



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **How jihadist networks operate: a grounded understanding of changing organizational structures, activities, and involvement mechanisms of jihadist networks in the Netherlands**

Bie, J.L. de

### **Citation**

Bie, J. L. de. (2016, April 14). *How jihadist networks operate: a grounded understanding of changing organizational structures, activities, and involvement mechanisms of jihadist networks in the Netherlands*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/38841>

Version: Corrected Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/38841>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/38841> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation

**Author:** Bie, Jasper L. de

**Title:** How jihadist networks operate : a grounded understanding of changing organizational structures, activities, and involvement mechanisms of jihadist networks in the Netherlands.

**Issue Date:** 2016-04-14

## Chapter 5:

# Jihadist Networks and the Involvement of Vulnerable Immigrants: Reconsidering the Ideological and Pragmatic Value

### Abstract

Research has shown that irregular migrants were disproportionately present in jihadist networks in the Netherlands between 2000 and 2005. Building on this study by analyzing files of closed police investigations and interviewing Imams and personnel within asylum centers and detention centers, this chapter explains the attractiveness of jihadist networks by a combination of pragmatic and ideological factors. The studied cases demonstrate how jihadist networks are able to satisfy certain needs of these irregular immigrants in a pragmatic way, and how criminal activities play an important role in this process. They also show how jihadist networks can fill a void for some of these irregular migrants who are in search for meaning and identity. The Jihadi-Salafist ideology does not seem to be the core pull factor explaining the attractiveness of the jihadist networks in this study.

A slightly different version of this chapter was published as a separate manuscript:

*De Bie, J.L., De Poot, C.J., & Van der Leun, J.P. (2014). Jihadi Networks and the Involvement of Vulnerable Immigrants: Reconsidering the Ideological and Pragmatic Value. Global Crime, 15(3-4), 275–298.*

*De Bie, J.L., De Poot, C.J., & Van der Leun, J.P. (2013). Illegale Vreemdelingen in Jihadistische Samenwerkingsverbanden. Tijdschrift voor Criminologie, 55(2), 155-174.*

## 5.1 Introduction

Jihadist terrorism is a form of crime in which radical networks, relying on an extremely violent ideology, are planning, preparing and executing terrorist acts. Academics and criminal investigative authorities tend to label the latter as “ideologically motivated crime”. Subjects within these radical networks are often depicted as protesters with a utopist image of society that is strongly supported by ideology. Ideology is seen as motivation for individuals to form groups and engage in criminal conducts. On the other hand, literature has also shown that many subjects are not protesters *a priori* but vulnerable individuals who search for solutions in order to deal with their alleged deprived situation (Berman, 2009; Buijs et al., 2006). In that regard, the pragmatic value of a network, rather than its ideological goals, might just as well be an attractive feature to vulnerable individuals.

Dutch criminal investigative authorities have been focusing on alleged ideological motivated criminal conducts intensively since 2001. The resulting police investigations pertain to both subjects that could be regarded as protesters, as well as vulnerable individuals such as young second generation Muslim migrants who show signs of an identity crisis. Furthermore, in the first tier of the data collection of this dissertation, the presence of a particular vulnerable group within the jihadist networks was found, namely a relatively large number of *irregular* Muslim immigrants. These irregular, undocumented, or unauthorized immigrants never acquired a residence permit for the Netherlands, their application was denied, or their permit had expired (Engbersen & Van der Leun, 2001).<sup>44</sup> From the 90 analyzed male individuals who were active in the first tier of data, almost half (41 subjects) resided illegally in Western Europe.<sup>45</sup>

This remarkable finding has not been thoroughly investigated. Also the relationship between specifically *irregular* Muslim immigrants and radicalization in general has hardly been studied. The presence of *home-grown*<sup>46</sup> terrorists is often related to the attractiveness of radical ideologies, but the background of an alleged protesting home-

---

<sup>44</sup> Common term in the Netherlands for individuals from third countries who reside in the country without lawful permission of the government is illegal migrant. We refrain from using this term here because of its stigmatizing nature and have replaced it by irregular migrant. We reserve the term illegal for the nature of the residence or stay (Illegal stay). This can imply that a person entered the country illegally, but many irregular immigrants in the Netherlands over stay their visa. For a discussion on terminology and an overview of studies in this field, see Engbersen, Van der Leun, & De Boom (2007); Schrover, Van der Leun, Lucassen, & Quispel (2008); Van Meeteren, (2010).

<sup>45</sup> The 23 active women in the analyzed networks were all legally residing in the Netherlands. Less than estimated 10% of the total number of migrants in the Netherlands appears to be irregular. See for instance Van der Leun & Illies (2010). Therefore, the fact that half of this study's male actors are illegally residing indicates disproportionality, although in absolute terms it only concerns a small number.

grown terrorist can significantly deviate from the profile of a, potentially vulnerable, first generation irregular immigrant. This raises the question why in the period of time under study the analyzed jihadist networks were so attractive to this group of irregular Muslim immigrants. More specifically, this chapter explores to what extent the ideological and pragmatic values of jihadist networks are important features that could attract irregular immigrants. Answering this question may help rethinking certain assumptions about the relation between ideology, crime and extremist environments.

Following terrorism expert Crenshaw (1981, p. 396), we approach this case from two complementary perspectives. On the one hand, from the perspective of the individual, who is driven by ideological motivations due to different circumstances. This ideological perspective emphasizes the background of the subjects, the radicalization process, the narrative of the ideology, and their relation with society. On the other hand, from the perspective of the jihadist network, regarded as a community which can draw individuals for different reasons. This community can satisfy different needs of its members in a pragmatic way. From this perspective the pragmatic benefits which are associated with group participation are emphasized, without ideological motives playing a significant role. One of such pragmatic solutions can be crime (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). As displayed in the crime-terror nexus literature, several scholars elaborated how and to what extent organized crime groups and terrorist groups either converge, collaborate, or imitate each other more and more in the last two or three decades when trying to achieve their allegedly distinctive objectives (Dechesne & Van der Veer; 2010; Dishman, 2005; Mullins, 2009b; Picarelli, 2006). According to this literature, terrorists' motivation behind this interaction is to invigorate funding, preparation, and execution of terrorist plots (Dishman, 2005, p. 244; Gartenstein-Ross & Dabruzzi, 2007; Hutchinson & O'Malley, 2007, p. 1097; Makarenko, 2004, p. 130; Naylor, 2004; Perri & Brody; 2011, p.49; Shelley & Picarelli, 2005, p. 54). None of the studies in this context, however, seem to address the issue of attractiveness of terrorist groups for new members through the adoption of crime.<sup>47</sup> This chapter aims at filling this gap by exploring the incentives that terrorist groups can offer to certain irregular migrants through a combination of ideology and pragmatic solutions such as crime.

The methodology we have deployed to study these aspects will be elaborated in the next paragraph. Based on a literature study, the third paragraph will briefly outline the jihadist ideology and what jihadist networks have to offer in theory. We will combine radicalization studies regarding the role of ideology with migration studies concerning the role of the community and practical solutions. Radicalization studies tend to focus on Muslims without paying specific attention to their residence status; migration studies

---

<sup>46</sup> Muslims who lived the greater part of their lives in a Western society and who also radicalized there. See Vidino (2009).

<sup>47</sup> Only Mullins (2009b) touches lightly upon this issue when he compares the pathways into crime and terrorism. He does not stress the attractiveness of crime within terrorist groups however.

that focus on irregular migrants do not pay much attention to ideology or religion. Based on an analysis of police files and additional semi-structured interviews with experts in the field, we will illustrate in paragraphs 4 and 5 how both ideological as well as pragmatic values can determine the attractiveness of jihadist networks to irregular Muslim migrants. We base these findings on the activities and behavior of members of the jihadist networks. We do not seek for the explicit motivations that drove them to join these networks, but we seek to understand their attitude by analyzing their (documented) behavior. We selectively focus on migrants without civil rights, who have come to the attention of the police and the Ministry of Justice because of their involvement with terrorism related issues. It should be kept in mind that for the majority of irregular Muslim migrants in the Netherlands, this is not the case. Whereas some seek crime as a solution, the majority does not (Engbersen & Van der Leun, 2001; Leerkes, Engbersen, & Van der Leun, 2012; Van Meeteren, 2012). Joining a jihadist network is even rarer.

## 5.2. Data and methods

### 5.2.1 Approach

In order to answer the research question “*To what extent do pragmatism and ideology determine the attractiveness of jihadist networks to irregular Muslim immigrants?*”, we first look at the background of the irregular immigrants present in the investigations. Their basic needs and frustrations point to the features that could make a jihadist network attractive to them. Hence, we look at the practical solutions jihadist networks have to offer, in order to lay bare the pragmatic value of these networks. Second, we also look at the behavior and activities of irregular immigrants within the networks, for indications of the ideological value of jihadist networks. We try to accomplish this by analyzing to what extent their behavior is characterized by Jihadi-Salafism. Ideologically characterized behavior not only implies a positive attitude towards the ideology, but also suggests that a subject is internalizing the ideology. Although the relationship between attitude and behavior is complex (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005) our data will help to understand ideological attitude by analyzing behavior knowing that Jihadi-Salafism explicitly prescribes and demands particular behavior as a signature of its doctrine (Roex et al., 2010; Wiktorowicz, 2005). We deal with the latter more in detail in 5.3.1.

We applied *grounded theory* methods in this study, which is an alternative for the positivist approach that aims to test and verify hypotheses from prior research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded Theory (GT) is an inductive approach that aims to generate a theory through the unprejudiced analysis of data. The basic principles of the GT approach are the *comparative method* and *theoretical sampling*. The comparative method involves comparison between data and emerging concepts during each stage of the analysis (Glaser & Strauss, p. 106), while theoretical sampling means that emerging categories direct the process of data gathering or sampling over time (Morse, 2007, p.

229-244).<sup>48</sup> The procedures of sampling, coding, categorizing, analyzing and theorizing need to be conducted simultaneously and continuously throughout the research in order to adhere to these premises.<sup>49</sup>

Data in the area of jihadism are not easy to gather, as radicalized irregular Muslim migrants who are active in jihadist networks are not easy to find. They keep a low profile because of their lack of residence status and their involvement in criminal networks. Hence, we used three kinds of methods. First, we analyzed radicalization studies and migration studies to discover the parallels between the two disciplines. Second, we analyzed closed police investigations on different forms of jihadist terrorism. Third, we conducted interviews with employees of detention centers and asylum centers who have a qualified perspective on the problems and behavior of irregular migrants (detention centers) and potential irregular migrants (asylum centers). Although these are rich data sources in particular when combined, a limitation is that we cannot generalize the data due to an unrepresentative sample.

### 5.2.2 Police investigations

For this chapter we only used the first tier of data that we collected from the police files, containing information on the 2000-2005 period. From that period, we analyzed 12 selected police investigations on jihadist terrorist activities in the Netherlands. A specified documentation sheet was used in order to analyze the suspect hearings, witness statements, original wiretap transcripts (both telephone and internet), observation reports, house searches, and other relevant information. This information illustrated the behavior of the subjects. When we found that many subjects in the analyzed investigations were undocumented, we explicitly focused on the 41 undocumented jihadists from these files<sup>50</sup> to further analyze their behavior. This is in line with the grounded theory principles. Table 5.1 shows the background characteristics of the migrants concerned. Due to limited information on the background, we did not conduct any further analysis of these data. The relatively high number of Algerians stands out though. However, previous research (Engbersen & Van der Leun, 2001) shows that for example undocumented immigrants with a Moroccan background often present themselves as Algerians in order to hamper expulsion. Hence, there are reasons to use these background data with some care. In the following paragraphs, we will provide examples taken from the police files in separate (often italicized) fragments, summarized in our own words, in order to clarify. These fragments can be seen as typical examples.

<sup>48</sup> For an extensive and general elaboration of GT methodology, see Corbin & Strauss (2008); and Charmaz (2006).

<sup>49</sup> For a more extensive outline of the used GT methods, see Chapter 2.

<sup>50</sup> In total, the first tier of data contained 119 actors. Of those, 41 were illegally residing in the Netherlands.

**Table 5.1:** Demographic facts of 41 irregular immigrants within the criminal investigations.

Background facts irregular Muslim migrants	Absolute numbers
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	41
Female	0
<b>Age</b>	
≤25 year	9
26-35 year	19
≥36 year	10
Unknown	3
<b>Native country</b>	
Algeria	27
Morocco	5
Other	9
Unknown	0
<b>Marital status</b>	
Married	10
Single	2
Unknown	29
<b>Completed Education</b>	
Tertiary Education	5
Primary/Secondary school	2
Unknown	34
<b>Employed <sup>51</sup>/study</b>	
Yes	19
No	3
Unknown	19

<sup>51</sup> Further information about employment is lacking, this is most likely to be illegal labor.

The police investigations in our study are composed as follows. When there is reason to believe that certain individuals have the intention to act unlawfully in accordance with an Islamic fundamentalist doctrine, the police often start a criminal investigation under the categorization of terrorism. This consequently implies that the monitored subjects become labeled as suspects of terrorism who have mobilized in terrorist groups. Although we use these particular investigations for academic research, we are reluctant to use the same categorizations as the police. In reality the so-called *groups* are less well defined than the investigations often portray them to be. Also, the inclination of *terrorism* is a heavy burden, whereas many subjects within the analyzed networks appear to show different degrees of involvement, which does not always warrant the label of terrorist.

The 12 analyzed police investigations focus on 6 separate jihadist networks, which means that some of the investigations focus on the same cluster of subjects. This is often already acknowledged by the police, but in some instances we took the liberty to merge several investigations due to their interconnectedness. As explained in 3.2.2, we categorized a cluster of subjects as one network when the subjects interacted with each other and conducted several activities in order to establish the same objective. This objective refers to a concrete action – such as suicide bombing – and not merely the overarching ambition of Jihadi-Salafism. Even with these criteria it remains arguable whether one is dealing with entirely independent networks or with a large movement that contains several semi-independent subgroups.

The nature and composition of these networks are summarized in Table 5.2. It illustrates the years under investigation. Although police investigations started in a particular year, the investigators often adopted a retrospective view to look back in time. This is why the investigation of network 1 started in 2001, although certain activities of the network already started in 2000. Regarding the composition of the networks, network 1, 2 and 4 contain many subjects, but they do not all interact with each other with the same frequency. Each network has a core of subjects that interact with each other more frequently than with those in the periphery, which also reflects their involvement and degree of support (see Chapter 3 for an example of different tie strengths between subjects). Table 5.2 also shows the number of irregular immigrants involved per network and the (terrorist and criminal) activities they conducted. Except for the actual liquidation executed by a member of network 4, the irregular immigrants were all involved in the mentioned activities.<sup>52</sup> Paragraphs 5.4.1.2 and 5.4.2.3 will elaborate on the subjects' activities more in detail and will portray the different types of involvement.

<sup>52</sup> The fact that these irregular immigrants were arrested is not a result of migration control. The investigations started under the presumption of terrorism and the monitored groups happened to include subjects without a residence permit.

Table 5.2: The nature of jihadist networks based on police investigations.<sup>54</sup>

Network no.	Years investigated	Number of subjects	Number of irregular immigrants	Intent of terrorism	Criminal activities
1	2000-2001	29	9	- Plans for suicide bombing at the American embassy in Paris or an military encampment in Belgium	- Passport theft - Passport forgery - Burglary - Credit card fraud/ skimming - Trade in counterfeit clothing
2	2001-2003	36	26	- Facilitating liquidation - Recruiting foreign fighters for jihad - Facilitating foreign fighters for jihad - Weapon trade	- Passport theft - Passport forgery - Shoplifting - Drug trafficking
3	2003-2005	11	4	- Recruitment for jihad - Possession of weapons	- Passport forgery - Human trafficking
4	2003-2005	48	3	- Ideological liquidation - Plans for attacking government buildings - Weapon trade	- Passport fraud - Identity fraud - Shoplifting

The use of police files as a source of data has inherent limitations: (1) not all jihadist activities and background data are known to the police; (2) whether to start an investigation is guided by investigation policy choices and priorities; (3) the initial aim of the files is to inform a judge; (4) the case selection is limited to the period 2000-2005; (5) and finally, we are able to analyze the networks only from the start of an investigation. The subjects are most likely to have entered the jihadist networks then already, and therefore processes that have led to this entrance can only be reconstructed partially and with great prudence.<sup>53</sup> According to Althoff (2013, p. 397), “court files are constructions of social reality in the context of criminal law”. Furthermore, the statements of suspects are the result of “forced” communication, which implies a biased perspective. It is indeed crucial to handle the data with prudence. However, the recorded internet and telephone wire taps cannot be regarded as “forced communication”, neither can the confiscated materials from the house searches. In that regard, Van Koppen (2013) claims that compared to other countries, Dutch criminal investigations provide rich information due to the extensive use of wiretapping, observation techniques, and the absence of plea-bargaining. The latter holds even more for terrorism investigations. However, it still

<sup>53</sup> For methodological limitations see De Poot & Sonnenschein, 2011, par. 1.3.

<sup>54</sup> Several subjects reside in more than one network. This means that the total number of irregular immigrants exceeds 41.

stands that the data are gathered and selected by police officials first, which transforms the information into secondary and biased data. Nevertheless, in accordance with Van Koppen, due to the fact that we had access to the original transcripts, we were for a great part able to check the data ourselves. Finally, without the possibility to conduct observations within jihadist networks, there is no realistic alternative. We recognize that not directly interviewing suspected jihadist terrorists is a disadvantage, but these police investigations offer a unique perspective on jihadist networks and their modus operandi, which is very difficult to obtain otherwise.

### 5.2.3 Interviews

In order to balance the abovementioned problems and to find more data about our research topic, we additionally interviewed key respondents. This is in line with the grounded theory principle of theoretical sampling. We conducted 10 interviews with public prosecutors and team leaders of the police who were closely involved in the studied police cases. Furthermore, to broaden our view on irregular immigrants, we also conducted 23 interviews with key informants from asylum centers (AC) and detention centers (DC).<sup>55</sup> The reason for choosing these two organizations is twofold. First, these are the locations where, for this research, relevant migrants visibly concentrate. Asylum seekers in an AC are legally speaking not yet irregular migrants; they may however become so potentially. Second, the data from the police files show that a portion of the subjects who were actively involved during that period had met each other in asylum centers and prisons. Previous studies also indicate that prison populations can be used to radicalize and recruit new members (Cuthbertson, 2004; Hamm, 2007; Hannah, Clutterbuck, & Rubin, 2008). Some of these studies clarify that especially vulnerable people are targeted (Trujillo, Jordán, Antonio Gutierrez, & González-Cabrera, 2009) who also pragmatically adopt new behavior (such as religious conversion) in order to cope with the prison environment (Mulcahy, Merrington, & Bell, 2013). Since we are interested in irregular migrants, we focused on detention centers instead of prisons, because that is where (criminal) irregular immigrants are detained in the Netherlands. In the AC and DC thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff members from different locations and with different executive positions, who work in close relation with the population of migrants over a longer course of time. We decided to interview these key informants (instead of irregular migrants) due to their experience over the years (including our research period) and their experience with many irregular immigrants and asylum seekers. The police investigations do not focus on a contemporary episode but stem from a few years back. Hence, the key informants we selected were able to provide information over a longer period and it is questionable

<sup>55</sup> Detected irregular migrants and asylum seekers who exhausted all legal procedures and who are obliged to leave the country, are detained or upheld in DCs.



whether irregular immigrants and asylum seekers who currently reside in DCs and ACs would be able to do so. In addition, these staff members are able to provide information about the living standards of a large number of irregular immigrants and asylum seekers and compare this with the living standards in different years. Furthermore, 10 Imams who work for the Custodial Institutions Agency have been interviewed in the context of a focus group interview. They all work in a DC,<sup>56</sup> where at the time 11 Imams were employed. Overall, the 23 respondents and the locations where they work are partially selected on the willingness to cooperate to this research. Hence, our sample of key informants is a convenience sample. Moreover, the informants are an indirect source of data, which again indicates that we should handle the outcomes, will be presented in paragraphs 4 and 5, with prudence.

### 5.3 Radical irregular Muslim migrants. A multidisciplinary perspective

#### 5.3.1 Jihadi-Salafism

The subjects in jihadist movements are associated with the *Salafism* doctrine. This ideology aims at a return to the pure interpretation of Islam, as it was lived in the original Muslim community (*umma*) in the time of the prophet Muhammed and the following three caliphates (Cottee, 2010; Meijer, 2009; Wiktorowicz, 2006). The heterogenic Salafist movement contains several ideological interpretations (De Koning, 2009, p. 377; Meijer, 2009, p. 3). Wiktorowicz analytically distinguishes between three types of Salafists: the purists, the politicians, and the Jihadi-Salafists who all share a common creed or *aqidah*. Within this *aqidah*, the *tawheed* (the unity and uniqueness of Allah) and the purification of Islam are central themes. All Muslims should adopt the lifestyle of the prophet, as laid down in the Quran and the Hadith, and reject all human desires and rationalizations (Cottee, 2010; Wiktorowicz, 2006). The religious precepts stemming directly from the Hadith are of essential importance to purify Islam (Roex et al., 2010; Wiktorowicz, 2005). The *aqidah* prescribes that every form of religious innovation (*bid'a*), that does not flow directly from the Quran or the Hadith, is a threat to its pure form (Wagemakers, 2009; Wiktorowicz, 2006). The foregoing shows that the common creed of this ideology prescribes explicit behavior. This implies that analyzing behavior of alleged supporters of this ideology, could indicate to what extent they value, support, or internalize the ideology. For example, not explicitly pursuing ideological goals, such as the implementation of sharia law, not willing to desist from unorthodox liberal and Western customs and crime, or not trying to comply with prescribed behavior, such as clothing, chastity, or nutrition regulations, does not suggest unconditional support for the purification of Islam. The three types of Salafists, however, differ in how they think Islam should be purified and Salafist goals should be reached. Purists advocate

<sup>56</sup> In AC no imams are employed.

education, propaganda and emphasize an orthodox lifestyle. Politicos resort to political tools, while Jihadi-Salafists preach violent means (Buijs et al., 2006; NCTb, 2008; Sageman, 2004; Wiktorowicz, 2006). This dissertation focuses on the latter group. According to Jihadi-Salafists, the violent jihad (armed struggle or holy war) is the tool to purify Islam (NCTb, 2009; Sageman, 2004; Wiktorowicz, 2006). There is, however, no consensus on the violent jihadist doctrine. Various scholars state that violent jihad can be both religiously as well as politically motivated, the war can be focused on Islamic as well as non-Islamic countries, both at protecting as well as expanding the *umma*. Although many individual nuances around the application of jihad exist (Meijer, 2009; Roex et al., 2010; Roy, 2005; Sageman, 2004, Wagemakers, 2009; Wiktorowicz, 2005; Zemni, 2006), they do share a common creed.

#### 5.3.2 Background factors of radical Muslims and irregular migrants

An analysis of selected radicalization and migration studies brings to the fore that similar background factors have been described for, on the one hand, radical Muslims and, on the other hand, irregular migrants. Three core factors can be derived. Firstly, radical Muslims and irregular migrants suffer respectively from relative and absolute *deprivation*. This perceived deprivation by radical Muslims is influenced by the generally low socio-economic position of Muslims in Western societies, which in their opinion is unfair and disproportionate (Buijs, 2009; Moghaddam, 2005; Silke, 2008). They feel that society failed them (Buijs et al., 2006; Horgan, 2008; Nesser, 2011). The absolute deprivation of irregular migrants correlates with, amongst others, their formal exclusion from society due to the restrictive migration policy in the Netherlands. Especially since the enactment of the *Wijzigingswet Vreemdelingenwet en enige andere wetten* (1998; Amendment of the Dutch Aliens Act), which enhanced the exclusion from public services such as non-essential health care, public housing, and social security. Second, identity problems are an important communal factor. One reason are the perceived feelings of threat by Muslims due to the negative stigmas in society (Buijs et al., 2006; Geelhoed, 2012), another reason is that the identity of irregular migrants as head and caretaker of the family is being jeopardized due to their inability of providing an income (Leerkes, 2009). Finally, the studies clearly point to *mental problems* as a core factor. For both groups, deprivation and identity problems are described as leading to insecurity (Engbersen et al., 2002; Slooman & Tillie, 2006), psychological and physical problems (Burgers & Engbersen, 1999; Muijsenbergh & Schroeffer, 2009), and strong emotional responses (Loza, 2007; Sternberg, 2003).

#### 5.3.3 Ideological and pragmatic responses

The responses of individuals to the aforementioned problems emphasize the importance of social ties. Adding to that, social movement theorists argue that especially grievances, efficacy, identity issues and emotions such as fear and anger motivate people to participate in protest groups (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans,



2013), which are comparable to the factors mentioned by radicalization studies. The latter focus on the role religion, ideology, group membership, and solidarity can play when personal identity is under pressure. Individuals, who feel trapped in insecure and threatening situations, seek to find meaning and control within religion, and in contact with fellow deprived peers (Kay, Gaucher, Napier, Callan, & Laurin, 2008; McIntosh, Silver & Wortman, 1993; Pargament et al., 1990; Pargament, et al., 2005). According to radicalization studies deprived Muslims are attracted to religion and to fellow Muslims who, close or abroad, find themselves in similar deprived or threatening situations. This offers control and mental relieve. For the majority of deprived Muslims these moderate solutions are sufficient, but a sub-group develops feelings of vengeance against the majority population or against a foreign power that oppresses fellow Muslims abroad. In some cases, an ideology such as Jihadi-Salafism can be embraced since its narrative explicitly counters the majority group of Western societies or other foreign powers. Distrust, distance, isolation from society, and potential violent means can be legitimized (Bartlett & Miller, 2012; Buijs et al., 2006; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008; Silke, 2008; Slooman & Tillie, 2006; Wiktorowicz, 2004).

Studies on irregular migrants, on the other hand, more often depart from a functionalist perspective. Based on Merton’s (1945) strain theory, they argue that by a lack of resources, practical coping strategies are adopted in order to deal with deprivation (Caplowitz, 1979, Mingione, 1987; Engbersen et al., 2002). These studies assume that individuals approach communities if these can practically help them by providing for their social and material needs. The social capital of irregular migrants is embedded in a network of relatives, friends, and acquaintances (Engbersen & Van der Leun, 2001; Portes, Guarnizo, & Haller, 2002; Van Meeteren, 2012). The accessibility to this type of capital is dependent on nationality, ethnicity, language, and kinship (Engbersen et al., 2002). Common backgrounds are useful when searching for contacts and seem indispensable for gaining access to labor, financial or material gifts, and housing. When the social network of irregular migrants does not suffice to provide for the basic needs in a legal manner, some irregular migrants get involved in criminal activity (Figure 5.1). To these groups, survival crime can offer a practical alternative (Engbersen & Van der Leun, 2001; Leerkes et al., 2012; Van der Leun, 2003). In fact, organized crime studies sometimes show a similar process: individuals can – due to a shared ethnic background – accomplish practical tasks for criminal organizations and thereby facilitate criminal activity, without being a member of the networks, and sometimes without being fully aware of the criminal nature of the activities (Hobbs, 2001, p. 553).

**5.3.4 Interaction of ideology and pragmatism**

We assume that the behavioral responses described in the literature are to some extent biased because both strands of studies prefer to emphasize either an ideological or a pragmatic perspective. Merging existing theories and findings will help getting better insights into the interaction of ideology and pragmatism.

Figure 5.1: Separate perspectives.

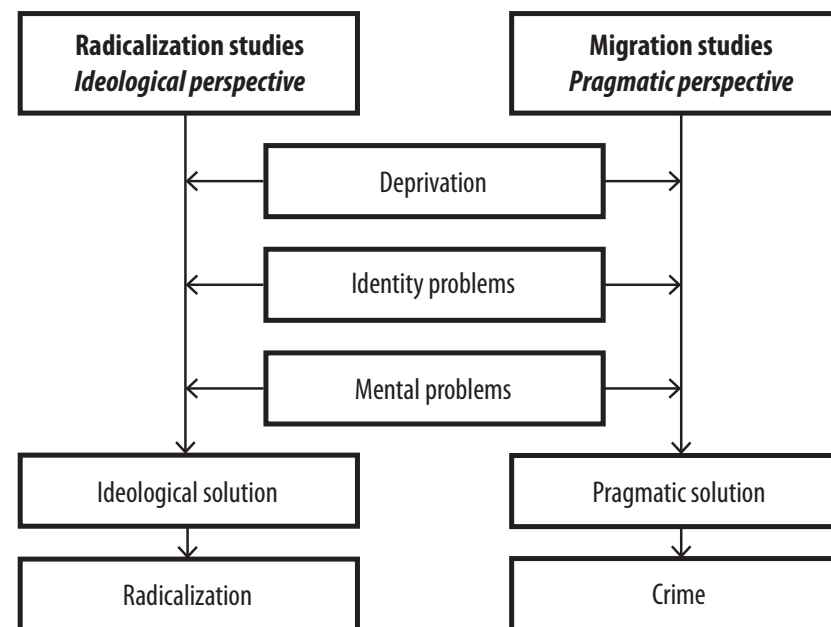
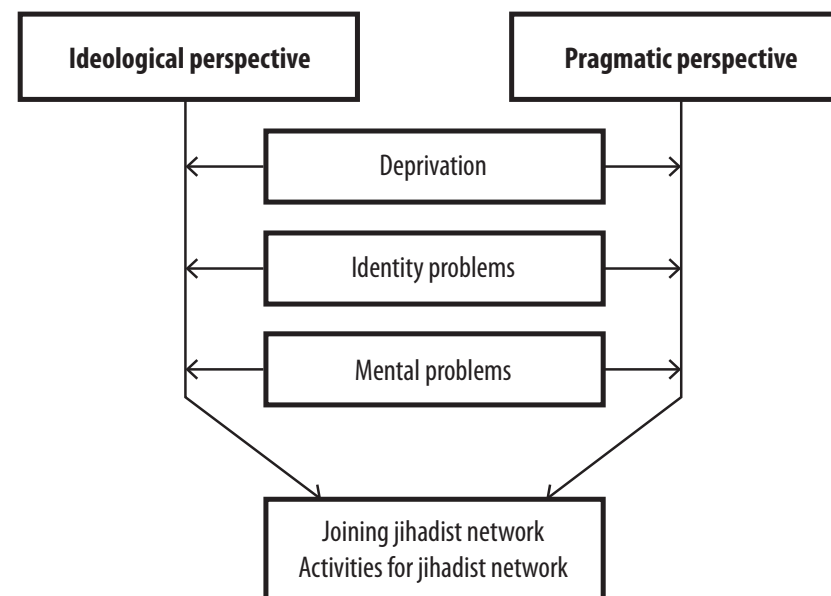


Figure 5.2: Interaction of ideology and pragmatism.



Radicalization studies for instance often assume that the subjects who entered jihadist networks are actually radicalized and have fully embraced and internalized the Jihadi-Salafist ideology (Demant, Slooman, Buijs & Tillie, 2008; Meertens et al., 2006; Moghaddam, 2005; Silber & Bhatt, 2007; Wiktorowicz, 2004). Although this probably accounts for some of the subjects, one could wonder whether this assumption is always applicable and whether the process of radicalization should be regarded as a *conditio sine qua non* for all subjects involved. Jihadist networks are extremely heterogeneous and variable (Bakker, 2006; De Poot & Sonneschein, 2011; Sageman, 2004). Besides faith and belief in a higher purpose, these networks can also provide other benefits, according to the economics of terrorism, such as social and material support and access to different kinds of goods and services (Berman, 2009; Ferrero, 2006; Iannacone & Berman, 2006). This pragmatic approach offers a relevant perspective. Studies on to the economics of terrorism as well as the earlier mentioned studies on the crime-terror nexus do touch upon this pragmatic nature of certain activities of the terrorist groups. These studies emphasize the growing collaboration between organized criminal and terrorist groups, which has been enhanced by globalization and the rise of the information age, the changing nature of state involvement and the way the composition of organizations is constructed. Especially the development from a hierarchical organization to a network structure has made collaboration between criminals and terrorists easier. The most important reason *why* terrorist groups would conduct criminal activities has to do with financial gain, which enables them to survive and to fund, prepare, and execute terrorist activities. Some scholars even argue that due to this convergence the ideological motive could also transform into a purely profit-oriented motive (Curtis & Karacan, 2002, p. 22; Dishman, 2001, p. 44; Shelley & Picarelli, 2005, p. 54). Although these studies touch upon the interaction between pragmatism (crime) and ideology (terror), they mainly analyze the crime-terror nexus from the perspective of established networks or criminal organizations. As Picarelli (2006, p. 7) correctly notices, the individual as a subject of analysis is widely ignored. Furthermore, studies mainly focus on crime in relation to the end-game of the network (financing terrorist attacks), without much regard to the entry motivations of individuals. Dishman (2005, p. 237) notes that some political militant groups introduced financial incentives to recruit new members, but does not further investigate this. Hence, the criminal attractiveness of terrorist groups in relation to entry mechanisms of new recruits has not received systematic attention so far. Emphasis on potential individual recruits in relation to the attractiveness of crime, however, could broaden our view on the crime-terror nexus and illustrate its importance in relation to entry mechanisms.

Studies on irregular migrants, which do stress pragmatically motivated behavior by individuals, are informative here, but they largely leave the role of religion and ideology out of the picture. Although some studies show that churches and religious communities are in fact an important source of social capital due to direct and indirect contacts within churches, this is, however, again explained from the pragmatic perspective (Burgers &

Engbersen, 1999). These studies rarely incorporate the search for meaning and control in religion and the ideological value a network can have (Figure 5.2). Social movement theorists, however, argue that the earlier mentioned grievances, efficacy, identity, emotions, and social embeddedness can motivate immigrants to participate in protest groups (Klandermans & Van Stekelenburg, 2008).

## 5.4 Results

### 5.4.1 Pragmatic attractiveness

#### 5.4.1.1 Problems and needs of irregular Muslim migrants

Key informants emphasized that asylum seekers share relatively small and sober living spaces with several people. Privacy in ACs is limited and social conflicts occur on a regular basis. Asylum seekers are supposed to organize their own leisure activities, but have difficulties integrating into society due to their lack of contacts and language skills.<sup>57</sup> In addition, their financial opportunities are limited to the weekly compensation by the Dutch government, as they are not allowed to work. Furthermore, in a DC irregular migrants are subjected to a prison regime, which means they cannot leave the premises to work or undertake any social activities in society. Contrary to the AC, social activities are organized in the DC and the living facilities offer a little bit more privacy than in the AC. Nonetheless, the living conditions are still frugal and, according to the National Ombudsman (Verhoef, Van Dorst, Van der Kleij, & Adric, 2012) inhumane.<sup>58</sup>

Until 2010, asylum seekers had to deal with asylum procedures that could last for years. Since the *Amendment of the Dutch Aliens Act 2000* in 2010 this process has been accelerated,<sup>59</sup> but asylum seekers are still confronted with time consuming procedures which tend to make them passive. DC respondents state that rejected asylum seekers often do not leave the country after the final negative decision (Staff members 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5). Consequently, according to the respondents, they become irregular migrants, who have very little to fall back upon and therefore start committing petty crimes. Many of them, according to our respondents, return to the DC after a while and attempt to start a new asylum procedure. The inflexibility of the authorities regarding the asylum procedure and the negative decision in their case is perceived as unjust by many migrants concerned. In the DC this is combined with feelings of anger, since the migrant perceives his behavior as non-criminal while he is literally detained. This dissatisfaction fuels a sense of *us-versus-them*. The detention Imams also observe these feelings and attempt to mollify them. Still, some of the Muslim migrants think they are detained

<sup>57</sup> In ACs language skills are not taught to immigrants without a permit.

<sup>58</sup> Also ACs are claimed to be inhumane. In May 2014 a German judge prohibited the return of an asylum seeker to a Dutch AC because the risk of possible inhuman treatment was too high (Kas, 2014).

<sup>59</sup> The Amendment of the Dutch Aliens Act 2000 in 2010 has accelerated the process of notification of a procedural decision concerning an asylum request. In addition, it prohibits repeated requests.

because they are Muslim, which makes it difficult to change their views (Focus group Imams, Detention Center, April 12<sup>th</sup> 2012).

A positive decision by the authorities (in both AC and DC) is usually met with a positive response, but a negative outcome can cause an emotional outburst of anger and disappointment, according to the respondents. This reaction varies from verbal expression to aggression. In most extreme cases, staff members are threatened or the migrant may demonstrate suicidal intentions.

*“Sometimes it can become personal. They start threatening you and shout ‘I will not leave! I will not let myself be deported’[...]. They sometimes threaten you with death, such as ‘If I run into you outside...you wait, I’ll get you. I will kill you if I run into you outside.’”* (Staff member 1, Detention Center, interview March 2012)

Also in these situations the detention Imam may play a neutralizing role, because they are relatively close to the migrants (Focus group Imams, Detention Center, April 12<sup>th</sup> 2012). The respondents in both AC and DC unanimously state that basically all migrants develop some kind of mental problems, which can be intensified when the migrants have to deal with a negative decision concerning their asylum application or due to the living conditions. This often leads to conflicts, depression, or social isolation.

*“The threshold for conflicts is much lower after some time. Nothing major, but for the people enough to let the bubble burst. This can be caused by the living conditions but predominantly by the psychological problems and the pressure of the procedure. They have a lot to deal with in this couple of weeks.”* (Staff member 21, Detention Center, interview February 2012)

The aforementioned problems of deprivation and mental instability of irregular migrants in the literature are thus confirmed by the interviews. Although the interviews mainly focused on migrants in an asylum procedure, we can assume that these problems do not disappear when asylum seekers become irregular immigrants without safe haven. These problems rather increase.

#### **5.4.1.2 Pragmatic solutions by jihadist networks**

Based on the police investigations that we have studied we observe that the jihadist networks have certain pull-factors, which can pragmatically provide for the cost of living of irregular migrants. *Heartland-oriented* jihadists,<sup>60</sup> subjects who were already radicalized in their native country, play an important intermediary role in this process. They have similar migration backgrounds as the irregular Muslim migrants and therefore may explicitly anticipate the needs of this population.<sup>61</sup> First of all, the majority of the irregular immigrants in our files shares housing with fellow subjects.

*A leading actor (subject 14, network 2) was aware of the fact that subject 20 (network 2) had a hard time adapting in the Netherlands because he disliked the heavy labor of his current job. As a result, subject 14 offered subject 20 to stay at his house, who in his turn seized this opportunity. In addition, subject 39 (networks 3 and 4) had met so many likeminded in the AC, which meant he could continuously move in and out with other members of the group. The same applied to subjects 40 and 41 (network 4), who alternately resided at the houses of 7 different members of the network.*

Second, all analyzed jihadist networks offer housing facilities to foreign jihadists who only temporally reside in the Netherlands.

*Subject 21 (network 2) coordinated the housing of international jihadists from the GSPC. Furthermore, he also ensured that other members of the network are housed. He either made his own house available or ensured that people could reside with others. For instance, focusing on the social surroundings of subject 22 (network 2), he appears to be a lonely man. He is then facilitated by subject 21 who offers him a bed and maintenance.*

Furthermore, the files indicate that certain houses are explicitly rented out to irregular migrants. For example, from the observation reports the police noticed that subject 35 (network 2), managed three attaching houses in which several irregular immigrants were living.

The networks also offer travel opportunities in order to enter, leave, or reside in the Netherlands. One of the core activities of networks 1, 2, and 3 is theft and forgery of passports, in order to enable its members to travel to jihad training and fighting hotspots abroad.

*During a house search of subjects from network 2, the police found a wide variety of stolen documents. These included Somalian passports, Algerian identity cards, and a Somalian marriage certificate. Besides these documents, a stock of passports was found which was stolen from a foreign municipality a few years before. Furthermore, also members from network 3 kept a variety of stolen passports, photographs, and identity notes. The latter implies new orders for forgery.*

<sup>60</sup> In Chapter 3 the *heartland-oriented* were referred to as *core members* or *international jihadists* in network 1. In Chapter 4 they were also explicitly mentioned as one of the *social facilitator* types.

<sup>61</sup> The role of the *heartland-oriented* jihadists depends on the context and time. The current files are from before 2005, an era in which there was little policy concerning recruitment. In the meantime, there have been relevant policy changes, such as the establishment of a terrorist wing in prisons and the commencement of some migration related counter-terrorism measures, which emphasized the aforementioned problems in AC and DC and made it difficult for recruiters to continue their work in the previous fashion. See Veldhuis, Gordijn, Lindenberg & Veenstra (2010).

We did not observe explicit activities of theft and forgery in network 4, but the subjects did possess false passports on a large scale. In addition, theft and forgery of false passports is a lucrative business, because the passports are sold to both irregular immigrants as well as other networks. Subjects from network 1 claim to make a 150 German Mark profit for each sold forged document. In network 2, the profit per forged document varied between 50 and 300 Euros. These revenues are used to finance terrorist purposes, maintain the members of the networks, or to support other jihadists worldwide. In the financial investigations we observed that some transactions made by members from network 1 were directed to other foreign jihadists who allegedly send this to training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan. This means that theft and forgery of passports at first facilitates the jihadist movement, although it also offers an alternative for the asylum procedures of irregular migrants. By explicitly responding to this vulnerable population, the jihadists are able to effectively commit some of them through, for instance, collecting an open debt.

*According to subject 35 (network 2) himself, he started to work for the network in return for a passport that he could not pay for. By helping with forgery and bringing in new customers, he could pay off his debt. He was also financially assisted in renting his apartment and in return the network positioned counterfeiting equipment in his apartment.*

Binding irregular immigrants can also occur through human smuggling and sham marriages. Network 3 uses these methods in order to offer an alternative migration entry and in addition successfully commits moderate Muslims. Subject 36 (network 3) for instance, tried to obtain Dutch citizenship with the coordinated help of a jihadist who had already helped him to travel to the Netherlands by human smuggling. Thereupon, we noticed in the wiretap transcripts, they tried to arrange a sham marriage and made several attempts by persuading a woman to marry subject 36 for the reward of 2,000 Euros.

Possession of official documents offers a semi-legal existence, including the opportunity to be formally employed and gain access to social services. More in particular, subject 5 (network 1) tried to obtain a Dutch social security number by registering at a government institution while using a forged French passport. In addition, earlier mentioned subject 21 (network 2) provided several irregular immigrants with a social security number and a forged passport (next to food, shelter, and train tickets), which they used to register at an employment agency. As a result, some of the irregular immigrants started to see him as social worker and stayed closely connected to him. In network 3 we also observed that several members were closely linked to a shadowy employment agency that deliberately worked with false passports. The members brought in new irregular immigrants who had just entered the country via human smuggling to this agency, which in turn arranged jobs for the immigrants concerned.

## 5.4.2 Ideological attractiveness

The previous paragraph has stressed practical solutions for the needs of irregular immigrants, which points to the pragmatic value of jihadist networks. In order to explore the ideological value, we analyze to what extent the jihadist networks can also fulfill non-material needs (5.4.2.1) and to what extent the activities and roles of the subjects within the network appear to be characterized by Jihadi-Salafism (5.4.2.2).

### 5.4.2.1 Irregular immigrants in search for meaning

The aforementioned practical solutions are primarily offered through criminal activities. The question remains whether crime alone could resolve identity problems and structural insecurity and how pragmatism (crime) and ideology relate to each other or interact. The interviews have shown that due to their deprived living situation irregular immigrants are in need for meaning, security, and safety. As a result, the majority of the respondents from the DC states that some irregular migrants are attracted to religion in order to find meaning and safety (Staff members 1, 2, 4, and 5, DC; all 10 Imams), mainly if they are in a hopeless situation. They sometimes react by becoming more devout and stricter with respect to religious rules. Some irregular Muslim migrants assume that when they put more faith into the hands of Allah, their saving and reward (including the possibility to stay in the country) will follow. The Imams stress that religion offers the migrants something to hold on to. It also offers them an understanding of and justification for their detention: Allah punishes them for their former moderately religious lifestyle. By adopting a more conservative or even orthodox lifestyle they feel they experience suitable punishment (Focus group Imams, Detention Center, April 12<sup>th</sup> 2012).

### 5.4.2.2. Ideological nature of jihadist networks

Joining religious movements and following a creed may enable people to find a community and might offer meaning and security to vulnerable migrants. The police investigations document how this often starts with an explicit bonding process. Religious conviction is a factor that brought many irregular Muslim migrants in contact with other members in the first place. Some subjects sought fellow Muslims inside an AC in order to meet new people. People kept in touch after they left an AC and these premature friendships functioned as a safety net when in need for overnight housing (see for example subject 39 in 5.4.1.2). In addition, several subjects frequently visited a Mosque to meet new people. For example subjects 3, 6, 7, and 8 from network 1 all met each other in a local Mosque. Also more in general, the movement offers a welcoming environment to new likeminded people who are rapidly embraced by the collective. The religious group identity comes forward as a significant factor in this process as it provides a sense of belonging. For example, people studied the Quran, attended political-religious meetings and prayed together. Despite the differing degrees of religiosity, the fact that members share a religion and share similar accounts of (relative)

deprivation, appears to have spurred solidarity and cohesion. In addition, networks 2 and 4 showed that the members frequently met at specific places in order to discuss about whatever was important and necessary for the movement. The files showed how their interpretation of an ideological narrative sometimes polarized their relation with Dutch society, emphasized the importance of the in-group, and also dictated to look after their fellow comrades within the in-group. This reflects a community aspect, where the safety of the in-group is secured. Moreover, safety and security of the in-group was also enhanced by Islamic purification demanded by the ideology. Members were denounced if they did not comply with the ideology's prescribed behavior. Some members from networks 1 and 4, for instance, initially adopted a *Takfir* doctrine, which enabled them to repudiate members from the in-group if they for example did not pray enough or did not demonstrate full (ideological) support. But foremost, this particular doctrine was used to denounce all nonbelievers in general.

To conclude, the emphasis on community and the feeling of belonging on the basis of religion and shared ideology points to the ideological value of the network. However, the shared religious group identity neither means that all subjects' activities are entirely characterized by the Jihadi-Salafist ideology, nor that all subjects should be considered radical. In the following we delve deeper into this issue.

### 5.4.2.3 Ideological hierarchy

The population of irregular Muslim migrants in our study is heterogeneous. On the one hand, there are illegally residing *heartland-oriented* subjects who imported the Jihadi-Salafist ideology into the Netherlands and whose status is based on Quran knowledge and former jihadist experiences. In total we have labeled 7 subjects as illegally residing *heartland-oriented* (subjects 4 and 9 from network 1, subjects 14, 16, and 21 from network 2, subject 37 from network 3, and subject 39 from networks 3 and 4). On the other hand, we found a much larger group of irregular Muslim migrants who could not claim a higher social status based on religious knowledge or jihadist experiences. For this reason we assume that they only fulfilled an active position in the jihadist movement after they migrated to the Netherlands.<sup>62</sup> Their marginalized position seems to be an important factor in influencing their involvement with the analyzed networks and the Jihadi-Salafist ideology. We support this conclusion with several findings.

First, there are many indications in the analyzed files showing that the *heartland-oriented* are more structurally devoted to the Jihadi-Salafist ideology than the other Muslim immigrants. The former explicitly spread the Jihad-Salafist ideology and encourage others to strictly apply orthodox rules. On the contrary, the other irregular Muslim migrants seem to be less religiously devoted and strict:

*Subject 19 (network 2) mentions he is addicted to cocaine. This could have been the result of the drug transportations by network 2, although we cannot verify this. In addition, in the wiretap transcripts, subject 36 (network 3) speaks more about women than about religion and he brags about the number of women he shares his bed with. He personally claims that he also smokes cigarettes. Other subjects do not want to shake his hand because of his unorthodox habits.*

We noticed this type of unorthodox behavior throughout the jihadist movement and it does not only apply to irregular immigrants. However, devotion is difficult to measure and the perceived importance of an orthodox lifestyle can sometimes be unclear within the networks.

Second, irregular immigrants play an unequal part in establishing ideological goals and these differences correlate with status and division of labor. The *heartland-oriented* are leaders whose status is based on religious knowledge, charismatic appearance, and jihadist experiences in their native Islamic countries. Their core activities are preaching, spreading the ideology, recruiting new members, preparing terrorist attacks, and facilitating jihad trainings.

*Subject 9 (network 1) used to be involved in terrorist operations in Muslim countries, but is now a recruiter who converts vulnerable people to the radical form of Islam. These recruited people, such as the alleged suicide bomber within this network, were predominantly self-declared drug addicts or people with social and mental problems. In addition, earlier mentioned subject 21 (network 2) used his status to indoctrinate new members, to spread fatwas on disobedient subjects and to guide them through the recordings of video testaments. He appears to be well-schooled in the jihadist doctrine and preaches his knowledge on cassette tapes. Finally, subject 39 (network 3 and 4) is an inspirer and ideologue of network 4. He positions himself as a forerunner of the radical Islam. He preaches the correct interpretation of the Quran to members of the network; an ability he already utilized during his residence in Asylum Centers a few years earlier, witnesses claim. He does not tolerate any contradiction against his interpretation of Islam and some members find his appearance intimidating. He is eventually suspected of providing a fatwa that allegedly induced an ideologically inspired liquidation.*

On the other hand, the other irregular Muslim migrants seem to lack ideological status within the movement and their core activities have a predominantly facilitating nature. Some of them were for instance actively engaged in theft and burglaries.

*Subjects 5, 6, and 7 from network 1, conducted several residential burglaries, where they specifically aimed for passports. However, they also stole domestic goods such as an alarm clock, coffee, fruit, towels, shampoo, reading glasses, and a sleeping*

<sup>62</sup> Five of the remaining 34 irregular jihadists found themselves in a grey area, now that we doubt their background. They only seemed to have radicalized after they entered the West, but they do seem to upgrade their social status due to previously required knowledge and skills.



*bag. Furthermore, several irregular immigrants from network 2 (subjects 23, 26, 34, and 35) were notorious shoplifters who specifically aimed at stealing clothes.*

The purpose of the stolen goods was initially to provide for foreign jihadists during their temporary stay in the Netherlands. However, regarding the nature of many of these goods, we assume that it is also a way to provide irregular migrants with basic possessions. In addition, in networks 1, 2, and 3 the irregular immigrants were also engaged in forgery of stolen passports.

*During a house search in the apartment of subjects 6 and 7 (network 1) the police found a counterfeiting workshop and confiscated around 60 stolen documents (passports, ID-cards, driving licenses) from all over the world. They also found all sorts of equipment used to forge these documents; needles, (municipality) stamps, markers, folding and cropping equipment for photo processing, and press moulds. Also, subject 35 (network 2) possessed counterfeiting equipment that enabled him to forge Dutch, Belgian, French, Spanish, and British documents. The police also found laminate, a laminator, blank cards, blank identity cards, punch letters, an instruction manual, and printers.*

Some irregular immigrants, such as subject 22 (network 2), claim that they explicitly conducted these criminal activities to help other irregular Muslim migrants. We noticed that subject 22 showed no intent to accomplish any ideological goal. He also stated that he was more intimidated by other Muslim extremists than that he supported them. Another criminal activity conducted by jihadist networks was credit card fraud. Again, several irregular Muslim migrants (subjects 6 and 8, network 1) were engaged in this activity that involved significant financial gain.

*The subjects travelled throughout Europe in order to buy stolen credit cards and then used them in other countries. They also possessed a skimming machine and the records of 45 different names and account numbers. They had connections with people across the world, which were able to either send or place skimming equipment.*

A final activity which involved large sums of money was the transportation of drugs.

*Subject 15 (network 2) coordinated the drug trade in order to generate income. The police traced three separate drug transportations executed by this network. They confiscated 27,000 Euros when they intercepted the first transport. A third transportation failed because one of the members stole the transportation truck and sold the cocaine for his personal gain.*

The police investigations suggest that many irregular Muslims migrants within the jihadist networks aim at financial and material gain and for whom a holy war is of insignificant importance. Their status, type of labor, and limited – or even absent – signs of ideological involvement show that their behavior is hardly characterized by the Jihadi-Salafist ideology. These findings suggest that the attractiveness of a jihadist movement for vulnerable migrants is not necessarily determined by ideology. We rather observe a combination of utility and a need for meaning and security, taking into account that their behavior was often based on pragmatic considerations.

This relative lack of ideological involvement in relation to criminal labor, could suggest that these subjects are “external” criminals from an organized crime syndicate that formed some kind of alliance with a jihadist network. Except for maybe the international credit card fraud, we cannot establish whether this is the case. We do see that most of the subjects are religiously involved (albeit sometimes very moderately) and some explicitly searched for meaning, which means it is unlikely they are merely the product of a crime-terror alliance. In accordance with most literature on the nexus of crime and terror (Dishman, 2001; p. 48; Hutchinson & O’Malley, 2007, p. 1102; Makarenko, 2004, p. 133), the execution of the aforementioned criminal activities by the extremist networks can therefore be regarded as “in-house capabilities”. We found different types of criminal involvement that seem to corroborate this. On the one hand, networks 1 and 2 recruited many vulnerable young Muslims, including irregular immigrants with a criminal history. They were allowed to continue with their criminal activities, which were even justified by ideology. They could steal from *kuffar* (nonbelievers) as long as they would hand over the shares to the network. Members from network 3 emphasized that stealing from *kuffar* is in essence a justified act. As a result, the criminal activities were now sugar-coated with a religious dip.

## 5.5 Conclusion

Many terrorism studies assume that subjects within extremist movements have embraced and internalized a radical religious ideology, implying that these subjects are per se attracted and motivated by ideology. This chapter has challenged this assumption. Departing from the central research question “*To what extent do pragmatism and ideology determine the attractiveness of jihadist networks to irregular Muslim immigrants?*” this chapter has emphasized the complexity of attractiveness. Next to the ideological value, jihadist networks can also have a pragmatic value for people in a vulnerable position, such as irregular migrants. This holds in particular for their limited legal options to survive as a result of tough policies on irregular migration, as is the case in the Netherlands.

The analysis of a selective sample of irregular Muslim migrants involved in jihadist networks between 2000 and 2005, was based on a range of police investigations and interviews with key informants. Based on the interviews, we started out by mapping the

problems that asylum seekers and irregular migrants in ACs and DCs encounter in their daily lives. The data showed that many of the migrants involved appear to struggle with feelings of deprivation and mental issues. Next, based on our analysis of extensive and well-documented police files, we focused on the practical solutions jihadist networks can offer. Criminal activities appeared to offer the most helpful solutions, which clearly indicates the pragmatic value of the networks. However, although crime may satisfy basic needs, it might not resolve the structural insecurity many irregular immigrants experience. Hence, we analyzed the activities and behaviors of irregular Muslim migrants as reflected in the files, in order to explore whether the attractiveness of jihadist networks could be found in the Jihadi-Salafist ideology. Our analysis suggested that due to the subjects' interpretation of the ideology, with its emphasis on community values, the jihadist networks seemed to offer a sense of belonging to the migrants concerned. Yet, Jihadi-Salafism did not seem to be the core instigator of the observed activities. Not all members of jihadist networks appeared to be attracted by the ideological value and strove to realize the proclaimed ideological goals. At least for our case study, the pragmatic value seemed to be more important than is often assumed. This may be a particular finding for a particular phase and place, but it does have wider implications as it sheds a different light on the crime-terror nexus discussion. A pragmatic solution – such as engaging in income generating crime – is not only beneficial to fund terrorism and facilitate the pursuit of ideological goals, but can also attract vulnerable new members. They may even adopt the ideology in order to engage in the movement, but that would require further research.

Despite the limitations and lack of generalizability caused by the use of indirect methods and a selective sample, our study highlights processes that have been largely overlooked so far. Our case study emphasizes that crimes which are commonly seen as ideologically motivated are in fact based on more complex motives. The relation between ideology and crime should not be taken at face value and the pragmatic value of radical movements deserves more attention.