Universiteit Leiden
The Netherlands

Becoming a European homegrown jihadist: a multilevel analysis of involvement in the Dutch Hofstadgroup, 2002-2005

Schuurman, B.W.

Citation
Schuurman, B. W. (2017, January 26). *Becoming a European homegrown jihadist: a multilevel analysis of involvement in the Dutch Hofstadgroup, 2002-2005*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/45328

Version:	Not Applicable (or Unknown)
License:	Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden
Downloaded from:	https://hdl.handle.net/1887/45328

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

Cover Page

Universiteit Leiden

The handle http://hdl.handle.net/1887/45328 holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Schuurman, B.W.
Title: Becoming a European homegrown jihadist: a multilevel analysis of involvement in the Dutch Hofstadgroup, 2002-2005
Issue Date: 2017-01-26

2. Studying involvement in terrorism

2.1 Introduction

This chapter details the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the multicausal framework used to study involvement in the Hofstadgroup. This discussion is preceded by a look at the various issues affecting research on terrorism in order to underline the importance of using primary-sources based data. What are their benefits compared to secondary sources and why have terrorism researchers found it so difficult to incorporate them into their work? The chapter closes by providing definitions for commonly used but controversial terms such as 'terrorism', 'radicalism' and 'extremism'.

2.2 Issues in terrorism research

Research on terrorism has a strong multidisciplinary character. Academic perspectives used to study this form of political violence range from psychology, sociology, political science, history, economics, criminology and anthropology to international relations, law, the military sciences and critical theory.[90] Given this diversity in terrorism researchers' backgrounds, the associated differences in the methodologies used and the thus far limited attempts at integrating these perspectives, it is not surprising to find scholarship on terrorism spread over several subfields.[91] However, the absence of a single field of terrorism studies is not necessarily an impediment to academic progress. As Schmid concludes his 2011 review of the literature on terrorism; a 'fairly solid body of consolidated knowledge has emerged'.[92] More worrying are the various and longstanding concerns over the quality of this research.

Contrary to the claims of the recently created discipline of Critical Terrorism Studies,[93] there is a long history of critical reflection among established terrorism scholars.[94] In the 1980s, authors like Crenshaw, Reich and Schmid and Jongman critiqued existing research for being

---

90 Schmid, "The literature on terrorism," 458; Isabelle Duyvesteyn, "The role of history and continuity in terrorism research," in *Mapping terrorism research: state of the art, gaps and future directions*, ed. Magnus Ranstorp (New York / Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 51-75; Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smyth, and Jeroen Gunning, eds., *Critical terrorism studies: a new research agenda* (New York / Abingdon: Routledge, 2009); Jeffrey A. Sluka, *Hearts and minds, water and fish: support for the IRA and the INLA in a Northern Irish ghetto* (Greenwich / London: JAI Press, 1989).

91 Edna F. Reid and Hsinchun Chen, "Mapping the contemporary terrorism research domain," *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies* 65, no. 1 (2007): 44, 53; Joshua Sinai, "New trends in terrorism studies: strengths and weaknesses," in *Mapping terrorism research: state of the art, gaps and future directions*, ed. Magnus Ranstorp (New York / Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 32.

92 Schmid, "The literature on terrorism," 470.

93 Richard Jackson, "The core commitments of critical terrorism studies," *European Political Science* 6, no. 3 (2007): 244-246.

94 John Horgan and Michael J. Boyle, "A case against 'Critical Terrorism Studies'," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 1, no. 1 (2008): 51-53.

unsystematic, a-historical and alarmist,[95] prone to unwarranted overgeneralizations and attempts to explain complex behavior in monocausal terms[96] as well as impressionistic, superficial and pretentious.[97] More recently, critics have pointed to the discrepancy between the small number of dedicated terrorism scholars and the multitude of one-time contributors, many of whom are non-academics or lack terrorism-related expertise.[98] The result, these critics claim, has been a post-9/11 deluge of ill-informed and methodologically naïve works.

Fortunately, research on terrorism has seen important signs of progress and maturation in recent years.[99] Improvements include an increase in collaborative research, a broadening of scholars' interest beyond topics related to Islamist terrorism or weapons of mass destruction, a greater number of dedicated researchers and more variety in methodological approaches.[100] Scholars have also drawn attention to the valuable knowledge gained since 9/11, for instance on risk factors for the occurrence of terrorism or the finding that radical beliefs alone are insufficient to explain involvement in this form of violence.[101] Given these encouraging signs, the 2014 claim of a leading terrorism scholar that research on the subject has 'stagnated' seems overly pessimistic.[102] Yet his concern that terrorism research has been too heavily reliant on secondary sources of information for too long, cannot be overlooked.

2.2.1 An overreliance on secondary sources

In 1988, Schmid and Jongman remarked that 'there are probably few areas [...] where so much is written on the basis of so little research'.[103] They were referring the fact that very few terrorism researchers actually collected new data on their subject. Instead, most of them used the existing secondary literature, consisting of other academic works on terrorism but also media reports, as

---

95 Martha Crenshaw, "The psychology of political terrorism," in *Political psychology*, ed. Margaret G. Hermann (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1986), 381.

96 Walter Reich, "Understanding terrorist behavior: the limits and opportunities of psychological inquiry," in *Origins of terrorism: psychologies, ideologies, theologies, states of mind*, ed. Walter Reich (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1990), 261-271.

97 Ranstorp, "Mapping terrorism studies," 14.

98 Ibid., 14-15; Andrew Silke, "An introduction to terrorism research," in *Research on terrorism: trends, achievements and failures*, ed. Andrew Silke (London / New York: Frank Cass, 2004), 1-2; Lisa Stampnitzky, *Disciplining terror: how experts invented 'terrorism'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 7, 12-13, 44, 46.

99 M.L.R. Smith, "William of Ockham, where are you when we need you? Reviewing modern terrorism studies," *Journal of Contemporary History* 44, no. 2 (2009): 334.

100 Silke, "Contemporary terrorism studies," 39-41, 46-47; Adam Dolnik, ed. *Conducting terrorism field research: a guide* (London / New York: Routledge, 2013).

101 Jessica Stern, "Response to Marc Sageman's 'The Stagnation in Terrorism Research'," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 4 (2014): 608; Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, "Some things we think we've learned since 9/11: a commentary on Marc Sageman's 'The stagnation in terrorism research'," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 4 (2014): 602; David H. Schanzer, "No easy day: government roadblocks and the unsolvable problem of political violence: a response to Marc Sageman's 'The stagnation in terrorism research'," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 4 (2014): 598.

102 Sageman, "The stagnation in terrorism research," 569.

103 Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman, *Political terrorism: a new guide to actors, authors, concepts, data bases, theories, and literature* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1988), 179.

the basis for their own conclusions. More than a decade later, Silke found that little had changed; publications on terrorism were still characterized by an overreliance on secondary sources and the predominance of literature-review based methods.[104] There has been little improvement since; a 2006 study found that just 3 percent of research on terrorism was based on empirical analysis.[105] A 2008 publication reached the conclusion that only 20 percent of articles provided previously unavailable data[106] and in 2014 Sageman lamented that terrorism researchers were still unable to access and utilize primary sources.[107]

An almost exclusive reliance on secondary sources means that researchers are developing theories that are insufficiently rooted in empirical evidence or rehashing existing findings rather than adding new insights. A second problem is that there is a marked qualitative difference between secondary and primary sources, especially when those secondary sources are newspaper articles rather than academic publications. Whereas primary sources typically provide information based on the direct observation of, or participation in, a certain subject, secondary sources relate information indirectly. The lack of a first-hand perspective may introduce inaccuracies and the subjectivity inherent in the act of relaying information may have diminished its reliability.[108] The qualitative differences between primary and secondary sources become all the more pronounced when the complexity of the subject of study increases.

There is little room for a reporter to make factual errors or misinterpret what happened when reporting on something as straightforward as a car crash. But the chances of this occurring when covering terrorism are considerably greater. The illegal and secretive nature of terrorism means that even such an ostensibly straightforward task as establishing a chronology of events can be a difficult undertaking. Journalists are often among the first to tackle these questions, a fact well illustrated by the numerous books on al-Qaeda written by investigative journalists shortly after the 9/11 attacks.[109] When such accounts are well-researched, they can form valuable sources of information. The more problematic aspect of relying on the journalistic literature is terrorism scholars' heavy use of much shorter and less extensively researched newspaper articles, which are frequently published mere hours after the events they relate transpired and thus raise critical questions concerning their accuracy and the comprehensiveness of the account presented.

On the one hand, media sources are a necessary staple in terrorism research as they are often the only readily available type of information. Yet their usefulness is marred by several concerns. First

---

104 Silke, "The devil you know," 4-9.

105 Cynthia Lum, Leslie W. Kennedy, and Alison J. Sherley, "The effectiveness of counter-terrorism strategies," *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, no. 2 (2006): 8.

106 Silke, "Holy warriors," 101.

107 Sageman, "The stagnation in terrorism research," 569-572.

108 David W. Stewart and Michael A. Kamins, "Evaluating secondary sources," in *Secondary research: information sources and methods*, ed. David W. Stewart and Michael A. Kamins (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1993), 17-32.

109 E.g.: Peter L. Bergen, *Holy war: inside the secret world of Osama bin Laden* (New York: The Free Press, 2001); Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: casting a shadow of terror* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).

of all, newspapers and their reporters are selective in the stories they pursue.[110] For instance, they tend to under-report or simply ignore failed or foiled terrorist attacks.[111] Secondly, newspapers and other media outlets may be of questionable objectivity, colored by political leanings or a simple desire to attract readership through sensationalist reporting. Furthermore, the reliability and objectivity of reporters' sources can be hard to ascertain.[112] Perhaps most problematic of all, media sources too frequently contain factual errors.[113] In sum, these problems make media sources unsuited to functioning as the main, let alone the *only* source of data used in academic research on terrorism.

Recent years have seen signs of a broadening of methodological approaches and indications that the overreliance on secondary sources may not be as pronounced in every subfield of terrorism research.[114] These are promising trends, yet the scarcity of primary-sources based research remains a key concern in the academic study of terrorism.[115] Given that most publications cite secondary literature that, in turn, refers to yet another set of academic works, and that at the end of this referral chain the empirical data often consists of media accounts, a worrisome situation has developed. Much research on terrorism resembles a 'highly unreliable closed and circular research system, functioning in a constantly reinforcing feedback loop'.[116] More empirical work that utilizes high-quality sources is urgently needed to move the study of terrorism forward.[117]

Why has this lack of primary-sources based research persisted? Crucially, terrorism is in a difficult subject to study empirically.[118] One way to gather primary sources is through interviews with (former) terrorists. While these are more common than might be assumed,[119] finding and gaining access to individuals that engage(d) in illegal and violent activities is time consuming and by no means guaranteed to succeed.[120] All the more so when interviews are undertaken during fieldwork

---

110 Roberto Franzosi, "The press as a source of socio-historical data: issues in the methodology of data collection from newspapers," *Historical Methods* 20, no. 1 (1987): 6.

111 Schmid, "The literature on terrorism," 461.

112 Silke, "The devil you know," 6; Franzosi, "The press as a source of socio-historical data," 6.

113 Silke, "The devil you know," 5-6; Tom Quiggin, "Words matter: peer review as a failing safeguard," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 7, no. 2 (2013): 71-81; Frederick Schulze, "Breaking the cycle: empirical research and postgraduate studies on terrorism," in *Research on terrorism: trends, achievements and failures*, ed. Andrew Silke (London / New York: Frank Cass, 2004), 163.

114 Silke, "Contemporary terrorism studies," 40-41, 48; Peter Neumann and Scott Kleinmann, "How rigorous is radicalization research?," *Democracy and Security* 9, no. 4 (2013): 372.

115 Schmid, "The literature on terrorism," 460; Sageman, "The stagnation in terrorism research," 565-580.

116 Adam Dolnik, "Conducting field research on terrorism: a brief primer," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 5, no. 2 (2011): 5.

117 Bart Schuurman and Quirine Eijkman, "Moving terrorism research forward: the crucial role of primary sources," in *ICCT Background Note* (The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2013), 1-13.

118 John Horgan, "The case for firsthand research," in *Research on terrorism: trends, achievements and failures*, ed. Andrew Silke (London / New York: Frank Cass, 2004), 30; Silke, "The devil you know," 2.

119 Horgan, "Interviewing the terrorists," 195-211.

120 Alessandro Orsini, "A day among the diehard terrorists: the psychological costs of doing ethnographic research," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36, no. 4 (2013): 337-351; Harmonie Toros, "Terrorists, scholars and ordinary people: confronting terrorism studies with field experiences," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 1, no. 2 (2008): 279-280, 286-290.

abroad. Although the potential dangers of fieldwork are generally described as manageable, they cannot be overlooked.[121] Fieldwork or interviews also require ethics approval, which may form a considerable obstacle in itself.[122] Especially after the 2014 Boston College controversy, where researchers were forced to hand over interviews with members of the Irish Republican Army to the Northern Irish police, breaching the interviewees' confidentiality and leading to the arrest of Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams.[123]

Government organizations such as law enforcement and intelligence agencies are another potential source of primary data on terrorism. However, most researchers lack security clearances and organizations involved in counterterrorism are generally reluctant to share their information for security and privacy related reasons.[124] Databases with information on terrorists and terrorist events constitute a third source of empirical data.[125] However, the media-based foundation of many databases raises critical questions about their reliability.[126] Gaining primary-sources based data on terrorism is certainly not impossible, but these obstacles go some way towards explaining its scarcity.

2.3 Making sense of involvement in terrorism

No less important than high quality data is making sense of it.[127] The rationale behind the multicausal approach to understanding involvement in the Hofstadgroup is built on a review of the literature on involvement in terrorism[128], which revealed four key insights. First of all, there is no single, generally applicable 'theory of terrorism'.[129] Instead, with regard to its causes alone the literature is able to identify almost fifty separate hypotheses.[130] Secondly, most of these explanations lack robust empirical verification.[131] Both issues make it difficult to choose one

121 Dolnik, "Conducting field research," 4; Horgan, "The case for firsthand research," 48-50; Schulze, "Breaking the cycle," 181-182.

122 Dolnik, "Conducting field research," 7-14.

123 Jon Marcus, "Oral history: where next after the Belfast Project?," *Times Higher Education*, 5 June 2014.

124 Lentini, "'If they know who put the sugar'," 7; Marc Sageman, "Low return on investment," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 4 (2014): 616; John Horgan, "Issues in terrorism research," *The Police Journal* 70, no. 3 (1997): 193.

125 Neil G. Bowie and Alex P. Schmid, "Databases on terrorism," in *The Routledge handbook of terrorism research*, ed. Alex P. Schmid (London / New York: Routledge, 2011), 294-340.

126 Silke, "Contemporary terrorism studies," 40-41; Anton Weenink and Shuki Cohen, "Trends in terrorisme. Een onderzoek naar de betrouwbaarheid van de Global Terrorism Database," in *NVC Congres 2014* (Leiden: Nederlandse Vereniging voor Criminologie, 2014).

127 Max Taylor, "If I were you, I wouldn't start from here: response to Marc Sageman's "The Stagnation in Terrorism Research" " *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 4 (2014): 583.

128 As there presently does not exist a specif set of explanations for the homegrown jihadist typology of terrorism, a wide net was cast that focused on terrorism in general.

129 Martha Crenshaw, "Terrorism research: the record," *International Interactions* 40, no. 4 (2014): 557; McAllister and Schmid, "Theories of terrorism," 202, 261.

130 McAllister and Schmid, "Theories of terrorism," 261.

131 Aly and Striegher, "Examining the role of religion," 849-850; King and Taylor, "The radicalization of homegrown jihadists," 616; Lia and Skjølberg, "Why terrorism occurs," 28; McAllister and Schmid, "Theories of terrorism," 261.

particular theoretical approach to study involvement in the Hofstadgroup. After all, how to justify choosing one out of dozens of possible approaches, particularly when the validity of many of them has not been adequately ascertained?

Thirdly, studies that emphasize one particular hypothesis, such as a presumed link between poverty or discrimination and involvement in terrorism, tend to be unable to explain why only a minority of the individuals exposed to such factors turn to terrorism.[132] Vice versa, monocausal approaches find it difficult to account for why not all of the people who *do* become involved in terrorism were exposed to the factor in question. For example, the ubiquitous use of 'radicalization' as an explanatory for terrorism obscures the fact that the majority of individuals with 'radical' ideas never act on them and that not all terrorists are strongly ideologically motivated.[133] Because no single factor has been found that is both *necessary* and *sufficient* to explain involvement in terrorism, the potential factors underlying involvement in this phenomenon should be assessed in conjunction with one another, rather than independently or as mutually exclusive competitors.[134]

A fourth reason for choosing a multicausal analytical framework is that it is well-established that involvement in terrorism is best understood as the result of a complex process in which multiple factors play a role.[135] Not only that, but these causative factors reside at different levels of analysis and their relative importance may change over time.[136] In other words, although a particular factor may convincingly explain why someone became involved in a terrorist group in the first place, it may be irrelevant to understanding how or why that person came to commit an actual act of violence. As Della Porta states, 'different analytical levels may dominate different stages of the evolution of radical groups'.[137]

For these reasons, using a single theoretical perspective to study involvement in the Hofstadgroup would not only be challenging but difficult to justify. An alternative is to use a multicausal approach. Not only does this reflect the complexity of terrorism, it also utilizes the explanatory power of the body of literature on the various factors relevant to understanding involvement in this phenomenon to its fullest potential. Such an approach can count on considerable

---

132 Edward Newman, "Exploring the 'root causes' of terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 8 (2006): 756.

133 Max Abrahms, "What terrorists really want: terrorist motives and counterterrorism strategy," *International Security* 32, no. 4 (2008): 78-105; Randy Borum, "Rethinking radicalization," *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (2011): 1-2.

134 Borum, *Psychology of terrorism*, 10; Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, "Violent radicalization in Europe: what we know and what we do not know," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 9 (2010): 810.

135 Tore Bjørgo, "Conclusions," in *Root causes of terrorism: myths, reality and ways forward*, ed. Tore Bjørgo (London / New York: Routledge, 2005), 257; John Horgan, "Understanding terrorist motivation: a socio-psychological perspective," in *Mapping terrorism research: state of the art, gaps and future directions*, ed. Magnus Ranstorp (New York / Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), 111-114; Taylor and Horgan, "A conceptual framework," 586-587.

136 Bjørgo, "Conclusions," 260; Donatella Della Porta, *Social movements, political violence, and the state* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 9-10; Horgan, *Walking away from terrorism*, 7-10.

137 Della Porta, *Social movements*, 10.

support from the literature.[138] In the words of Borum, '[a]ny useful framework [to understand radicalization] must be able to integrate mechanisms at micro (individual) and macro (societal/ cultural) levels'.[139] Similarly, Stern argues that '[humans] catch the fire of terrorism in myriad ways – some environmental, some individual (or more likely, in most cases, a mix of the two)'.[140]

Many authors referenced in the previous paragraphs (implicitly) utilize three 'levels of analysis.' A concept borrowed from the field of international relations, which commonly distinguishes between individual, state and international system perspectives.[141] The study of terrorism similarly utilizes a distinction between micro, meso and macro perspectives, but generally translates these as the individual, the group and structural or environmental conditions in which they operate.[142] That is not to say that there are no other useful analytical divisions that could be made.[143] But it is this tripartite distinction that is most commonly used to capture the myriad potential factors that may lead to involvement in terrorism, making it most suited for the goals of this thesis. Its utility is also well demonstrated by Della Porta's work on post-1945 left-wing terrorism in Italy and Germany, which shows that by studying these three levels in conjunction with each other, a fuller understanding can be generated of how and why people become and remain involved in such groups.[144]

2.3.1 Structural-level explanations for involvement in terrorism

Structural-level factors relate to specific characteristics of the social, cultural, economic and (geo) political *environment* that can enable, motivate or trigger the use of terrorism.[145] Examples include widespread poverty, profound social inequality, war or regional instability and lack of political freedoms.[146] In addition to forming characteristics of the environment in which people live that exert their influence over a longer period of time, structural factors relevant to involvement in

---

138 Crenshaw, "The psychology of political terrorism," 380; Dalgaard-Nielsen, "Violent radicalization in Europe," 810; Horgan, "Understanding terrorist motivation," 109, 113-114; Rex A. Hudson, "The sociology and psychology of terrorism: who becomes a terrorist and why?," (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1999), 15, 23; Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, "Mechanisms of political radicalization: pathways toward terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, no. 3 (2008): 429; Gregory D. Miller, "Rationality, decision-making and the levels of analysis problem in terrorism studies," in *ISA's 50th Annual Convention 'Exploring the past, anticipating the future'* (New York: International Studies Association, 2009), 3-4; Jeffrey Ian Ross, "A model of the psychological causes of oppositional political terrorism," *Peace and Conflict* 2, no. 2 (1996): 129; Sinai, "New trends in terrorism studies," 36-37; Veldhuis and Staun, *Islamist radicalisation*, 21-26.

139 Randy Borum, "Radicalization into violent extremism I: a review of social science theories," *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (2011): 8.

140 Stern, "Response to Marc Sageman," 607.

141 John T. Rourke, *International politics on the world stage* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 65.

142 See also: Brynjar Lia and Katja H-W Skjølberg, "Causes of terrorism: an expanded and updated review of the literature," (Kjeller: Norwegian Defense Research Establishment, 2004), 1-82; Sageman, *Leaderless jihad*, 13-16.

143 Thomas Oleson and Fahrad Khosrokhavar, *Islamism as social movement* (Aarhus: The Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation, 2009), 10; McAllister and Schmid, "Theories of terrorism," 255-260.

144 Della Porta, *Social movements*, 9-10.

145 Lia and Skjølberg, "Causes of terrorism," 17-63; Jeffrey Ian Ross, "Structural causes of oppositional political terrorism: towards a causal model," *Journal of Peace Research* 30, no. 3 (1993): 317.

146 Newman, "Exploring the 'root causes'," 749-772.

terrorism can also relate to specific events in which people become embroiled. A government's violent crackdown on a protest can be considered an example of such an event as it leaves a significant number of people with little choice but to undergo the violence that has suddenly become a part of their surroundings. Such events can potentially form decisive moments in people's lives that may set them on a path towards militancy and terrorism.

The above discussion is inspired by Crenshaw's influential 1981 article on the causes of terrorism, in which she distinguishes between structural factors that function as preconditions and those that act as precipitants.[147] Preconditions can provide both opportunities and motives for involvement in terrorism.[148] With access to the Internet, for instance, people can easily find information on how to construct explosives, facilitating the acquisition of violent means. Ability alone, however, is unlikely to lead to an act of terrorism unless it is matched by a willingness to do harm. Structural factors that can *motivate* involvement in terrorism include widespread grievances against the government and intergroup inequality.[149] The onset of Northern Ireland's violent 'Troubles' in 1968, for instance, was influenced by the Catholic population's political underrepresentation and socioeconomic disadvantagement vis-à-vis their Protestant neighbors.[150]

Precipitants are what Crenshaw identifies as 'specific events that immediately precede the occurrence of terrorism'.[151] Excessive use of force by the authorities can instigate a violent response, but precipitants need not be violent in nature. As chapter 5 discusses in more detail, the broadcast of a controversial short film criticizing Islam was a key structural-level event for the Hofstadgroup as it exposed its participants to criticism of very closely held beliefs, triggering a violent response from one of them that led to the murder of Van Gogh. In more recent publications, the basic distinction between preconditions and precipitants that Crenshaw suggested in 1981 has been maintained, making this a valuable way of structuring the various explanations found at the structural level of analysis.[152] Table 1 provides an overview of the most commonly encountered structural-level explanations for terrorism found in the literature, divided over the three categories described here.

---

147 Martha Crenshaw, "The causes of terrorism," *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (1981): 379-399.
148 Ibid., 381.
149 Lia and Skjølberg, "Causes of terrorism," 17-63.
150 Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, *The origins of the present Troubles in Northern Ireland* (New York: Longman, 1997), 39-41.
151 Crenshaw, "The causes of terrorism," 381.
152 Bjørgo, "Conclusions," 258; Newman, "Exploring the 'root causes'," 751.

Structural level explanations for involvement in terrorism		
Preconditions: opportunities	**Preconditions: motives**	**Precipitants**
The Internet	(Relative) Deprivation	Govt's excessive use of force
Popular support for terrorism	Intergroup inequality	Government attempts reforms
External assistance	Political grievances	
Social / cultural facilitation of violence	Clash of value systems	
Ineffective counterterrorism	Economic globalization	
Political opportunity structure	Cultural globalization	
Modernization	Urbanization	
Population growth / youth bulge	Modernization	
Shifts ethnic/religious balance society	Spillover from other conflicts	
Urbanization	State sponsorship of terrorism	
Mass media	Power structure internat. system	
Organized crime – terrorism nexus	Failed / failing states	
	Armed conflict	

Table 1

2.3.2 Group-level explanations for involvement in terrorism

As a form of 'organized violence', considerable attention has been paid to the role of group dynamics in initiating, sustaining and precipitating involvement in terrorism.[153] Indeed, some authors believe this level of analysis to be an especially salient lens through which to study the phenomenon.[154] In this thesis, explanations are categorized as belonging to the group-level of analysis when they have their basis in the interaction between individuals or in the tangible and intangible attractions that group participation offers. Peer pressure, which can push individuals towards participation in a terrorist group, is an example of the former.[155] The possibility to acquire status, increased self-esteem and a sense of belonging are some examples of the latter.[156] Most explanations at this level of analysis focus on person-to-person interactions within the terrorist group itself. However, group effects can also stem from virtual connections such as enabled by the Internet.[157]

153 Martha Crenshaw, *Explaining terrorism: causes, processes and consequences* (New York / Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 69.

154 Scott Matthew Kleinmann, "Radicalization of homegrown Sunni militants in the United States: comparing converts and non-converts," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 35, no. 4 (2012): 288; Sageman, *Leaderless jihad*, 22.

155 Donatella Della Porta, "Recruitment processes in clandestine political organizations: Italian left-wing terrorism," in *Psychology of terrorism: classic and contemporary insights*, ed. Jeff Victoroff and Arie W. Kruglanski (New York / Hove: Psychology Press, 2009), 310.

156 Clark McCauley and Mary E. Segal, "Social psychology of terrorist groups," in *Psychology of terrorism: classic and contemporary insights*, ed. Jeff Victoroff and Arie W. Kruglanski (New York / Hove: Psychology Press, 2009), 336.

157 Oleson and Khosrokhavar, *Islamism as social movement*, 19.

A literature review of group-level factors relevant to involvement in terrorism identified a wide variety of possible explanations. Some of these account for the formation of terrorist groups; how and why do people become involved in these violent organizations? Research indicates that pre-existing social ties are especially important in this regard.[158] Other explanations focus on how an actual act of terrorism comes about. What rationales underlie the decision of terrorist groups to commit attacks? One thing that this level of analysis lacks, however, is a broadly accepted way of distinguishing between the various explanations. Unlike the structural level of analysis, which could build on Crenshaw's distinction between preconditions and precipitants, there is no common way of categorizing the various hypotheses to make for a more structured overview.

Instead, the author relies on work by Taylor and Horgan because it convincingly argues that the factors influencing people's *involvement* in terrorist groups are distinct from those that govern a group's decision to commit a terrorist *attack*.[159] In other words, joining a terrorist group does not automatically lead to involvement in (preparations for) an act of terrorism itself. As a result, explanations for the former do not necessarily extend to cover the latter. The distinction between group-level factors that can account for the process of becoming and remaining involved in a terrorist group and those that can contribute to the rationale for committing an act of terrorist violence, forms the overarching structure for the group-level of analysis. Because both subjects cover a large number of relevant explanations, they have been turned into separate chapters (Tables 2 and 3). The second of these has been subdivided further based on the themes to emerge from the review of the relevant literature.

Group dynamics I: Becoming and staying involved in terrorist groups
Terrorist group formation
Social identity and the benefits of group membership
Socialization into a worldview conducive to terrorism
The underground life
Social learning theory
The influence of leaders
Peer pressures
Brainwashing

Table 2

158 Della Porta, "Recruitment processes," 309-310.

159 Horgan, *Walking away from terrorism*, 13, 142-146; Max Taylor, "Is terrorism a group phenomenon?," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 15, no. 2 (2010): 125-126; Taylor and Horgan, "A conceptual framework," 592.

Group dynamics II: Committing acts of terrorist violence		
Organizational lethality	***Overcoming barriers to violence***	***Rationales for terrorism***
Organizational lethality	Diffusion of responsibility	Strategic
	Deindividuation	Organizational
	Authorization of violence	

Table 3

2.3.3 Individual-level explanations for involvement in terrorism

The individual level of analysis seeks explanations for terrorism not in environmental conditions or group processes, but in the distinct psychological characteristics and ways of thinking of individual terrorists.[160] During the 1970s and 1980s, as research on terrorism was emerging as a distinct subject of academic study, there was a strong focus on explaining terrorism as stemming from some form of psychopathology or as a result of psychological trauma incurred during childhood and adolescence.[161] More recently, individual-level explanations have been particularly strongly wedded to the concept of 'radicalization'. This is the idea that involvement in terrorism stems from the adoption of increasingly extremist political or religious ways of thinking.[162]

Of the three levels of analysis, the individual one has been the most affected by the difficulties of gaining reliable data on terrorism. For instance, sound empirical evidence for the abnormality of terrorists has generally been lacking.[163] Nevertheless, the individual perspective is a crucial complement to the other analytical lenses. As Crenshaw remarks, 'terrorism is not the direct result of social conditions but of individual perceptions of those conditions'.[164] Even though explanations at this level of analysis appear to be among the most poorly empirically substantiated ones, they cannot be dismissed out of hand.

The literature on individual-level explanations for involvement in terrorism is extensive. In keeping with this study's goals, only those hypotheses that focus directly on involvement in terrorism have been included for analysis. Publications on, for instance, the psychological impact of terrorism, biological explanations for violent behavior or evolutionary psychology, which seeks to account for why certain behaviors exist in the first place, are not taken into consideration. In the end, two main areas of inquiry were identified that because of their size formed the basis for two separate chapters. The first of these deals with cognitive explanations for involvement in terrorism (Table 4).

---

160 Della Porta, *Social movements*, 9, 12-13; Jeff Victoroff, "The mind of the terrorist: a review and critique of psychological approaches," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 1 (2005): 3-42.

161 Crenshaw, "The psychology of political terrorism," 384-390; Victoroff, "The mind of the terrorist," 23-24.

162 Alex P. Schmid, "Radicalisation, de-radicalisation, counter-radicalisation: a conceptual discussion and literature review," in *ICCT Research Paper* (The Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2013), 1-91.

163 Victoroff, "The mind of the terrorist," 31-32.

164 Martha Crenshaw, "Questions to be answered, research to be done, knowledge to be applied," in *Origins of terrorism: psychologies, ideologies, theologies, states of mind*, ed. Walter Reich (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1990), 250.

Individual level analysis I: Cognitive explanations
Radicalization
Fanaticism
Cognitive openings and 'unfreezing'
Cognitive dissonance and moral disengagement

Table 4

It essentially looks at how particular ways of thinking about and perceiving the world can make it more likely that someone becomes involved in extremism and terrorism. The second chapter discusses explanations for involvement that center on terrorists' presumed distinctiveness in terms of psychology, character or emotional state (Table 5).

Individual level analysis II: Terrorists as psychologically distinctive
Psychopathology
Psychoanalysis, significance loss and identity-related alienation
Terrorist personality or profile
Anger and frustration
Mortality salience

Table 5

2.3.4 Interrelated perspectives

Each level of analysis offers unique explanations for involvement in terrorism. Yet although they are each treated in separate chapters, this distinction is in reality quite artificial. Structural, group and individual level factors do not exert their influence independent of one another, but frequently operate in an interdependent and interrelated fashion. To gain a comprehensive understanding of involvement in the Hofstadgroup, it is not sufficient to analyze the various analytical perspectives separately. They must also be discussed in relation to each other. Although each chapter refers to other levels of analysis where relevant, drawing together the various explanatory strands is the primary purpose of the thesis' conclusion.

2.4 Limitations

By studying the available empirical data on the Hofstadgroup through the various lenses provided by these three levels of analysis, a comprehensive understanding of how and why involvement in this group came about can be realized. However, several limitations should be acknowledged. A general first point is that, while the author has tried to be comprehensive in his approach, he does not claim to have found and utilized *all* possible explanations for terrorism. Undoubtedly, readers will remark upon omissions. Partly this may be because in the absence of clear naming conventions, the author has used unfamiliar designations, or because similar explanations have

been grouped together under a single heading. Given the large amount of literature on, or relevant to understanding involvement in terrorism, a truly exhaustive overview is practically unfeasible.

A more specific limitation is the omission of social movement theory as a potential explanation for involvement in terrorism. According to Arrow, social movements are 'collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities'.[165] While the Hofstadgroup's adoption of a militant interpretation of Islam could be seen as a collectively mounted form of contention targeted at both the Dutch authorities, non-militant Muslims and unbelievers, a clearly defined common purpose was strikingly absent. This finding, which is discussed in considerable detail in later chapters, forms an impediment to viewing the Hofstadgroup from a social movement perspective.

In addition to lacking collective goals, the Hofstadgroup also failed to engage in collective action. According to Beck, terrorism can be seen as a form of collective action focused on making political claims and seeking political influence, which in turn allows terrorist groups to be studied as movements with political goals.[166] The very absence of such claims and the associated instrumental use of violence problematizes seeing the Hofstadgroup's activities in this light. The only terrorist attack to actually materialize was the murder of Van Gogh, which was not the result of a collective effort but the work of one man. Furthermore, there are no indications that the killer was pursuing political goals. While there were some signs that the Hofstadgroup was beginning to undertake collective efforts towards the end of its existence in 2005, later chapters will demonstrate that collective action, like a common purpose, was for all intents and purposes not part of the group's repertoire.

A final reason why social movement theory is not used to study involvement in the Hofstadgroup is its emphasis on contention and social interactions, which leaves only a secondary role for the explanatory potential of ideas, beliefs and the biographies or characteristics of individuals.[167] This comes back to the assumption that involvement in terrorism is a multicausal process with explanations at the structural, group and individual levels of analysis. Focusing on one of these at the expense of another would go against the central aim of constructing a multifaceted understanding of involvement in the Hofstadgroup. None of this means, however, that social movement theory is abandoned altogether. Various elements, such as political opportunity structure and the importance of looking at how terrorist groups frame their causes and their justifications for violence are discussed in the relevant chapters.

---

165 Sidney Tarrow, *Power in movement: social movements and contentious politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4, italics removed from original.

166 Colin J. Beck, "The contribution of social movement theory to understanding terrorism," *Sociology Compass* 2, no. 5 (2008): 1566.

167 See, for instance: Charles Tilly, *The politics of collective violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7-8.

2.5 A definitional debate

The terms 'terrorism', 'radical', 'extremist' and 'jihad' are used throughout this thesis. Virtually all of them can be interpreted in multiple ways and constitute controversial subjects of an ongoing definitional debate. To avoid confusion, it is therefore important to make clear at the outset how these terms are understood here. On account of its especially controversial nature, 'terrorism' is discussed at some length whereas the other terms are introduced more succinctly.

2.5.1 Terrorism

The debate on what constitutes 'terrorism' and when individuals or groups become 'terrorists', is a very contentious one. After decades of discussion, a broadly accepted definition is still not at hand.[168] Some authors believe that such efforts are futile because terrorism 'is a term like *war* or *sovereignty* that will never be defined in words that achieve full international consensus'.[169] This quote suggests that the study of terrorism is not the only discipline to be affected by definitional quandaries. But this observation does little to diminish the adverse effects produced by the absence of a clear understanding of what 'terrorism' is. This issue has stood in the way of the development of a general theory of terrorism, 'scattered and fragmented' the focus of research efforts and complicated the comparison of research results.[170] Some scholars have even argued that 'it is time to stop using the "t word"' altogether.[171] Why has achieving consensus on the meaning of terrorism proven so difficult?

An immediate problem with the word 'terrorism' is that it has strong negative connotations, conjuring an image of 'cowardly violence, fear, and intimidation'.[172] A closely related second issue is the politicized nature of the term. The 'terrorism' descriptor is frequently used to delegitimize an oppositional regime, movement or organization while simultaneously legitimizing violence against that opponent.[173] Used in this fashion, the term terrorism becomes part of a 'war of words', aimed at condemning rather than understanding a certain form of violent behavior.[174] Such definitions are essentially political tools that serve the defining party's interests, for instance by limiting the scope of 'terrorism' to an activity only non-state actors can engage in, even though

168 Schmid, "The definition of terrorism," 39; Harmonie Toros, "'We don't negotiate with terrorists!': legitimacy and complexity in terrorist conflicts," *Security Dialogue* 39, no. 4 (2008): 408-409.

169 Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How terrorism ends: understanding the decline and demise of terrorist campaigns* (Princeton / Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 7, italics in original.

170 Sánchez-Cuenca, "Why do we know so little?," 594-595; Schmid, "The definition of terrorism," 43; Silke, "An introduction," 3-4.

171 Dominic Bryan, Liam Kelly, and Sara Templer, "The failed paradigm of 'terrorism'," *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 3, no. 2 (2011): 94.

172 James D. Kiras, "Terrorism and irregular warfare," in *Strategy in the contemporary world: an introduction to strategic studies*, ed. John Baylis, et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 210.

173 Arie W. Kruglanski and Shira Fishman, "The psychology of terrorism: 'syndrome' versus 'tool' perspectives," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 2 (2006): 201.

174 Austin T. Turk, "Sociology of terrorism," *Annual Review of Sociology* 30(2004): 271-273.

states can and have used terror on a much larger scale than most non-state groups are capable of.[175] The biases inherent in such definitions make them unsuitable for research purposes.

A third obstacle is that the interpretation of what constitutes terrorism is highly subjective. This is best represented by the classic dichotomy between freedom fighters and terrorists, with the choice for one or the other depending on the observer's perspective and his or her stake in the conflict.[176] Tellingly, few violent oppositional groups call themselves terrorists and most prefer to describe their activities in much more neutral terms such as 'liberation' or 'resistance'.[177] Delineating where terrorism begins and ends constitute a fourth stumbling block. How to disentangle terrorism from insurgency, two forms of political violence that are often used in conjunction with one another?[178] Similarly, how is terrorism different from organized crime? Criminals and terrorists both place a premium on secrecy, they both use force and intimidation against civilians to achieve their aims and both exert strong control over group members.[179]

These obstacles have not prevented the creation of many different legal, government and academic definitions of terrorism.[180] Of these three types of definitions, only academic ones are expressly intended to guide non-partisan analysis, making them most suited to the task at hand.[181] Within the subset of academic definitions of terrorism, it is hard to overlook the pioneering work of Alex Schmid, who has been working on the definitional question for decades.[182] This thesis utilizes Schmid's 2011 'revised academic consensus definition' because it convincingly addresses the issues raised above.[183] Its neutral wording avoids issuing a value judgment on terrorism. By being applicable to state as well as non-state actors, Schmid's definition offers some protection against an overly politicized view of terrorism. Furthermore, its very detail allows it to differentiate terrorism from other forms of organized violence.

In this thesis, therefore, '[t]terrorism refers on the one hand to a **doctrine** about the presumed effectiveness of a special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence and, on the other hand, to a conspiratorial **practice** of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action without legal or moral restraints, targeting mainly civilians and non-combatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects on various audiences and conflict parties'.[184]

---

175 Schmid, "The definition of terrorism," 40.

176 Gus Martin, *Understanding terrorism: challenges, perspectives, and issues* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2003), 34-36.

177 Ibid., 35-36.

178 Isabelle Duyvesteyn and Mario Fumerton, "Insurgency and terrorism: is there a difference?," in *The character of war in the 21st century*, ed. Caroline Holmqvist-Jonsäter and Christopher Coker (London: Routledge, 2009), 27-41.

179 Schmid, "The definition of terrorism," 64-67.

180 Ibid., 44-60; Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur, and Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, "The challenges of conceptualizing terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 4 (2004): 780.

181 Bruce Hoffman, *Inside terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 31-33.

182 See, for instance: Schmid and Jongman, *Political terrorism*, 1-38.

183 Schmid, "The definition of terrorism," 39-98.

184 Ibid., 86-87, emphases in original.

2.5.2 Radicalism and extremism

The terms 'radical' and 'extremist' are repeatedly used to describe the convictions of Hofstadgroup participants. Because both are inherently subjective and frequently used interchangeably, clear definitions are in order.[185] Schmid once again provides a thoroughly researched and well-reasoned definition of both terms. Radicalism comprises 'two main elements reflecting thought/attitude and action/behaviour respectively: 1. Advocating sweeping political change, based on a conviction that the status quo is unacceptable while at the same time a fundamentally different alternative appears to be available to the radical; 2. The means advocated to bring about the system-transforming radical solution for government and society can be non-violent and democratic (through persuasion and reform) or violent and non-democratic (through coercion and revolution)'.[186]

Radicals may hold views that are deemed inappropriate, offensive or disagreeable for other reasons, but they do not *necessarily* justify or support the use of violence. This marks an important difference with extremists.[187] 'While radicals might be violent or not, might be democrats or not, extremists are never democrats. Their state of mind tolerates no diversity. They are also positively in favour of the use of force to obtain and maintain political power (…). Extremists generally tend to have inflexible 'closed minds', adhering to a simplified mono-causal interpretation of the world where you are either with them or against them, part of the problem or part of the solution.'[188]

For extremists, violence constitutes *the* preferred means to an end. This distinction is important, as it allows for a nuanced discussion of the beliefs held by Hofstadgroup participants and their views on the use of violence. It should be noted that some scholars refer to these dispositions using the terms 'non-violent extremism' and 'violent extremism'.[189] The author finds that 'radical' and 'extremist' better convey the different mindsets associated with these positions which, as Schmid's definitions make clear, encompass more than differing views on the use of violence alone.

2.5.3 Jihad & homegrown jihadism

Islam, which translates as 'submission to the will of God', constitutes one of the world's three great monotheistic religions.[190] There is, however, no singular way in which Islam is interpreted

185 Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation," 11; William M. Downs, *Political extremism in democracies: combating intolerance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 13.
186 Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation," 8.
187 Jamie Bartlett and Carl Miller, "The edge of violence: towards telling the difference between violent and non-violent radicalization," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 1 (2012): 1-21.
188 Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation," 10.
189 Peter R. Neumann, "The trouble with radicalization," *International Affairs* 89, no. 4 (2013): 873-893.
190 John L. Esposito, *Islam: the straight path* (New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 85.

or practiced. This is reflected, for instance, in the division of the global community of believers, known as the 'ummah', between Sunnis and Shiites over the rightful successor to the Prophet Muhammad. Sunnis, who constitute the largest denomination within Islam, believe that essentially anyone can be proclaimed heir to the prophet. Shiites, on the other hand, accept only Muhammad's descendants, specifically the progeny of the prophet's son-in-law Ali and his wife Fatima, who was Muhammad's daughter. The Sunni-Shia divide is Islam's most well-known internal division. But there are a multitude of other, smaller, denominations such as the Druze and the Alawis, as well as the more mystical approach to Islam known as Sufism, that further undermine the idea of Islam as a homogeneous religion.[191]

Just as there is no one Islam, there is no one view on the conditions under which Muslims are allowed or required to use violence, who and what can justifiably be targeted and which means and methods of war are permitted.[192] The use of violence by Muslims has been closely linked to the concept of 'jihad', the Arabic word for struggle or effort.[193] As a contested concept that has been the subject of centuries of debate and varying interpretations, there is not one clear way in which to define jihad.[194] Moghadam notes that the Quran's coverage of jihad allows a broad distinction to be made between a peaceful and an aggressive interpretation.[195] The first form, which has also been called the 'greater' jihad, refers to an individual believer's personal struggle against temptation and sin, his or her quest to live in accordance with god's will or a community's efforts to better themselves.[196] The aggressive or 'lesser' interpretation of jihad sees it as religiously sanctioned or mandated warfare.[197]

Jihad is therefore not necessarily a violent undertaking. Unless specified otherwise, however, the use of the term jihad in this thesis refers to the 'lesser' or militant variety. Jihadist groups or individuals are thus those that believe their religious beliefs necessitate or sanction the use of violence against perceived enemies. Following Crone and Harrow's definition, jihadists can be labeled 'homegrown' when they display a high degree of autonomy from internationally operating terrorist networks such as al-Qaeda, and a strong sense of belonging, e.g. through citizenship, to the countries they target.[198]

---

191 Dick Douwes, "Richtingen en stromingen," in *In het huis van de Islam*, ed. Henk Driessen (Nijmegen: SUN, 2001), 162; Esposito, *Islam*, 2, 42-43, 47-48, 124-126, 291-294.

192 Assaf Moghadam, "Mayhem, myths, and martyrdom: the Shi'a conception of jihad," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 1 (2007): 126-129. John Turner, "From cottage industry to international organisation: the evolution of Salafi-Jihadism and the emergence of the Al Qaeda ideology," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no. 4 (2010): 544; Egerton, *Jihad in the West*, 17-21.

193 Michael G. Knapp, "The concept and practice of jihad in Islam," *Parameters* 33, no. 1 (2003): 82.

194 Turner, "From cottage industry to international organisation," 544.

195 Moghadam, "Mayhem, myths, and martyrdom," 126.

196 Ibid.; Turner, "From cottage industry to international organisation," 544.

197 Turner, "From cottage industry to international organisation," 544; Moghadam, "Mayhem, myths, and martyrdom," 126.

198 Manni Crone and Martin Harrow, "Homegrown terrorism in the West," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23, no. 4 (2011): 521-536.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter began by highlighting several issues that have affected research on terrorism. In particular, the qualitative difference between primary and secondary sources and the longstanding scarcity of the former in existing research on terrorism. Given that terrorism is in many ways a difficult subject to study empirically, this situation is perhaps not that surprising. Nevertheless, it has had serious consequences. There exist many explanations for involvement in terrorism whose accuracy and reliability has been insufficiently ascertained due to the difficulties of the high-quality data required to do so. Consequently, this thesis sees the use of primary sources as a prerequisite for making a contribution to existing knowledge on the Hofstadgroup and understanding involvement in homegrown jihadism more broadly.

The bulk of this chapter was dedicated to explaining the decision to use a multicausal analytical framework for studying involvement in the Hofstadgroup. Using literature reviews, a comprehensive inventory was made of the various explanations for involvement in terrorism at the structural, group and individual levels of analysis. Applying these to the available data on the Hofstadgroup will allow for a multifaceted and detailed understanding of the factors that shaped participants' involvement in this group. Following this discussion, the chapter concluded with an overview of several key terms that are used throughout the thesis.

One task remains before it is possible to move on to the analysis of the factors that influenced involvement in the Hofstadgroup proper. That is to familiarize readers with the Hofstadgroup and its activities. The next chapter provides a detailed chronology of the most important events in the group's 2002-2005 existence in order to create the necessary factual background for the analysis that is to follow. Chapter four then rounds off the introductory section of this thesis by discussing the Hofstadgroup's organizational and ideological characteristics and assessing to what extent it can be considered a group that engaged in (preparations for) terrorism in a communal sense.