombing of Gaza in December 2008 to January 2009 led to a number of non-violent initiatives. Within the Dutch Salafist milieu, the AIVD therefore noted a “self-cleansing power” and an increased resilience against (violent) radical tendencies within the Muslim community.<sup>73</sup>

### Conclusion

After 2001, the orthodox Salafist creed gained popularity because it offered alienated Dutch youth of Moroccan descent a critical perspective of their own society. It enabled them to identify with the *umma* and suffering of Muslims elsewhere (in Iraq, Chechnya or Palestine), whose plight, in their view, mirrored their own discriminated position in the Netherlands. Salafism provided youths who felt caught between their traditionalist parents and the modern, secularized Dutch society a clear set of beliefs and a means of (re)gaining pride and self-esteem.<sup>74</sup>

59 NCTb, “Salafisme in Nederland”; “Ook tweede Eindhovense imam terecht uitgezet,” Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau, October 10, 2007.

60 “Lokale en justitiële aanpak van radicalisme en radicalisering,” Kamerstukken 2004-2006 29754 No. 5; “Actieplan polarisatie en radicalisering 2007-2011,” Netherlands’ Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, August 2007.

61 “Saoedische invloeden in Nederland. Verbanden tussen salafistische missie. Radicaliseringsprocessen en islamistisch terrorisme.”

62 De Koning, *Zoeken naar een ‘zuivere’ islam*, p. 372.

63 Alberts et al.

64 “Folderen in strijd tegen aanslagen,” *Brabants Dagblad*, June 10, 2006.

65 To these clerics, *takfir* can only be pronounced by qualified religious authorities under special and restricted circumstances. See Thomas Hegghammer, “Jihadi Salafis or Revolutionaries: On Religion and Politics in the Study of Islamist Militancy,” in Meijer, *Global Salafism*, pp. 244-266.

66 “De radicale da’wa: De opkomst van het neo-radicalisme in Nederland.”

67 “The ‘Hofstadgroep,’” p. 16; “Annual Report 2006,” Dutch Intelligence and Security Service, 2007, p. 33.

68 “Annual Report 2008,” Dutch Intelligence and Security Service, 2009, pp. 20-22.

69 Ibid.

70 “Letter to Parliament with the Eleventh Counterterrorism Progress Report,” Netherlands’ National Coordinator for Counterterrorism, December 15, 2009.

71 Regarding the Turkish community, social resilience against radicalization is traditionally higher because of the moderating influence of Islamist organizations such

as Diyanet and Milli Görüs and the impact of Turkish nationalism. In its annual report in 2007, the AIVD did, however, signal that some youths were trying to shirk away from their tight community and were radicalizing on their own account, through the internet. No news of violent activism perpetrated by radical Islamist or Salafist Turkish youths has yet come to light. See “Annual Report 2007,” Dutch Intelligence and Security Service, 2008.

72 NCTb, “Salafisme in Nederland.”

73 “Weerstand en tegenkracht: Actuele trends en ontwikkelingen van het salafisme in Nederland.” Also see A. Olgun, “Nuance keert terug in Nederland,” *NRC Handelsblad*, February 13, 2008; “Bijna 3000 digitale knuffels voor PVV-voorman Wilders,” *Metro*, January 30, 2008; Bas Heijne, “Waarom ik Geert Wilders dankbaar ben,” *NRC Handelsblad*, January 26, 2008.

74 Buijs et al., pp. 228-231.

Only a tiny group among them went a step further, embracing the lifestyle and symbols of jihadists abroad as the only answer to their perceived sense of injustice and insecurity, and even put them into practice in the Netherlands.<sup>75</sup> The members of the Hofstad Group legitimized their terrorist intentions with thoughts they took from notable Salafi-jihadi clerics such as Abu Hamza al-Masri or Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi.

This still does not solidify a causal relationship. Salafist mosques did indeed function as an ideological hotbed for potential radicals. The al-Fourqaan mosque in Eindhoven was identified as a playground for jihadist recruiters. The members of the Hofstad Group, however, were not passive victims of Salafist “hatemongers” from abroad. On the contrary, militant Muslims such as Samir Azzouz, Jason Walters or Mohammed Bouyeri were actively seeking jihadist guidance once they had embarked on their course of radicalization. At some point, they even stopped visiting their Salafist mosques because it did not offer them instructions to wage jihad in the Netherlands. They therefore constructed their own brand of *umma*-oriented jihadism through texts and principles they found on the internet.

Indeed, the AIVD defined Salafism as “anti-integrative, anti-democratic and isolationist” in 2007 and again in 2009.<sup>76</sup> This definition, however, cannot be equated with terrorism. Salafism is not a sliding scale from passive orthodoxy into violent orthopraxy. On the contrary, from 2005 onward, Salafist imams, including Fawaz Jneid, have tried to put a brake on overly enthusiastic jihadist emotions among Muslim youth by steering them into more apolitical and especially non-violent action modes and sometimes even reported them to the police.<sup>77</sup>

In sum, the Salafist movement in the Netherlands is still controversial. The strand of political Salafism remains responsible for anti-Western, isolationist and radical opinions; however, as stated by De Koning, political Salafists and apolitical Selefies hold a different view on violence and attitudes toward “infidels” compared to the jihadists. Salafist criticism of the war in Afghanistan or the exploitation of women in Western media and society should not be equated to terrorism, but could be viewed as the voice of a group of highly critical and religious citizens that are searching for a self-conscious position within Dutch society.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, both the NCTb and the AIVD signal a trend of adaptation and moderation (inspired by external pressure from Dutch security services and local authorities as well as from the Saudi regime) of Salafist excesses and a growing resilience and resistance against the seeds of violent jihadism.<sup>79</sup>

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75 Kees van den Bos, Annermarie Loseman and Bertjan Doosje, *Waarom jongeren radicaliseren en sympathie krijgen voor terrorisme: Onrechtvaardigheid, onzekerheid en bedreigde groepen* (The Hague: WODC, 2009).

76 “De radicale da’wa: De opkomst van het neo-radicalisme in Nederland”; “Weerstand en tegenkracht: Actuele trends en ontwikkelingen van het salafisme in Nederland.” Also see Hans Moors and Menno Jacobs, *Aan de hand van de imam. Integratie en participatie van orthodoxe moslims in Tilburg-Noord* (Tilburg: IVA beleidsonderzoek en advies, 2009).

77 Buijs et al.; Alberts et al.

78 De Koning, *Zoeken naar een ‘zuivere’ islam*, p. 378.

79 NCTb, “Salafisme in Nederland”; “Weerstand en tegenkracht: Actuele trends en ontwikkelingen van het salafisme in Nederland.”