

REBELS WITHOUT A CAUSE?

“Rebel lifestyle” and recruitment: an analysis of Al-Qaeda, ISIS,
and the Dutch jihadist constituency



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Thesis

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Supervisor: prof. dr. Jacco Pekelder



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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations in Historical Perspective, Utrecht University.

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Cover image:

‘Oppeens heb je het...je toekomst ligt in het paradijs. Van MU-zikant naar MU-jahid!’ [Spelling conform original image], see: Bibliography, 6.4 Images.

Abstract

In this thesis, I analyse the role of “rebel lifestyle” as a pull-factor in radicalisation and recruitment, guided by the question: “To what extent does rebel lifestyle play a role in propaganda distributed by contemporary terrorist organisations, and in the behaviour and radicalisation processes of their (potential) recruits?”.

Through a historical perspective, constructed by an analysis of West-Germen New Left movements (1965-1975), I design an analytical framework to apply to the recruitment strategies of contemporary terrorist organisations and aligned local networks. In that, I understand rebel lifestyle to include those aspects that are considered inherent to living as a member of a rebel group, but which are not exclusively determined by their proximity to the group’s political, ideological or religious ideals. I divide lifestyle into three components: 1) identity and image construction, which is related to the personal idea of belonging; 2) subculture, which covers those aspects that define the collective experience of belonging; and 3) the prospect of rewards, which relates to lifestyle-related benefits that rebels expect to receive in return for their loyalty to the organisation they join. This analytical framework helps to identify the symbolic value terrorist organisations and their followers have assigned to branding themselves as rebels that reject the social, cultural, or political conventions of the societies in which they live.

Subsequently, the third and fourth chapters are devoted to the interaction between jihadist terrorist organisations and their constituencies through propaganda. I expect that lifestyle will play a more important role in these dynamics than has hitherto been acknowledged in academia. The analysis I provide is twofold: on the one hand, I analyse the ways in which terrorist organisations have constructed an attractive image of themselves and their lifestyle to encourage targeted recruits to join them. An analysis of the propaganda published by Al-Qaeda and Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is central to this part of the thesis. On the other, I analyse the extent to which lifestyle appeared relevant among the constituency of these groups. Since a lot of the more recent propaganda is targeted at potential supporters in western diasporas, I have analysed two local networks from The Netherlands to this end: *De Hofstadgroup* and *De Waarheid*.

The case studies point out that an idea of rebel lifestyle, rooted in a broader discourse of heroism, brotherhood, and adventure, played a significant role in the propaganda of Al-Qaeda and ISIS, and in the behaviour of Dutch jihadists that desired to identify with these groups.

Keywords

terrorism – propaganda – (rebel) lifestyle – image construction – subculture – jihadism – radicalisation – Al-Qaeda – ISIS – Hofstadgroup – *De Waarheid*.

Glossary

This glossary provides an overview for those who wish an introduction to these concepts before proceeding, or wish a reference while reading. In this thesis, the terms listed below will be accompanied by a translation or explanation when used for the first time. Explanations have been derived from the academic literature listed in the bibliography (pages 61-66).

Al-Qaeda	Salafi jihadist terrorist organisation founded by Osama bin Laden and others in Afghanistan. Several affiliated groups exist: in this thesis Al-Qaeda refers to Al-Qaeda Central unless indicated otherwise.
<i>Bay'at</i>	pledge of allegiance.
Caliph	ruler of the Muslim community; political successor of Muhammad.
Caliphate	political-religious state ruled by a caliph (also: <i>khilafa</i>).
<i>Da'wa</i>	Islamic missionary work (including preaching), the call to Islam.
<i>Ghanimah</i>	booty or spoils of war; good fortune.
<i>Hijrah</i>	migration, emigration.
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (or: al Sham), Salafi jihadist terrorist organisation. It is the successor group of ISI (Islamic State of Iraq) and renamed itself IS (Islamic State) in June 2014, to express its claim to authority in Syrian and Iraqi territory. Since, it has been referred to as ISIS, IS, ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant), and <i>Daesh</i> (to its Arabic acronym). Following several terrorism experts, this thesis will refer to the group as ISIS.
<i>Jahiliyyah</i>	a period of ignorance: “a government system, ideology, or institution based on values other than those referring to God”.
Jihad	struggle. Used to describe personal spiritual struggles (non-violent) and armed conflict (violent; either defensive or offensive).
<i>Kuffar</i>	unbelievers, infidels.
<i>Mujahid</i>	holy warrior (plural: <i>mujahideen</i>).
Quran	the full account of the revelations that came to the prophet Muhammad.
<i>Salaf</i>	first generations of Muslims, considered an example of the sincerity of early Islam by Salafists.
<i>Shariah</i>	the Islamic moral code and religious law.
<i>Takfir</i>	the process by which a Muslim is accused of apostasy. For jihadists, <i>takfir</i> is a crucial part in justifying the use of violence against the subject.
<i>Ummah</i>	the worldwide Muslim community.

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REBELS WITHOUT A CAUSE?

*“Rebel lifestyle” and recruitment: an analysis of Al-Qaeda, ISIS,
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1. Introduction

“I was no longer an insignificant teenager. I became heroic overnight.
I felt almost drunk with power.”¹

– *Shane Paul O’Doherty, member of the Irish Republican Army (IRA)*

What drives people to become a terrorist? Scholars agree that it is nearly impossible to identify a single explanation: rather, a cocktail of political, social, and personal reasons causes radicalisation.² In that, ideological, political, or religious convictions are considered the primary motivations for joining a terrorist group.³ After all, political objectives define the movement to which a rebel aligns, and distinguish terrorist groups from regular criminal organisations.⁴

IRA-member O’Doherty’s quote above however, sounds nothing like the hardcore idealists that terrorists are generally assumed to be. His sensation of glory, significance, and heroism sounds more like the aspiring teenager he actually is: seeking adventure and a sense of belonging, encouraged by the expectation of a heroic rebel lifestyle. Such factors have not remained confined to the IRA. In fact, today’s terrorist recruits increasingly appear to be young people in pursuit of brotherhood, significance, and excitement.⁵ Following heroic examples set by charismatic leaders, they aspire to elevate themselves to a “celebrity status” amongst their peers.⁶ This urge to identify themselves with controversial radical groups and adjust their behaviour to their idea of this group, arguably prioritises their perception of terrorism as a means to *rebel*.

Recently, experts have suggested more often that political motives alone are not sufficient to convince an individual to resort to violence, and that the influence of ideological conviction might

¹ Shane Paul O’Doherty, IRA-member who was sentenced to thirty life sentences for his bombing campaign in England, quoted in: Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Enemy, Containing the Threat* (New York 2007) 96.

² Edwin Bakker and Tinka Veldhuis, ‘Causale factoren van radicalisering en hun onderlinge samenhang’, *Vrede en veiligheid* 36 (2007) 4, 448. ; Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 40.

³ Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 76; 82.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵ Marc Sageman, ‘The Next Generation of Terror’, *Foreign Policy* (March-April 2008) 37.

⁶ Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror* (New York 2015) 84.

have been overstated by scholars and policymakers.⁷ Nevertheless, this shift in academic attention is relatively new. But further research is vital: if young people are indeed susceptible to radical ideas because of the factors mentioned above, these could arguably be leveraged by terrorist organisations attempting to encourage these youngsters to join them. As such, image construction could be a potentially powerful instrument in recruitment strategy, especially when targeted at social groups in a specific subculture. Although some scholars and even the Dutch *Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst* (General Intelligence and Security Service, AIVD) have signalled the existence of a romanticised “rebel culture” or related “youth culture” with accompanying lifestyle, this topic has remained under-researched in academia.⁸

With this thesis, I therefore aspire to enhance insight in the role of “rebel lifestyle” as a pull-factor in radicalisation and recruitment. This analysis will be guided by the question: “To what extent does rebel lifestyle play a role in propaganda distributed by contemporary terrorist organisations, and in the behaviour and radicalisation processes of their (potential) recruits?”. I will focus on the contemporary terrorist organisations Al-Qaeda and Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and on their supporters in The Netherlands. I expect that the idea of a specific rebel lifestyle and group culture will be more prevalent in terrorists’ propaganda strategy than has hitherto been acknowledged in scholarly literature.

1.1 Concise introduction to contemporary jihadist terrorism

Contemporary examples of terrorism have been dominated by violence legitimised by religion-based arguments. Amongst these, Islamist ideology arguably produced the most active and potentially appealing religious groups.⁹ In fact, terrorism experts like Alex Schmid claim that militant Islamism is the primary rebel ideology of the twenty-first century.¹⁰ Groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS pursue the establishment of one united Islamic state (caliphate), that transcends existing national borders and is governed by *shariah* (Islamic religious law). Since caliphates had been realised in the past, this was

⁷ See: Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 82-83. ; comments on new research published by Teun van Dongen, see: Kees Versteegh, ‘De terrorist is een altruïst’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 21 March 2017, <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2017/03/21/de-terrorist-is-een-altruïst-7150388-a1551162> (accessed on 22 March 2017) 13.

⁸ Jacco Pekelder has advanced this idea in his publication: ‘Het leven als terrorist. Groepscultuur, Duits terrorisme en de culturele dimensie’, *Internationale Spectator* 58 (2004) 11, 548-550.; The AIVD signalled the influence of lifestyle amongst jihadist networks in a 2006 report, see: AIVD, ‘De gewelddadige jihad in Nederland’ [The violent jihad in the Netherlands], March 2006 (Den Haag) 39.; Ineke van der Valk mentions a “youth culture” among groups that align themselves with the Dutch Hofstadgroup, see: Ineke van der Valk, ‘Islamitisch extremisme in Nederland’, in: Peter R. Rodrigues and Jaap van Donselaar, *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme: Negende Rapportage* (Amsterdam 2010) 93.

⁹ Rapoport, ‘The four waves of modern terrorism’, in: Audrey Kurth Cronin and James M. Ludes (eds.), *Attacking terrorism. Elements of a grand strategy* (Washington, D.C. 2004) 61.

¹⁰ Alex P. Schmid, ‘Data to Measure Sympathy and Support for Islamist Terrorism: A Look at Muslim Opinions on Al Qaeda and IS’ [ICCT Research Paper], *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague* 8 (2017) 25.

considered a feasible objective and it found strong appeal.¹¹ Charismatic leaders of these groups justified their violence by condemning the Middle East-policy of the United States and its allies, and cleverly appealed to the existing anti-American resentment in the region.¹² Resistance against western involvement in the Middle East and oppression of the Muslim world still composes a fundamental part of the jihadist narrative today. The 9/11 attacks (2001) are exemplary of the destructive potential of jihadist terrorism. Terrorism expert Louise Richardson warned that the declaration of a global “War on Terror” as a response, has only intensified the power of the anti-western narrative leaders like Al-Qaeda frontman Osama bin Laden propagate.¹³

Crucial is that the largest jihadist groups actively target recruits from all over the world. In Western Europe for example, young Muslims with high expectations and low chances of realising them form a significant pool of recruits for militant Islamism.¹⁴ According to expert on jihadism Thomas Hegghammer, 9/11 seems to have caused a turning point in the popularity of foreign fighting amongst Muslims living in western societies. Whereas foreign fighters used to go abroad to attend military training and return, the goal of the majority of today’s foreign fighters is to permanently exchange their lives for the warrior adventure abroad.¹⁵ The proclamation of a caliphate by ISIS in June 2014 has lifted the jihadist narrative to a new level: an Islamic utopia had been established, in which Muslims could finally live in accordance with Islam and practise their religion in peace and dignity.¹⁶ Now, the duality of the world was made absolute: there was either good (living in the caliphate) and bad (secular and non-Islamic societies).¹⁷ ISIS seeks recruits from western Muslim communities to strengthen its ranks and to delegitimise western democracies. Its propaganda appeals to those living in western societies, stating that Muslims’ employment at western companies has turned them into slaves of *kuffar* (apostate, infidel) masters.¹⁸

Because jihadist organisations promote an anti-western narrative, simultaneously target recruits from western societies, and attack places they deem symbolic of the western “hedonistic

¹¹ The last caliphate was abolished in 1924, see: David C. Rapoport, ‘The Fourth Wave: September 11 in the History of Terrorism’, *Current History*, 100 (2001) 650, 422.

¹² Gilles Kepel, ‘Introduction to Jihad’, in: David C. Rapoport (red.), *Terrorism. Critical Concepts in Political Science, IV, The Fourth or Religious Wave* (Abingdon 2006) 74.

¹³ Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 170.

¹⁴ Schmid, ‘Data to Measure Sympathy and Support for Islamist Terrorism: A Look at Muslim Opinions on Al Qaeda and IS’, 25-26.

¹⁵ Thomas Hegghammer, ‘Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists’ Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting’, *The American Political Science Review* 107 (2013) 1, 1; 6.

¹⁶ AIVD, ‘Leven bij ISIS, de mythe ontrafeld’ [Life with ISIS: the Myth Unravelling], January 2016 (Den Haag) 3.

¹⁷ Haroro J. Ingram, ‘An analysis of Islamic State’s *Dabiq* magazine’, *Australian Journal of Political Science* 51 (2016) 3, 472.

¹⁸ Ingram, ‘An analysis of Islamic State’s *Dabiq* magazine’, 469.

lifestyle”¹⁹, these organisations and their potential support base pose challenging case studies for analysing the role of lifestyle in contemporary recruitment by terrorist groups. Moreover, these organisations have produced more propaganda than any of their predecessors, which means that there are many available sources for this analysis.²⁰

1.2 Research design

In this thesis, my aim is to identify how Al-Qaeda and ISIS have promoted their own image and lifestyle in propaganda, and on the extent to which this idea resonated among their constituencies. It is thus a study of the perception of these groups and their followers during the process of radicalisation and recruitment, and is limited to the idea of lifestyle as a *pull-factor* in radicalisation. Due to lack of a clear definition of “rebel lifestyle”, it is necessary to develop an interpretative framework of this phenomenon. Hence, the first question to be answered is: “What is “rebel lifestyle” and which components of this idea can be identified?”²¹

In chapter two, I take a historical perspective as central to answering this question. This is constructed through a historiography of the West-German radical left (1965-1975). To what extent can a rebel lifestyle be distinguished in groups like the *Rote Armee Fraktion* (Red Army Faction, RAF), the *Bewegung 2. Juni* (Movement of the 2nd of June; previously *Haschrebellen*)²² and the *Tupamaros München*? Did these movements originate from a subculture? And which references to a collective identity can be distinguished? It may seem paradoxical to construct a framework for analysing groups that propagate strict compliance to orthodox Islamic life, by using the perspective of a study of groups that rebelled against “the system” and openly broke with taboos on drugs, crime, and sexual liberty.²³ However, both these types of terrorist organisations are partly defined by their adherence to a specific lifestyle that rejects the established values and practices of the western societies from which they recruit. As such, lifestyle might compose an influential part of the rebellion they pursue. Based on this

¹⁹ This reference is made in an interview with terrorism expert Beatrice de Graaf, see: Kees Versteegh, ‘Aanslag Manchester heeft precies het gewenste effect’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 25 May 2017, <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2017/05/25/aanslag-manchester-heeft-precies-het-gewenste-effect-10063732-a1560366> (accessed on 30 May 2017).

²⁰ Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 109; 128.

²¹ It is crucial to understand that “rebel lifestyle” can be considered the equivalent of “terrorist lifestyle”, but “rebel” is a more appropriate term to use in an analysis of image construction and radicalisation, for terrorists have not been eager to label themselves as “terrorist” since the term got so many negative connotations in the early twentieth century. See: Rapoport, ‘The four waves of modern terrorism’, 54.

²² Jacco Pekelder, ‘Het geweld der kameraden. Peter Brückner, het terrorisme en de linkse identiteit’, in: Jacco Pekelder and Frits Boterman (red.), *Politiek geweld in Duitsland. Denkbeelden en debatten* (Amsterdam 2005) 235.

²³ Detlef Siegfried, ‘Ästhetik des Andersseins: Subkulturen zwischen Hedonismus und Militanz 1965-1970’, in: K. Weinbauer, J. Requate and H.-G. Haupt (ed.), *Terrorismus in der Bundesrepublik. Medien, Staat und Subkulturen in den 1970er Jahren* (Frankfurt 2006) 76.

historical study, I have defined a set of components that can be used to identify and study the instrumentalisation of lifestyle. I will elaborate on this method in the following chapter.

The next part of chapter two is devoted to academic theory. The research question implies that rebel lifestyle could influence radicalisation processes of potential supporters of terrorist groups. Therefore, one needs to comprehend the dynamics of radicalisation: how has this process been defined in academia? Which implications for the interaction between terrorist groups and the audiences they aspire to radicalise does this entail? Here, I pay attention to perspectives from social and political science, and terrorism studies in general.

In the third chapter, I use these insights to analyse how terrorist groups use propaganda specifically to construct an attractive image of themselves and their lifestyle. To what extent have Al-Qaeda and ISIS constructed a rebel image and lifestyle, and instrumentalised lifestyle-related components as pull-factors in their recruitment campaigns? In this analysis, I focus on propaganda published by these groups, such as material distributed through their official channels and quotes from their leaders. It is a selection of items dating from Osama bin Laden's first "declaration of war" against the United States (1996) until the peak in propaganda production by ISIS (2015).²⁴

The fourth chapter takes the level of analysis down to the potential support base: the terrorist constituency.²⁵ Here, I focus on the twenty-first century jihadist constituency in The Netherlands. The worldview of this community has been strongly influenced by the 9/11 attacks, the resulting political debate on security and immigration, and the Dutch participation in the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan.²⁶ But to what extent has lifestyle played a role in the rebellious behaviour of the Dutch constituency of Al-Qaeda and ISIS, and its readiness to support jihadist terrorist organisations? The analysis follows a similar structure as chapter three, and focuses on a domestically oriented network that emerged shortly after 9/11, the Hofstadgroup, and an internationally oriented network supporting foreign fighters, *De Waarheid* (The Truth).

It is evident that radicalisation does not take place in a vacuum and can hence not be analysed as such. Therefore, each chapter takes off with an introduction to the political and cultural context of the movements I study, and explains their core ideological objectives. I have also been aware of the possibility that lifestyle has been strategically politicised by terrorist organisations and their followers, to which I pay attention in the conclusion of this thesis.

²⁴ Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 92. ; Irene de Zwaan, 'Propagandamachine IS lijkt nauwelijks nog te draaien', *De Volkskrant*, 6 April 2017, <http://www.volkskrant.nl/buitenland/propagandamachine-is-lijkt-nauwelijks-nog-te-draaien~a4483759/> (accessed on 8 April 2017).

²⁵ Jacco Pekelder, 'The RAF and the Left in West-Germany: Communication Processes between Terrorists and their Constituency in the Early 1970s', in: Klaus Weinhauer and Jörg Requate (eds.), *Gewalt ohne Ausweg? Terrorismus als Kommunikationsprozess in Europa seit dem 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt 2012) 11.

²⁶ Froukje Demant, Marieke Slootman, Frank Buijs and Jean Tillie, *Decline and Disengagement. An Analysis of Processes of Deradicalization* (Amsterdam 2008) 86-87.

1.3 Relevance

This thesis is positioned within historical research and terrorism studies. Its primary academic contribution will be to insights in the socio-cultural dimension of terrorist organisations and radicalisation processes. As mentioned above, in-depth research on the “rebel lifestyle” as a pull-factor in radicalisation and recruitment is scarce. This makes my thesis unique in paving the way for future research on the topic.

The examples mentioned above justify an academic contestation of the dominant explanation of radicalisation, which emphasises hardcore political conviction. Studies on radicalisation of rebel groups usually take ideological frameworks as a starting point. For instance, political scientist Maura Conway’s work on the radical jihadist milieu focuses on the *ideological* content to which terrorists’ target communities are being exposed online.²⁷ Another example is cultural anthropologist Ineke Roex, who has studied Dutch Salafist communities by examining individual stances on violence and political activism.²⁸ Political scientist Louise Richardson does take non-ideological motives into account in her work *What Terrorists Want* (2007), but she does not distinguish between the meaning of political and non-political motives for the different societal components of a radical milieu.²⁹ By making this distinction, and combining insights gained through historical research with the available sources on contemporary terrorism, I aspire to expand the existing knowledge on the societal aspect of terrorism and radicalisation.

The relevance of this study extends beyond the academic dimension to the professional and popular debates. Providing insight in the different factors that influence radicalisation dynamics can help determine possible ways to counter radicalisation. It will enable policymakers to critically analyse and improve the current approach: does it target all important factors that contribute to radicalisation? If not, what can they do to improve counterterrorism policy? This is also relevant in the field of international relations, since international cooperation in counterterrorism and security is necessary when dealing with transnational movements.³⁰ Moreover, if this thesis will indeed confirm that “rebel lifestyle” is an important pull-factor, this would mean that it is a radicalisation stimulus that is applicable to *any* group that commits to violent extremism – regardless of the political ideas that “justify” the means. This could nuance the polarising political and public debate on immigration restrictions that are directed against the social groups from which terrorists aspire to derive recruits.

²⁷ Maura Conway, ‘From al-Zarqawi to al-Awlaki: The Emergence and Development of an Online Radical Milieu’, in: ‘Special Issue on Social Media in Jihad and Counterterrorism’, *CTX: Combating Terrorism Exchange* 2 (2012) 8-9.

²⁸ Ineke Roex, ‘Should we be Scared of all Salafists in Europe? A Dutch Case Study’, *Perspectives on Terrorism* 8 (2014) 3, 51-52.

²⁹ Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 76.

³⁰ BZ, ‘Speech minister Koenders at the meeting of the Foreign Terrorist Fighter working group’ [Global Counterterrorism Forum], 18 May 2017 (Den Haag) 4.

1.4 Literature and sources

This research is based upon a combination of scholarly literature and primary sources. Studies of terrorism experts like Louise Richardson, David Rapoport and Randall Law serve as valuable sources for understanding the phenomenon “terrorism” and its history.³¹ For the historical framework in chapter two, I have used the historical studies published in the edited volume *Terrorismus in der Bundesrepublik. Medien, Staat und Subkulturen in den 1970er Jahren* (2006).³² I have also analysed historian Jacco Pekelder’s work on terrorist constituencies and a selection of sociological publications, to construct an analytical framework of the societal surround of terrorist groups.³³

Several recent publications have contributed to my analysis of contemporary terrorist organisations and their constituencies. Amongst these are studies on terrorist propaganda by Haroro Ingram (2016) and Jessica Stern and John Berger (2015), and research on Dutch jihadist networks by Bart Schuurman (2017) and Edwin Bakker and Peter Grol (2017).³⁴ This range of scholarly literature is complemented by information gained through reports from security institutions, and a wide range of propaganda materials published by Al-Qaeda and ISIS.³⁵ To enhance insight in the individual considerations of members and supporters of terrorist groups, I have used a selection of memoirs of, and interviews with, (former) militants. Additionally, I analysed material shared on social media by sympathisers of Al-Qaeda and ISIS from The Netherlands.³⁶

It should be mentioned that reliable sources on the true motives of members of terrorist groups are scarce, especially concerning the most recent cases. Some material, such as legal evidence, is not accessible to the public yet. Moreover, the available sources are not always academic and arguably run the risk of bias, either by governmental approaches to security policy, or by the (former) radicals’ self-perception as they recall their experiences. Since this thesis can only draw conclusions based on the available material, further research in the field can be conducted to verify these conclusions.

³¹ I am referring to: Richardson, *What Terrorists Want* (2007); Rapoport, ‘The four waves of modern terrorism’ (2004); and Law, *Terrorism. A History* (2016).

³² This volume is: K. Weinbauer, J. Requate and H.-G. Haupt (ed.), *Terrorismus in der Bundesrepublik. Medien, Staat und Subkulturen in den 1970er Jahren* (Frankfurt 2006).

³³ Amongst others: Jacco Pekelder, ‘The RAF and the Left in West-Germany: Communication Processes between Terrorists and their Constituency in the Early 1970s’ (2012); Stefan Malthaner and Peter Waldmann, ‘The Radical Milieu: Conceptualizing the Supportive Social Environment of Terrorist Groups’ (2014); and Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State. A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (1995).

³⁴ Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror* (2015); Ingram, ‘An analysis of Islamic State’s *Dabiq* magazine’ (2016); Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadistien. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen* (2017); and Schuurman, *Becoming a European homegrown jihadist: a multilevel analysis of involvement in the Dutch Hofstadgroup, 2002-2005* (2017).

³⁵ For example: the Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) regularly releases a “terrorist threat assessment” (DTN), and the AIVD has published reports on terrorism regularly throughout the twenty-first century. I will elaborate on the selection of propaganda published by terrorist organisations in section 3.2 of this thesis.

³⁶ In particular, the videos produced by Dutch-Moroccan preacher Abou Hafs. Additionally, I found material through newspapers, academic studies, and AIVD reports.

2. Historicising lifestyle & terrorism: Theoretical framework

Constructing an analytical framework for studying “rebel lifestyle” requires an introduction into the historical origin of the concept and to the theories already available on this topic. This chapter takes off with an introduction to the academic debate on terrorism and radicalisation, followed by a historicisation of the role of lifestyle in terrorist subcultures. Central to this historical research are the West-German New Left movements, in particular the RAF, the *Bewegung 2. Juni*, and the *Tupamaros München*, whom all defined themselves as urban guerrillas.³⁷ Starting with a concise introduction to the social environment in which these movements originated, I subsequently discuss the politicisation and radicalisation of these movements. Based on this information, I draw conclusions on the relevant aspects of image construction and lifestyle that prevailed in these groups and triggered individuals into membership. Amongst others, the study is based upon research from historians Michael Sturm, Detlef Siegfried, and Jacco Pekelder, source material from the RAF, and the memoir of former militant Michael “Bommi” Baumann.

Based on this historical study, the chapter moves on to academic theory. I first proceed to my interpretation of “rebel lifestyle” and provide a set of three components that guide the analysis in this thesis. They are supported by sociological and historical publications from Benedict Anderson, John Bowyer Bell, and Louise Richardson. Taking into account that lifestyle is an essentially social aspect in a radicalisation process, I will subsequently elaborate on the societal function of terrorism. After all, terrorism is a strategy and terrorist attacks primarily are communicative acts intended to influence the behaviour of their audiences.³⁸ As such, it is a performative act within a social sphere. To understand the target and potential effects of a terrorist campaign, it is worth exploring this social dimension within which terrorists operate. This will be done by an analysis of the leading theories in the field: the radical milieu, the social movement family, and the terrorist constituency.³⁹ Finally, conclusions can be drawn about the societal and legitimising function of terrorist violence in a political struggle, and the way this struggle is framed and presented to the potential supporters of terrorist groups. I expect

³⁷ Pekelder, ‘The RAF and the Left in West-Germany: Communication Processes between Terrorists and their Constituency in the Early 1970s’, 15. ; Pekelder, ‘Het geweld der kameraden. Peter Brückner, het terrorisme en de linkse identiteit’, 235.

³⁸ Randall D. Law, *Terrorism. A History* (Cambridge 2016) 3.

³⁹ Studies on the societal dimension of terrorist groups include: Stefan Malthaner and Peter Waldmann, ‘The Radical Milieu: Conceptualizing the Supportive Social Environment of Terrorist Groups’ (2014); Maura Conway, ‘From al-Zarqawi to al-Awlaki: The Emergence and Development of an Online Radical Milieu’ (2012); Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State. A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (1995); and Jacco Pekelder, ‘The RAF and the Left in West-Germany: Communication Processes between Terrorists and their Constituency in the Early 1970s’ (2012).

that lifestyle will play a more important role in these dynamics than has hitherto been acknowledged in academia.

2.1 Introduction to the theory on terrorism and radicalisation

Violence against non-combatants to serve political purposes is as old as mankind.⁴⁰ In his work *Terrorism. A History* (2016), historian Randall Law traces terror as an oppressive ruling instrument back to the seventh century BCE. Terror inspired by revolutionary ideas emerged during the French Revolution. The Jacobins reigned by a dictatorship of the majority, in which terror was considered the inevitable counterpart of virtue. They proudly referred to themselves as *les terroristes*.⁴¹ Contemporary terrorism experts like David Rapoport make the distinction between state terror and rebel or non-state terrorism, to emphasise the difference between the political objectives of the violence and the means at the terrorism perpetrator's disposal.⁴² In this distinction, modern rebel terrorism commenced in the 1880s in Russia, where anarchists fought the repressive tsarist regime by attacking state representatives. They promoted their assassinations as "propaganda of the deed"⁴³, thereby coining the essence of modern-day terrorism: communication of political ideas through the use of violence.

This distinction between state and rebel terrorism is relevant for analytical purposes, but a more specific definition of rebel terrorism remains contested among scholars. Academic consensus exists on the assertion that terrorism is a strategy, applied to achieve political objectives through the use of violence, in which non-combatants are being targeted deliberately.⁴⁴ In terrorism, the goal of violence goes beyond inflicting harm upon the immediate victims of an attack: above all, violence is a means of communication with those witnessing it. Attacks are intended to instigate fear, and through that, influence political decision-making.⁴⁵ Obviously, terrorism is a highly complex phenomenon, and if one seeks to enhance insight in the dynamics of terrorism as a strategy, this complexity must be taken into account.

The target audience of terrorist attacks is diverse and so are the messages implicit in these acts. On the one hand, this group concerns the people that may identify with the victims and feel threatened by the attack. Instigating fear among these groups should serve to undermine their unity and damage their sense of security, which undermines the authority of their government. Eventually, the attacks must influence public and political opinion so that the terrorists' demands will be met.⁴⁶ On the other

⁴⁰ Law, *Terrorism. A History*, 1.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁴² Rapoport, 'The four waves of modern terrorism', 46.

⁴³ Law, *Terrorism. A History*, 83.

⁴⁴ Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 6. ; Law, *Terrorism. A History*, 3.

⁴⁵ Schmid, 'Data to Measure Sympathy and Support for Islamist Terrorism: A Look at Muslim Opinions on Al Qaeda and IS', 3.

⁴⁶ Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 78-79.

side of the scope, the target audience are those people that may sympathise with the terrorists' objectives. They can be the people for whom the terrorists claim to be fighting, who may also be a resource for recruits, practical assistance or legitimacy. But they can also be other, (non-)violent groups that adhere to the same ideas and must be convinced to accept the terrorists' leadership within the broader social-political movement.⁴⁷ Through the same attack, terrorists thus broadcast multiple messages with diverging, even incompatible, purposes. However, they all serve one overarching goal: increasing the political strength and legitimacy of the terrorist group, and undermining its enemies. It stands out that a great deal of terrorism as a strategy is directed at influencing social dynamics.

Before a person becomes a terrorist, he or she will go through a radicalisation process that motivates him or her to accept the use of violence to achieve political goals. There are countless academic studies of radicalisation, and numerous definitions of the phenomenon are available. For this thesis, I think two approaches are relevant. First of all, the one provided by Haroro Ingram, who defines radicalisation as:

“...the process by which an individual or collective increasingly adheres to a selectively literate interpretation of an identity narrative (e.g. an ideology), a response triggered and catalysed by perceptions of crisis which *can* lead to the legitimisation of and engagement in violence against perceived Others as a solution to that crisis.”⁴⁸

The relevance of Ingram's definition resides in the fact that he emphasises the importance of identity narratives, perceptions of the self and the other, in the process of becoming radicalised and framing an idea of an enemy to which the use of violence is justified. He also takes into account that this process entails an increasingly polarised perspective on the world, crucial to understand the impact of terrorist strategy on societies. In *Decline and Disengagement* (2008) the authors add to this concept by pointing out that perceptions of “the system” underline the delegitimation of the rebel's environment, and that a determination to change the system is a core motivation and belief for a radicalised person:

“[Radicalisation is] a process of delegitimation, a process in which confidence in the system decreases and the individual retreats further and further into his or her own group, because he or she no longer feels part of society. (...) The legitimacy of the system is increasingly called into question and the people who form a part of the system are increasingly dehumanised and regarded as the enemy. This attitude is connected with the wish and the intention to radically change the system. The most extreme form of radicalisation is extremism, in which the intention is transformed into violent actions.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Donatella della Porta, ‘Comparative research on political violence’, in: Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State. A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge 1995) 3.

⁴⁸ Ingram, ‘An analysis of Islamic State's *Dabiq* magazine’, 463.

⁴⁹ Demant et al., *Decline and Disengagement. An Analysis of Processes of Deradicalisation*, 12-13.

It is important to understand that radicalisation as such is not the equivalent of terrorism: instead, it is a process that precedes terrorist activity. Terrorism can thus be regarded as one of the most extreme outcomes of radicalisation.⁵⁰

Radicalisation is a complex process that is influenced by different factors. Because it is an individual condition, no undisputed explanation for radicalisation can be given. Most scholars distinguish between external, social, and individual causes for radicalisation, and recognise three analytical levels on which radicalisation can be studied: the political or macro-level, the group or meso-level, and the personal or micro-level.⁵¹ In this thesis, I focus on a specific phase of the radicalisation process: the point of creation of a counter-culture. Here, both the group and the personal levels are relevant. Individuals may be triggered into sympathising with the rebel culture because of various motivations, which all function as pull-factors in the process. These can be stimulated by terrorist organisations, who distribute propaganda and actively recruit new members. But curious individuals can also be inspired independently, by the propaganda they encounter online, or in social environments, because they admire radicalised friends, relatives, or hero figures. The radicals of the last category are whom former CIA officer Marc Sageman refers to as “self-recruited wannabes”.⁵² Such processes have grown in impact in the twenty-first century.⁵³

2.2 “*High sein, frei sein, Terror muß dabei sein!*”: The role of lifestyle in West-German New Left movements (1965-1975)

The West-German New Left movements from the late 1960s and 1970s originated in a distinct urban youth culture.⁵⁴ Their political background was rooted in the *Außerparlamentarische Opposition* (extra-parliamentary opposition, APO), a group of left-wing activists that ranged from moderate criticism of the political situation in the German Federal Republic until ideological hardliners that propagated counter-violence as an answer to the structural violence of their common foe: the “system”, being the state and its authoritative institutions.⁵⁵ The youngsters belonging to this subculture adopted a lifestyle that explicitly broke with existing taboos, which was considered a powerful way of rebelling against the world of their parents. The slogan “*High sein, frei sein, Terror*

⁵⁰ Bakker and Veldhuis, ‘Causale factoren van radicalisering en hun onderlinge samenhang’, 450.

⁵¹ Ibid., 451-452. ; Demant et al., *Decline and Disengagement. An Analysis of Processes of Deradicalisation*, 13-14.

⁵² Sageman, ‘The Next Generation of Terror’, *Foreign Policy* (2008) 165, 37.

⁵³ Beatrice de Graaf and Jelle van Buuren, ‘Hatred of the System. Menacing Loners and Autonomous Cells in the Netherlands’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 26 (2014) 1, 178.

⁵⁴ Rapoport, ‘The four waves of modern terrorism’, 56.

⁵⁵ Pekelder, ‘Het geweld der kameraden. Peter Brückner, het terrorisme en de linkse identiteit’, 229; 234. ; Pekelder, ‘The RAF and the Left in West-Germany: Communication Processes between Terrorists and their Constituency in the Early 1970s’, 14.

muß dabei sein!”,⁵⁶ that the *Bewegung 2. Juni* allegedly operated under, definitely seems applicable to the early phase of these movements. At the start, their main goal was to protect their way of living, which was considered a legitimation of public militant behaviour. In the “*Ästhetik des Andersseins*”, they found purpose and satisfaction.⁵⁷

Especially the cities, where students clustered in specific neighbourhoods and gradually established closely intertwined communities, appeared to be convenient stages for this type of activism in the 1960s. In these communities, strong social bonds and a shared perspective on the world took shape.⁵⁸ In cities like Munich for example, several districts had grown into meeting-points for “hippies and other *Nichtstuers*”.⁵⁹ Confrontations with the police were common, and drug consumption and the rate of criminality increased significantly. Flirting with existing taboos on sex, drugs, violence, and crime, was an essential part of daily life for the youngsters living here: it was crucial in their strategy of provoking the system they detested so vehemently. As a scene with shared political, social, and cultural values, in which the explicit lifestyle was considered a vital aspect of the group identity, these urban habitats formed a specific subculture. By the turn of the decade, this counter-culture provided the fundament for militant protest and formed an important pool of recruits for upcoming protest movements like the RAF, the *Haschrebellen*, and the *Tupamaros München*.⁶⁰ Especially the political branches of these subcultures believed that their provocative lifestyle would boost revolutionary changes of the West-German capitalist system.

Historian Michael Sturm ironically refers to the rebels in this period as “*Spaßguerrillas*”⁶¹ because of their focus on adventure, pleasure, sexuality, and the use of drugs. But although groups like the *Haschrebellen* thought these were essential parts of rebelling against consumerism and bureaucracy, their counter-culture’s novelty and provocative effect started to decline by the end of the 1960s.⁶² Faced with an increasing commercialisation of their lifestyle, several activists feared that their revolutionary potential would fall into oblivion. These pioneers wished to embark upon a more serious revolutionary challenge. Hence, some of them united to inspire a politicisation process that would

⁵⁶ Quoted in an article on the undercover experience of former secret service agent Volker Weingraber: Unknown author, ‘High sein, frei sein’, in: *Der Spiegel* 44 (1994) 31, 84.

⁵⁷ Siegfried, ‘*Ästhetik des Andersseins: Subkulturen zwischen Hedonismus und Militanz 1965-1970*’, 76.

⁵⁸ Michael Sturm, ‘Tupamaros München: »Bewaffneter Kampf«, Subkultur und Polizei 1969-1971’, in: K. Weinhauer, J. Requate and H.-G. Haupt (ed.), *Terrorismus in der Bundesrepublik. Medien, Staat und Subkulturen in den 1970er Jahren* (Frankfurt 2006) 118.

⁵⁹ Sturm, ‘Tupamaros München: »Bewaffneter Kampf«, Subkultur und Polizei 1969-1971’, 120.

⁶⁰ Pekelder, ‘The RAF and the Left in West-Germany: Communication Processes between Terrorists and their Constituency in the Early 1970s’, 14-15. ; Sturm, ‘Tupamaros München: »Bewaffneter Kampf«, Subkultur und Polizei 1969-1971’, 120-121.

⁶¹ *Spaßguerrillas* (fun-guerrillas), see: Sturm, ‘Tupamaros München: »Bewaffneter Kampf«, Subkultur und Polizei 1969-1971’, 108.

⁶² Siegfried, ‘*Ästhetik des Andersseins: Subkulturen zwischen Hedonismus und Militanz 1965-1970*’, 87-88.

soon go hand in hand with radicalisation. An important attempt to reorganise politically and appeal a large audience at the same time, was the organisation of the *Knast Camp* in Ebrach in July 1969. The *Rechtshilfe der APO* from Munich and several groups from Berlin and Frankfurt jointly organised this weeklong gathering to facilitate political discussions, boost revolutionary ideas, and develop militant strategies. The *Roten Knastwoche* was attended by 150 activists, many of whom would later join the RAF, *Tupamaros* divisions⁶³, and the *Bewegung 2. Juni*. For instance, later RAF-founders Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin were among the attendants.⁶⁴ Notwithstanding the arguably ambitious political programme, this camp's main appeal appeared to be what it had to offer for those practising a hedonistic lifestyle. The camp leaflets explicitly promoted swimming pools, plentiful food, concerts, parties, a collective sleeping area, and numerous other facilities to satisfy personal desires.⁶⁵

Concurrent to this emphasis on pleasure, the *Knast Camp* provided a social environment in which politicisation and militancy could develop. Protest activities were organised during the week, which were met with tough measures from the local and regional authorities. After occupying a police office in a city near Ebrach, forty activists were arrested. Even regional prime minister of Bavaria, Alfons Goppel, sharply criticised the protesters and urged for their prosecution.⁶⁶ Escalations like this were not limited to the *Knast Camp*: the rising tensions in West-German society had entailed more frequent violent confrontations between young activists and state authorities. At the trial of Rolf Pohle in 1969, one of the attendants attacked a representative of the judiciary with a book.⁶⁷ Clashes occasionally escalated, thereby catalysing the polarisation of West-German society. This process was intensified by the tough counterterrorism policy that the West-German police and judiciary executed. Although conviction of terrorists was a new legal terrain, heavy sentences were imposed upon members of the RAF and the *Tupamaros München*.⁶⁸ Demonstrations were brutally repressed by police: most notably was the death of student Benno Ohnesorg, who was killed in a violent clash between rebels and the police in West-Berlin on 2 June 1967. This event shocked many West-German citizens and instigated more understanding for the leftist rebels.⁶⁹ The situation enabled leftist groups

⁶³ Two West-German rebel movements labelled themselves *Tupamaros*: the *Tupamaros West-Berlin* and the *Tupamaros München*. Their names were inspired by the Uruguayan National Liberation Movement, which was internationally known as the *Tupamaros*: a reference to Incan leader Tupac Amaru II, who had led anti-colonial resistance in the eighteenth century (see: Law, *Terrorism. A History*, 248).

⁶⁴ Sturm, 'Tupamaros München: »Bewaffneter Kampf«, Subkultur und Polizei 1969-1971', 115-116.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 123.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 116-117.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 110; 115.

⁶⁸ Gisela Diewald-Kerkmann, '»Verführt« – »abhängig« – »fanatisch« : Erklärungsmuster von Strafverfolgungsbehörden und Gerichten für den Weg in die Illegalität – Das Beispiel der RAF und der Bewegung 2. Juni (1971-1973)', in: K. Weinbauer, J. Requate and H.-G. Haupt (ed.), *Terrorismus in der Bundesrepublik. Medien, Staat und Subkulturen in den 1970er Jahren* (Frankfurt 2006) 240-241.

⁶⁹ Pekelder, 'The RAF and the Left in West-Germany: Communication Processes between Terrorists and their Constituency in the Early 1970s', 20.

to frame their terrorist activities as a war against state repression, which contributed to further radicalisation of others. The RAF and the *Bewegung 2. Juni* seized their opportunities to demand sympathy for their battle against the system: the name *Bewegung 2. Juni*, which was adopted in 1972, refers directly to Ohnesorg's death.⁷⁰ Even non-violent radicals were triggered into endorsing the armed struggle because of feelings of solidarity with what they perceived to be underdogs.⁷¹

As the members of the leftist subcultures became more militant, they increasingly politicised their lifestyle.⁷² Distinguishing oneself from mainstream society by profiling themselves as pioneers of a free world became entangled with political ideals. The political dimension increased in importance and constituted the core business of the most militant branches of this subculture: the West-German terrorist movements of the 1970s.⁷³ Rationality would not hinder the rebels' preoccupation with their lifestyle, as illustrated by RAF-leader Andreas Baader arguing that: "The anti-imperialist struggle and sexual emancipation go hand in hand. Fucking and shooting are the same thing!"⁷⁴

Despite internal disagreement within the broader radical left milieu, the groups shared core political objectives and a lifestyle that distinguished them from their opponents. Hence, as the politicised factions of a young urban subculture, the West-German New Left groups had a cultural and political tradition within which they could position themselves. The West-German New Left lifestyle was largely defined by a subculture that balanced between hedonism and violence. On the one hand, drugs, sexual liberty, and consumerism contributed to an image of free people that were mostly occupied with satisfying their personal desires. On the other, violence was considered an inevitable part of the revolution:

"...unterstützen sie die Lügen der Bourgeoisie, daß in diesem Staat mit den Mitteln der parlamentarischen Demokratie noch was auszurichten sei, ermutigen sie das Proletariat zu Kämpfen, die angesichts des Potentials an Gewalt in diesem Staat nur verloren werden können – auf barbarische Weise."⁷⁵

Acceptance of violent strategies was thus perceived a central aspect of the rebel identity, and calls for revolt against the representatives of institutionalised authority resulted in regular violent clashes with the police.⁷⁶

Profiling as groups that abandoned existing taboos served two goals: it created an image of a group that led an exciting life, and it provoked a reaction of the authorities that the groups politically

⁷⁰ Pekelder, 'Het geweld der kameraden. Peter Brückner, het terrorisme en de linkse identiteit', 235.

⁷¹ Pekelder, 'The RAF and the Left in West-Germany: Communication Processes between Terrorists and their Constituency in the Early 1970s', 21.

⁷² Siegfried, 'Ästhetik des Andersseins: Subkulturen zwischen Hedonismus und Militanz 1965-1970', 76.

⁷³ Ibid., 94.

⁷⁴ Quoted in: Law, *Terrorism. A History*, 259.

⁷⁵ Rote Armee Fraktion Collection, inventory nr. 1: Documents RAF. 1968-1973, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 'Das Konzept Stadtguerrilla' (April 1971) 10.

⁷⁶ Sturm, 'Tupamaros München: »Bewaffneter Kampf«, Subkultur und Polizei 1969-1971', 124.

rebelled against, thereby enhancing the chances of escalating into an actual revolutionary struggle. It also served to legitimise their entrenchment in the criminal circuit. For instance, in its pamphlet *Das Konzept Stadtguerilla* (1971), the RAF emphasised the close relation between revolution and crime by stating that accomplishing the revolution required illegal operations.⁷⁷

This politicisation of rebel lifestyle brought forth political and socio-cultural heroes, which were admired throughout the New Left movement and are significant symbols of their shared values. Politically, US protest movements like the Black Panthers and Third World liberation movements like the Palestinian Fatah and the Cuban *Movimiento de 26 de Julio* (Movement of the 26th of July) were idolised. Solidarity demonstrations and aligned movements were installed for these organisations, and their key figures were considered heroes.⁷⁸ By expressing solidarity with these groups, the German New Left strategically legitimised its existence: after all, groups like the RAF perceived themselves as fighting for injustice that was done to others, emphasising their altruistic motivations. Culturally, the West-German radical left milieu occupied a grey area between semi-legal political activism and outright underground activities. Many of its members were involved in the criminal scene, varying from petty theft until narcotics trade and bank robberies.⁷⁹ It inspired a strong fascination with, and glorification of, outlaws. The radical left expressed its admiration for these individuals in statements like: “a crime is an act of courage ... who commits a crime will be free”, and that convicted criminals should in that respect be considered “political prisoners”.⁸⁰ This is a remarkable example of the active politicisation of deeds that were actually distinct from their ideological ambitions. Anything that could, even merely symbolically, be considered an act of rebellion against the establishment was presented as a step ahead in the revolution. Heroes and idols were thus not only of significant symbolic value, they also helped shape a heroic identity: an example that potential rebels wanted to follow.

Such examples were not the only factors that triggered youngsters into membership of the West-German New Left groups. Which other factors can be identified to have influenced this process? Firstly, the political and socio-cultural image of the West-German radical left can be considered a pull-factor that led curious individuals further down the path of radicalisation. Youngsters were attracted by a romantic idea of revolution and the accompanying lifestyle: rebels became icons, and the group’s image determined the self-perception of its members.⁸¹ The subculture provided a social surround to which they could belong, and with which they wanted to identify themselves. Nicknames like the

⁷⁷ Rote Armee Fraktion, ‘Das Konzept Stadtguerrilla’, 13-14.

⁷⁸ Sturm, ‘Tupamaros München: »Bewaffneter Kampf«, Subkultur und Polizei 1969-1971’, 126.

⁷⁹ See for instance Bommi Baumann’s recollections of bank robbing by the *Bewegung 2. Juni* and the RAF: Bommi Baumann, *How it all began: The Personal Account of a West German Urban Guerrilla* (Vancouver 2002) 104-105 ; 109.

⁸⁰ Sturm, ‘Tupamaros München: »Bewaffneter Kampf«, Subkultur und Polizei 1969-1971’, 127-128.

⁸¹ Jacco Pekelder, ‘Het leven als terrorist. Groepscultuur, Duits terrorisme en de culturele dimensie’, *Internationale Spectator* 58 (2004) 11, 548; 550.

Lederjackenfraktion indicate that dress code constituted an important part of group identity.⁸² Hence, something as apolitical as clothing became politicised as well. To young recruits, illegality meant a new identity and ultimate freedom: an exciting escape from daily routine.⁸³ In these cases, a lifestyle change was thus the core motivation. Other people that joined for apolitical reasons were those that were already deeply entrenched in the criminal circuit. The political motives of the groups they joined were even irrelevant: membership just offered another opportunity to increase their criminal network.⁸⁴ To them, lifestyle continuity was important. Either way, the group's lifestyle was a vital pull-factor for recruits.

These individual motivations, such as personal desires to adopt a new identity and lifestyle, or immerse in clandestine operations, were influenced by social factors. Pre-existing friendships, family ties and other social bonds were crucial. The urban youth subculture provided a network through which potential recruits could easily be targeted, which was also strategically used by groups like the *Tupamaros München* and the RAF. In her study of legal reports of the convictions of German terrorists, historian Gisela Diewald-Kerkmann found that many of them were influenced by their personal contact with key figures in the RAF, like Ulrike Meinhof and Horst Mahler.⁸⁵ Sometimes these contacts evolved into relationships of dependency from which there was no way back, but in most cases the decision to exchange life for an underground existence was frankly easy because of the social surround they were already connected to.⁸⁶

Evidently, the image of the rebel and his liberated lifestyle boosted the expectations of new recruits. But what was living as a terrorist actually like, once you descended into the underground? Did it meet the romanticised image that these recruits had when they joined? Memoirs of former terrorists provide a less attractive picture. Michael "Bommi" Baumann, who was a member of the *Bewegung 2. Juni* in the early 1970s, published an extensive memoir of his radical days, titled *Wie Alles Anfang* (1975). Initially, Baumann and his companions experienced a lot of fun in robbing banks, attacking police officers, enjoying sexual liberty, and alleviating their daily woes by using drugs.⁸⁷ Again, the slogan "*High sein, frei sein, Terror muß dabei sein!*" seems appropriate. However, according to Baumann, the stress eventually took its toll. He recalls that his involvement in the clandestine movement actually did not increase his personal liberty, but restricted it because he was forced to operate in secrecy. It was impossible to have a normal private life, and the fear of betrayal loomed over every new place to live. Even in the own radical milieu you would become marginalised

⁸² *Lederjackenfraktion* = "leatherjacket faction". Pekelder, 'Het leven als terrorist. Groeps cultuur, Duits terrorisme en de culturele dimensie', 550.

⁸³ Diewald-Kerkmann, '»Verführt« – »abhängig« – »fanatisch«', 222.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 230-231.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 223; 231; 233; 239.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 240-241.

⁸⁷ Bommi Baumann, *How it all began: The Personal Account of a West German Urban Guerrilla* (Vancouver 2002) 105-106.

once you were wanted by the police, Baumann argues: to avoid suspicion, you could not actually meet your fellow members.⁸⁸ Although certain aspects of the lifestyle they previously enjoyed remained – using drugs, having fun, seeking ecstasy – Baumann and his companions perceived their involvement in the movement as highly stressful. In fact, he states that if it had not been for the moments of “mini-insanity ... that brought comedy into the situation” the revolutionary job would not have been worth living for.⁸⁹ Although political motivations were fundamental in Baumann’s radicalisation process, his memoir confirms that even he was not an exclusively ideological hardliner: lifestyle evidently defined his time with the *Bewegung 2. Juni*.

2.3 Analysing lifestyle: Preliminary definition and research model

This historiography of West-German radical left movements points out that lifestyle influenced radicalisation and participation in terrorist activities in West-Germany between 1965 and 1975. Can a similar role of lifestyle in these dynamics be identified in contemporary cases of terrorism? And how should this be approached? I suggest to use the historical framework to distinguish different elements of a perceived “rebel lifestyle”, that can henceforth be connected to radicalisation processes.

A preliminary definition of rebel lifestyle serves as the basis for this analysis. I understand rebel lifestyle to include those aspects that are considered inherent to living as a member of a rebel group, but which are not exclusively determined by their proximity to the group’s political, ideological or religious ideals. As such, it can be perceived as a code of conduct, an image of group identity, or collective experiences. In this thesis, I analyse how terrorist organisations have used lifestyle to appeal to their constituencies, and to what extent such elements resonate in the debates among their constituencies. Hence, it is appropriate to limit the components of lifestyle to those that can be considered pull-factors in radicalisation.

Two central questions help to define the components of the rebel lifestyle that guide this thesis. First of all, the fundamental question is: what do potential supporters want to belong to? This should be studied for both the individual perspective and the expectation of a collective experience. These compose the first two components: 1) identity and image construction and 2) subculture. The second question is: which improvements in future life do recruits expect to gain by joining the organisation? This produces the third element: the prospect of rewards. I will explain these three components and the relevant academic theories that help understand their dynamics below.

2.3a Personal ideas of belonging: Identity and image construction

The first and perhaps most fundamental aspect of the impact of the perceived rebel lifestyle on potential recruits is the personal idea of belonging to a group. As displayed in the German

⁸⁸ Baumann, *How it all began*, 107-109.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

historiography, group identity had a profound impact on this idea and formed an example with which individuals desire to identify themselves. Crucial too was the role of heroes, which were considered sources of inspiration. They posed important personifications of what the rebel identity should be: examples recruits set out to admire and follow. Group identity is generally based upon an oversimplified view of the “in-group” (us) and the “out-group” (them). The in-group identity serves as a strong pull-factor to convince an audience that it wants to belong to this group. The out-group image serves to intensify both internal solidarity and hate against the enemy.⁹⁰ This twofold function of identity is thus a powerful instrument to stimulate radicalisation processes. Hence, the individual experience of belonging to a group is to a large extent determined by the group image.⁹¹ This image is constructed and promoted in several ways, in which uniforms, a group logo, and catchy slogans are among the tangible aspects of group identity. Revolutionary propaganda, shared sentiments, and the expectation of comradeship form the more abstract dimension of this image.

I will briefly introduce two sociological conceptualisations of group construction, which are useful to comprehend the strategic identity construction of terrorist organisations. First of all, Benedict Anderson’s study of the ‘imagined community’ is one of the leading theories on inclusive and exclusive constructions of group identity in relation to community-building. The imagined community is founded upon an idea that provides social cohesion and represents an imagined, but sovereign, political community.⁹² Anderson exemplifies this theory with the nation, which exists not because all members of the nation know each other, but because it is being experienced as a legitimate institution through shared values and experiences amongst its members. In that, this imagined community provides a framework for identity construction.⁹³ As a concept that advances social cohesion, the imagined community can also be applied to non-nationalist social bonds, such as the terrorist constituency. Terrorists use a legitimising narrative to play upon the collective sentiments, such as hopes and grievances, of their prospective supporters.⁹⁴

Related to this theory is Rogers Brubaker’s study of the dynamics of groups that are founded upon such abstract collectivity. He approaches the phenomenon of belonging to a group as a dynamic

⁹⁰ J.M. Berger, ‘Deconstruction of Identity Concepts in Islamic State Propaganda. A Linkage-Based Approach to Counter-Terrorism Strategic Communications’, *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism*, report presented at 1st European Counter Terrorism Centre conference on online terrorist propaganda, Europol (The Hague 2017) 3. ; Demant et al., *Decline and Disengagement. An Analysis of Processes of Deradicalisation*, 13.

⁹¹ Tore Bjørgo, ‘Dreams and disillusionment: Engagement in and disengagement from militant extremist groups’, *Crime, Law and Social Change* 55 (2011) 4, 282. ; Pekelder, ‘Het geweld der kameraden. Peter Brückner, het terrorisme en de linkse identiteit’, 248.

⁹² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London 1991) 6.

⁹³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 4; 6.

⁹⁴ Text based on my analysis in a paper for the MA Research Seminar on terrorism: Manon van de Schootbrugge, *Terrorism: Pursuit of legitimacy. A historical analysis of the FARC’s interaction with its left-wing rivals and its terrorist constituency* (Research paper MA International Relations in Historical Perspective, Utrecht, October 2016-January 2017).

process, because internal cohesion and solidarity usually change over time. This is what he calls “groupness”.⁹⁵ As such, constructing a group, for instance in order to create a unified support base for political purposes, can be perceived as a political, social or cultural project. It is aimed at increasing levels of groupness and can be catalysed by collectively experienced dramatic events.⁹⁶ Following Brubaker’s approach, violence can thus be a very effective tool to accelerate and intensify group bonding. The role of violence in this process will be further explained in section 2.5 of this thesis. Moreover, Brubaker’s conceptualisation also relates to the collective experience of belonging, to which I will now turn.

2.3b Collective experience of belonging: Subculture

As explained in the New Left historiography, being a member of a terrorist group inevitably involves clandestine operations and acting outside the law. It requires assimilation to a specific social environment that often entails its own group culture and characteristics. Sometimes, the group culture already exists and provides a stimulating environment for the development of radical ideas, as was the case with the West-German *Gegenkultur*-scene. Then, the in-group subculture tends to be a radicalised version of the culture it originated in. Either way, the in-group subculture is primarily defined by violence, since the legitimisation of the use of violence to achieve the group’s objectives is one of the core beliefs dominating the group.⁹⁷

Terrorism expert John Bowyer Bell’s research helps to identify additional aspects of an underground culture. Firstly, he distinguishes several expected elements of living with an armed rebel group. Outsiders usually perceive the group to be enjoying unrestrained freedom and an adventurous lifestyle.⁹⁸ Especially potential followers may be inspired by the mystery surrounding the rebel movement: they encounter the group not as terrorists that use indiscriminate violence against civilians, but as heroes starring in songs, wearing identical uniforms in pictures and on the news.⁹⁹ These appearances contribute to the image of a powerful group that is worth its members’ loyalty, and in which members become brothers through sharing exciting adventures. As such, brotherhood, adventure, freedom, prestige, and power, compose elements of the rebel subculture that can be considered pull-factors in radicalisation processes.

An additional aspect of the rebel subculture that Bowyer Bell defines is an oversimplified view of the world, which serves as a reference to interpret virtually complex problems. This

⁹⁵ Rogers Brubaker, ‘Ethnicity Without Groups’, in: Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge 2004) 38.

⁹⁶ Brubaker, ‘Ethnicity Without Groups’, 40-41.

⁹⁷ Pekelder, ‘The RAF and the Left in West-Germany: Communication Processes between Terrorists and their Constituency in the Early 1970s’, 17.

⁹⁸ J. Bowyer Bell, ‘Revolutionary Dynamics. The Inherent Inefficiency of the Underground’, in: Rapoport, David C. (red.), *Terrorism. Critical Concepts in Political Science, III, The Third or New Left Wave*, (Abingdon 2006) 81-82.

⁹⁹ Bowyer Bell, ‘Revolutionary Dynamics. The Inherent Inefficiency of the Underground’, 84; 86; 89.

extremism allows rebel groups to reduce the solutions to these problems to slogans. These may be potentially powerful in terms of recruitment and group-bonding, but are misleading when applied to solve genuine problems.¹⁰⁰ In terms of pull-factors, the oversimplified world view is thus rather paradoxical and arguably subject to individual approaches, but should not be neglected when analysing radicalisation processes.

In order to understand the full meaning of “subcultures”, it is important to briefly mention the potentially unattractive aspects of living underground as well. Bowyer Bell argues that actual life underground is far from the romanticised world rebels tend to imagine when they decide to join. They may arrive in a group without any combat experience and will be sent off to battle before having received sufficient training. Their most likely fate is to be either sacrificed or discarded, and they must always be on the run. These factors make life very stressful, which is intensified by the social isolation that living in illegality inevitably causes.¹⁰¹ Within this closed “ecosystem”, as Bowyer Bell describes it, it is hard to maintain order when there are no courts and other legal institutions. Hence, to maintain internal control a violent hierarchy prevails in the movement: control is exercised through threats, exiles, and inflicting physical pain.¹⁰² It should be taken into account that these potential hardships of rebel life are usually discarded as merely temporal sacrifices. Both the ones who start the movement and those who are recruited later perceive armed struggle as a last, albeit necessary, sacrifice that will entail victory. They believe that their revolution will be accomplished, which means all rebels will be released from the isolation of the underground.¹⁰³ In recruitment, negative aspects of living underground are thus cleverly presented as temporal, whereas benefits like brotherhood and heroism are promised to be permanent.

2.3c Expected benefits in future life: Prospect of rewards

Although not exclusively a matter of lifestyle, the expectation of benefits to be gained by joining a terrorist organisation is significant to take into account when studying pull-factors in radicalisation processes. Moreover, when focusing on the benefits that improve a rebel’s life compared to his pre-rebel existence, such rewards are intertwined with the idea of rebel lifestyle. Expected rewards may vary from material rewards like money and luxury items, to immaterial rewards such as glory, prestige, and comradeship. More abstract notions of a “better” life, either earthly or in a hereafter, can also be considered part of this component.

First of all, it must be pointed out that terrorism experts like Richardson emphasise that self-gratification is not a primary motivation for most terrorists. After all, they tend to perceive themselves as altruistic, taking up arms to avenge the suffering of others and to end injustice for their

¹⁰⁰ Bowyer Bell, ‘Revolutionary Dynamics. The Inherent Inefficiency of the Underground’, 84.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 84; 86; 89.

constituency. In cases where recruits did pursue personal interests through joining a terrorist group, they were generally more likely to pursue glory than material gain.¹⁰⁴

As for immaterial rewards, the idea of personally contributing to a revolution and social change has provided a motive for rebels throughout history.¹⁰⁵ Recruits expect (predominantly in-group) glory and prestige for their commitment to the struggle, for themselves and their relatives. It can also provide them with a purpose to life, and with recognition of their individual contribution to the group's project. A specific case is the pursuit of a suicide mission. The use and promotion of this tactic by terrorist organisations is not new, but has increased significantly since the 1990s.¹⁰⁶ Perceived as the ultimate sacrifice in the armed struggle, suicide terrorists have expected to be personally rewarded in the hereafter, and to bestow glory upon their relatives and personal legacy.¹⁰⁷ Finally, social scientists such as Tore Bjørgo argue that seeking friends often plays a role in becoming involved in a terrorist group. The expectation that belonging to the group will offer comradeship can be considered an important factor in fulfilling personal social needs.¹⁰⁸

The pursuit of material rewards has been more contested in the academic debate on terrorism. Especially terrorist leaders are arguably less inclined to seek material rewards, since they often have come from wealthy families. For the followers however, such rewards can be a motive to join, especially for the ones who are not deeply involved in ideological activities.¹⁰⁹ Individuals that have previously been involved in criminal activities are a specific issue in this respect. As mentioned in the German case, this can reduce the step to further illegality. New research on radicalisation processes moreover shows that groups like ISIS target individuals involved in petty crime by promising them forgiveness for their sins when they support the caliphate.¹¹⁰ For non-criminal individuals, the prospect of reward can also be relevant. For example, this is indicated by the fact that inequity in wages and other financial compensations, led to frustration with two Al-Qaeda members accused of bombing the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam.¹¹¹ Moreover, Bjørgo argues that an important group of

¹⁰⁴ Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 43. ; and new research discussed in: Versteegh, 'De terrorist is een altruïst', *NRC Handelsblad*, 21 March 2017, <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2017/03/21/de-terrorist-is-een-altruïst-7150388-a1551162> (accessed on 22 March 2017).

¹⁰⁵ Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 102-103.

¹⁰⁶ A martyrdom culture related to suicide missions was also part of Sicarii terrorism (first century) and several other historical examples, but increased in importance significantly in the late twentieth century, see: Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 107-109.

¹⁰⁷ Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 110; 115.

¹⁰⁸ Bjørgo, 'Dreams and disillusionment: Engagement in and disengagement from militant extremist groups', 282-283.

¹⁰⁹ Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 45-46. ; Bjørgo, 'Dreams and disillusionment: Engagement in and disengagement from militant extremist groups', 283-284.

¹¹⁰ Versteegh, 'De terrorist is een altruïst', 12.

¹¹¹ Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 59.

radicals actually consists of youngsters that have no prospects for the future. In their perspective, membership of a rebel group primarily provides an opportunity to change this.¹¹²

These findings confirm that the extent to which terrorist organisations play upon the prospect of future benefits should be taken into account to comprehend the scope of lifestyle.

2.4 The societal surround of terrorist organisations

Scholars from various scientific disciplines have developed analytical frameworks to conceptualise the societal surround of terrorist organisations. These conceptualisations can help to comprehend such abstract ideas as “the societal surround of terrorist organisations”. Therefore, I consider a concise introduction of these frameworks pivotal for understanding the role terrorist organisations have in the society within which they operate. Most commonly used in terrorism studies are the radical milieu, the social movement family, and the terrorist constituency. I will first briefly introduce these different concepts and their dynamics, and will then turn to an analysis in the context of the topic of this study.

A first concept used to study the societal environment of terrorist groups is the *radical milieu*. This concept has been developed from a sociological perspective. Stefan Malthaner and Peter Waldmann explain the radical milieu as a specific indirect social environment, within which people share the perspectives and objectives of terrorist groups and can also offer practical and moral support.¹¹³ Hence, the terrorist organisations are socially and symbolically connected to their radical milieus through shared experiences, symbols, narratives, and frameworks of interpretation. The milieu is radical because of a high degree of commitment to one’s own side, which includes the approval or use of violence. Violence is therefore central in their understanding of the radical milieu: Malthaner and Waldmann consider it the boundary between who does and does not belong to the radical milieu.¹¹⁴ Conway adheres to this definition, but challenges the assertion that face-to-face interaction is central in every radical milieu.¹¹⁵ Instead, she includes the virtual sphere in her definition, stressing that many of the social bonding characteristics of radical milieus are also present in “their online counterparts”.¹¹⁶ By acknowledging that the online radical milieu is equally complex and can also be

¹¹² Bjørge, ‘Dreams and disillusionment: Engagement in and disengagement from militant extremist groups’, 284.

¹¹³ Stefan Malthaner and Peter Waldmann, ‘The Radical Milieu: Conceptualizing the Supportive Social Environment of Terrorist Groups’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 37 (2014) 979.

¹¹⁴ Malthaner and Waldmann, ‘The Radical Milieu: Conceptualizing the Supportive Social Environment of Terrorist Groups’, 983-984.

¹¹⁵ The article by Malthaner and Waldmann to which this thesis refers is among the more recent publications of these authors; Peter Waldmann has published many articles on the topic of the radical milieu before. Among others, Conway refers to: Peter Waldmann, “The Radical Milieu: The Under-Investigated Relationship between Terrorists and Sympathetic Communities,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 2 (2008) 9.

¹¹⁶ Conway, ‘From al-Zarqawi to al-Awlaki: The Emergence and Development of an Online Radical Milieu’, 12.

considered a similar basis of legitimacy for those who share their radical ideas online¹¹⁷, she adds to the literature on online radicalisation.

A different approach to the societal surround of terrorist groups is sociologist Donatella della Porta's conceptualisation of the *social movement family*. Della Porta argues that in each society various social movements with similar basic demands coexist, which together make up a social movement family. Within this family, the movements compete for the support of their shared constituency and the achievement of their specific goals.¹¹⁸ They aim to mobilise their followers, thereby increasing the visibility of their movement and adding leverage to their cause. Terrorist organisations can be understood as social movements that use violence specifically to this end.¹¹⁹

This dynamic of internal competition also features in the concept of the *terrorist constituency*. Historian Jacco Pekelder defines the constituency as "a wider audience that is potentially receptive to their [the terrorists'] ideology and the messages implicit in their acts".¹²⁰ This audience consists of social groups for whom the terrorists claim to be fighting and with whom they identify. Hence, terrorist attacks are for a great deal intended to win over this potential support base for their cause. They wish to inspire sympathy that can serve as a basis for legitimacy of the terrorist acts, and as a support base for logistical and material assistance such as recruits, hideouts, and finance. Terrorist organisations claim to represent a certain group, but do not emerge in a vacuum. They compete with other groups to obtain the vanguard position within their specific social movement. Violence plays a central role in outbidding their radical and moderate rivals, which is perceived to confirm their dedication.¹²¹ As opposed to, for instance, peaceful political parties with similar political ideals, terrorists argue that their militancy distinguishes them as the ones truly committed to their cause, and therefore entitled to be the representatives of their respective constituencies.

The theories outlined above confirm that a terrorist organisation needs a certain extent of societal support to exist. Both in terms of practical support, to fuel the struggle, and of political legitimacy, to justify the violent method, a societal support base is crucial to keep the terrorist struggle going. However, the societal surrounds of terrorist organisations are not homogenous and certainly not unconditionally supportive of terrorist activities. In fact, the terrorist organisation tends to be a relatively marginal group within its societal surround. This implies a certain extent of isolation from society. Importantly, this should not be mistaken for an absence of social bonds: communication, approval, and criticism are constant features in the terrorist campaign. It follows that the societal

¹¹⁷ Conway, 'From al-Zarqawi to al-Awlaki: The Emergence and Development of an Online Radical Milieu', 17-18.

¹¹⁸ Della Porta, 'Comparative research on political violence', 3.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹²⁰ Pekelder, 'The RAF and the Left in West-Germany: Communication Processes between Terrorists and their Constituency in the Early 1970s', 11.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 11-12; 17.

surround of terrorist groups is dynamic: the members of the groups change over time, and people may engage and disengage with the political ideology of the broader movement.

Regarding the interaction between the terrorist organisation and its societal surround, the constituency approach is the only one to acknowledge the social group as a potential support base, to which the terrorist organisation actively makes appeals to win their support. More than in other conceptualisations, the terrorist constituency thus concerns a target audience that is not limited to the people that are already supportive of the group or its justification of violence. Neither is it limited to the *self-perception* of the terrorists within their societal surround: the constituency involves interaction with the explicit goal of enhancing legitimacy within a wider social group. When studying terrorism as a phenomenon closely intertwined with social factors, it is crucial to work with an approach that takes into account the dynamics of these social projects. It is therefore that I will take the constituency theory as central in my thesis.

2.5 Violent and non-violent interaction with a constituency

The theories discussed above imply that a terrorist organisation can derive legitimacy from holding the vanguard position within their broader ideological milieu, and from having a visible, mobilised support base in society.¹²² The vanguard position is not guaranteed: as mentioned above, both the terrorist organisation and its rivals constantly compete to acquire the status of legitimate leader of the social movement they claim to represent. In this competition, terrorist organisations consider violence to be the ultimate proof of their dedication to the future of their constituency: they are the only ones prepared to take up arms to achieve change.¹²³

Hence, terrorist strategy and a politically legitimising narrative go hand in hand. On the one hand, the violent strategy cannot exist, let alone succeed, without a narrative that justifies the use of violence and generates social support. On the other hand, terrorists distinguish themselves from other groups that share their ideals by their conviction that peaceful means will not be sufficient: to them, violence is the only way to get their political narrative across. If they would not use violence while the narrative they distribute is militant, they would discredit their credibility. It follows that, in order to persuade their constituency to support them, terrorist organisations must use a combination of violent and non-violent communication with their constituency. Terrorist violence is thus also intended to send out a political message to their potential supporters. For example, members of Al-Qaeda perceived the 9/11 attacks as a spectacular way to show the Arab world that Muslims could defeat a military giant like the United States.¹²⁴ This will be taken into account in the analysis of propaganda items in this thesis.

¹²² Della Porta, 'Comparative research on political violence', 8.

¹²³ Pekelder, 'The RAF and the Left in West-Germany: Communication Processes between Terrorists and their Constituency in the Early 1970s', 17.

¹²⁴ Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 144.

2.6 Conclusion

The historiography of the urban guerrilla movements in West-Germany indicates that rebel lifestyle and subculture were important elements of these groups in terms of collective identity, image construction and group bonding. As such, they posed pull-factors for potential followers of the movement. Simultaneously, the movements recognised the *Gegenkultur*-society as a valuable source of recruits. Flirting with taboos was an integral part of the rebel lifestyle, which entailed the idolisation of figures that were controversial in West-German society, like criminals and the leaders of Latin-American left-wing liberation movements. Recruits wanted to follow the examples set by their heroes. Lifestyle was thus for a great deal determined by symbolic provocation, which led to violent clashes with the police and judiciary. Such confrontations in turn intensified the radicalisation processes of those who perceived the state to be oppressing an unconventional lifestyle. The rebel lifestyle was promoted through propaganda materials, like the *Knast Camp* brochure and publications by the RAF, and became increasingly politicised. Perhaps most remarkably: the German case points out that, for several individuals, lifestyle was a core motivation in their decision to join a rebel group.

Based on this historical approach, the definition of lifestyle to be used in this thesis is “those aspects that are considered inherent to living as a member of a rebel group, but which are not exclusively determined by their proximity to the group’s political, ideological or religious ideals”. As such, terrorist organisations can strategically employ the idea of rebel lifestyle to persuade potential recruits to join their movements. The resulting analytical framework consists of three components, each with specific elements. The first to be distinguished is image construction relating to the individual experience of belonging to a group. This category includes visible symbols of image construction, such as uniforms, slogans, and heroic images; and abstract sensations such as the desire to identify with heroes. The second component is the rebel subculture, which includes the shared values and experiences related to the collective experience of belonging to a group. These include an expected culture of glory and heroism, glorification of violence, and an adventurous, exciting lifestyle. Equally important is the role of friends, relatives and other acquaintances that have radicalised: their “insider stories” can encourage curious individuals to join a rebel group. Thirdly, followers of terrorist organisations tend to expect something in return for their loyalty to the group. Again, this can be divided into abstract and tangible examples: material rewards, prospects for a better future (on earth or in an afterlife), expectation of comradeship, and glory amongst peers.

From the assertion that terrorist organisations instrumentalise the concept of lifestyle to encourage radicalisation of potential supporters, it follows that defining who these followers might be is essential. This is the terrorist constituency: the wider audience for whom terrorist groups claim to be fighting and with whom they identify, and that they wish to persuade into legitimising, supporting, or joining them. Not only do terrorist groups aspire to win the sympathy of their constituencies, they also

compete with likeminded groups to obtain the vanguard position of their broader ideological movement. The constituency approach takes interaction with the potential supporters and rivals of a specific group to be fundamental. Hence, it is the most appropriate approach when studying the *dynamics* of the terrorists' pursuit of legitimacy.

Sympathy of constituencies and holding the recognised leader position of the broader movement are both vital for the political and social legitimacy of the group. In the case of terrorist groups, readiness to use violence is usually considered the ultimate evidence of genuine commitment to the political ideals of the groups, and forms one of the core means with which they aim to outbid their rivals and show their dedication to their constituency. As such, terrorists need a politically legitimising narrative to justify their violent strategy, and simultaneously need violence to distinguish themselves from likeminded groups.

In this thesis, I thus approach rebel lifestyle as an important pull-factor in radicalisation. I analyse radicalisation processes in the early stage of seeking connection to an identity narrative, in which rejecting established values, breaking taboos, and creating a counter-identity, are among the primary vehicles to carry out the rebellion. This process can be experienced individually and collectively. Crucially, it can arguably be instrumentalised as a recruitment tool, to which I will turn in the following chapter. Have contemporary terrorist organisations used an idea of rebel lifestyle in their interests and if so, how did they construct their groups' images?

3. “Five star jihad”: Rebel lifestyle in Al-Qaeda and ISIS propaganda (1996-2015)

“Five star jihad” was a slogan coined by British foreign fighter Ifthekar Jaman, who shared his daily experiences as ISIS-member through pictures and personal stories. His enthusiasm about his time in Syria came across well, and “five star jihad” was picked up as a rallying cry amongst his followers on social media.¹²⁵ With statements like this, Jaman and his companions significantly contribute to the narrative of heroism, fun, and purpose that ISIS distributes through many channels. This narrative is not new: it is rooted in a tradition of propaganda for many causes that require societal support.¹²⁶

In their public statements, ISIS and Al-Qaeda both emphasise the primacy of religion and their ideological objectives to win support. They urge their audience to prioritise their Sunni Muslim identity and justify political statements with religious quotes from the Quran, which is considered a fundamental source of religious authority in Islamic tradition.¹²⁷ As any terrorist organisation, Al-Qaeda and ISIS need to attract followers to consolidate their support bases in society. I hypothesise that the rebel image and lifestyle could be effective discourses in this recruitment campaign. Arguably, this narrative would be even more powerful if they succeeded in presenting this lifestyle as inherent to religious prescriptions.¹²⁸ To what extent have these organisations constructed a rebel image and lifestyle, and instrumentalised lifestyle-related components as pull-factors in their recruitment campaigns?

Any answer to this question should start by comprehending the jihadist ideology and its appeal to contemporary recruits all over the world. In order to do so, an introduction into the historical context in which it originated is essential. The next section elaborates on jihadism’s ideological and cultural roots to explain where groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS came from. I focus on those parts that are relevant for analysing these two groups, therefore the twentieth century is central in this historiography. Before moving on to the analytical part, I provide an introduction to the use of propaganda by contemporary jihadist groups: in which ways is this unique with regard to their predecessors? What kind of propaganda items do they distribute? I continue by analysing the extent to which the terrorist organisations actively use an assumed rebel image and lifestyle in these propaganda items, thereby applying the analytical framework constructed in the previous chapter.

¹²⁵ Quote and background information in: Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 84.

¹²⁶ Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 17-19.

¹²⁷ Ingram, ‘An analysis of Islamic State’s *Dabiq* magazine’, 470.

¹²⁸ In a report presented at Europol, Berger mentions that terrorist organisations often use religious scripture and other sources of information to justify identity-construction. See: Berger, ‘Deconstruction of Identity Concepts in Islamic State Propaganda. A Linkage-Based Approach to Counter-Terrorism Strategic Communications’, 3.

Studies published by political scientist and Arabist Gilles Kepel (2006), terrorism expert David Rapoport (2004), and historian Randall Law (2016) form the basis for describing the historical context of Islamism and jihadism.¹²⁹ The analytical part is primarily based on propaganda materials produced by Al-Qaeda and ISIS themselves. Publications on ISIS propaganda by Jessica Stern and John Berger (2015) and Haroro Ingram (2016) contribute to this analysis.¹³⁰

3.1 Modern political Islamism and the rise of jihadist organisations

The Islamic religion recognises the Quran as the recollection of the revelations that came to the prophet Muhammad in the sixth and seventh century CE. This holy scripture is Islam's most prominent source of religious authority, but the correct interpretation of the Quran has been debated for centuries by the different traditions that exist within Islam. The most fundamental distinction is between the Sunni and Shi'a traditions, which have developed unique identities. The fracture between these groups originated in the seventh century and was instigated by a debate over religious leadership. Over time, the Shi'a tradition formalised religious leadership, whereas Sunni Islam is organised through a more loose network of institutions. The Sunni identity was strongly influenced by the political and military successes of its caliphate, to which modern-day groups like ISIS still refer.¹³¹

Al-Qaeda and ISIS adhere to a variant of Sunni Islam that calls for a return to the beliefs and practices of early Islam. This ultraconservative branch of Islam is named Salafism, referring to the *salaf*: early generations of Muslims. Salafists take the practices, deeds, and words of Muhammad and his followers as an example of the most righteous way of Muslim life.¹³² They pursue the purification of Islam, motivated by a shared concern that exposure to and influence from non-Islamic cultures has corrupted Islam and led to oppression of the Muslim world. Although this is primarily a religious devotion, it has been translated into political activism since the twentieth century. Its most radical example is jihadist Salafism, which legitimises coercion and the use of violence to realise a purified Islamic society. An equally political, but not necessarily violent branch, is political Salafism.¹³³ Why did political and jihadist Salafism originate? The answer does not reside in an extreme interpretation of Islam only: the political history of the Middle East was an equally important factor influencing the development of this ideology.

¹²⁹ These include: Kepel, 'Introduction to Jihad' (2006); Rapoport, 'The Fourth Wave' (2001); Rapoport, 'The four waves of modern terrorism' (2004); and Law, *Terrorism. A History* (2016).

¹³⁰ I am referring to: Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror* (2015); and Ingram, 'An analysis of Islamic State's *Dabiq* magazine' (2016). The selected propaganda materials will be introduced in more detail in section 3.2 of this thesis.

¹³¹ Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 259-260.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 263.

¹³³ For a more elaborate explanation of the various branches of Salafism, see: Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 265-268. ; Roex, 'Should we be Scared of all Salafists in Europe? A Dutch Case Study', 51; 54.

The League of Nations mandates following World War I gradually placed the region under European dominance, which in many states entailed a concentration of political and economic power in the hands of a small, westernised elite. In other states, leaders sought a way to counter cultural erosion and establish a society untainted by Western political values. These leaders turned to Islam, which also inspired political movements in the region.¹³⁴ The Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in 1928, was probably the most influential offspring among them. It is regarded as the source of the broader Islamist movement and laid the groundwork for this movement's future political programme: the pursuit of a revitalised Muslim world, in which the militant jihad was considered a justified means to realise this objective.¹³⁵ One of the Brotherhood's leading members and most influential thinkers was Egyptian theorist Sayyid Qutb. He approached Islam as a "perfect, timeless and all-encompassing guide for individual and collective life that must not be compromised by man-made ideologies".¹³⁶ In Qutb's work, western values and the secular political democracy are strongly rejected. Especially his work *Milestones* had a massive influence upon later Islamist thinking: in it, he argued that genuine Muslims should not only obey Allah, but also commit to living in a community that was governed by *shariah*. Everything else was claimed to be *jahiliyyah*, a term used to describe the evil, ignorant condition of the world before Islam arose.¹³⁷ This term is still being applied by ISIS to describe contemporary non-Islamic societies and justify the use of violence against them.¹³⁸ Qutb's views on radical Islamism, violent jihad, and anti-westernism have been embraced by political, and later also jihadist, Salafist movements and still significantly determine the modern jihadist discourse.¹³⁹

Qutb's ideas inspired a movement that started to develop in the context of many regional tensions. Amongst others, the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian struggle, the decolonisation war in Algeria, the 1973 oil crisis, and Cold War-related conflicts in Egypt and Afghanistan divided the Middle East. Throughout the twentieth century, refugee crises and socio-economic deterioration increased. Post-World War II geopolitical interests led the United States, the Soviet Union, and European nations to get involved in the region. As crises and hostility intensified, all these states got deeper entrenched into the regional problems.¹⁴⁰ The region seemed to be on the verge of exploding and Middle Eastern societies became polarised, partly due to the repressive measures several leaders took in attempts to remain in power. According to Rapoport, three separate developments eventually culminated in the rise of jihadist terrorism. First, the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which erupted in response to the

¹³⁴ Law, *Terrorism. A History*, 273-274.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 274. ; Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 267.

¹³⁶ Ingram, 'An analysis of Islamic State's *Dabiq* magazine', 460.

¹³⁷ Law, *Terrorism. A History*, 275-276.

¹³⁸ Ingram, 'An analysis of Islamic State's *Dabiq* magazine', 460.

¹³⁹ Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 267.

¹⁴⁰ Law, *Terrorism. A History*, 276-277.

authoritarian Iranian regime but was seized by the Islamist movement within a year.¹⁴¹ Simultaneously, a new Islamic century began: a momentum that, according to an important Islamic tradition, would bring a redeemer. It inspired revolutionary protests throughout the Middle East, among which the storming of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in the first minutes of the new century.¹⁴² Third, the *mujahideen* or “holy warriors” succeeded in defeating the Soviet Union after it invaded Afghanistan, which militant Islamists considered a triumph for jihadism.¹⁴³ Against this tumultuous background, the Islamist movement started to organise.¹⁴⁴

Particularly influential in the jihadist branch of this movement was Osama bin Laden, who had acted as an indispensable recruiter and fundraiser for the *mujahideen*’s war against the Soviet Union. His ideas on Islam and jihad had been strongly influenced by Qutb’s follower Ayman al-Zawahiri and the radical Islamist scholar Abdullah Azzam.¹⁴⁵ After the Soviet-Afghan war, Bin Laden developed his ideas and strategy in Saudi Arabia and Sudan, until eventually returning to Afghanistan in 1996. In this same year, he issued his first “Declaration of War” against the United States.¹⁴⁶ Together with Al-Zawahiri he invested in the further organisation of their jihadist group Al-Qaeda, which would strike in Washington and New York on September 11, 2001. As part of the global “War on Terror” that U.S. president George W. Bush declared as a response, the U.S. and its allies invaded Afghanistan in that same year, and Iraq in 2003.¹⁴⁷

In the decade that followed, various jihadist organisations emerged that either aligned with Al-Qaeda or propagated a slightly different interpretation of jihadism. One of them was Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), which was formed in 2006. They were initially involved in the war in Iraq, until they merged with the Syrian group Jabhat al-Nusra in 2013 and renamed themselves ISIS.¹⁴⁸ According to official statements, Al-Qaeda and ISIS did not wish to be held responsible for the acts of the other at the time. Instead, they competed to be the most powerful jihadist terrorist organisation in the region.¹⁴⁹

A few years earlier, resistance against the regime of president Bashar al-Assad had erupted in Syria during the Arab Spring, the wave of revolutionary protests in the Middle East. Al-Assad’s regime violently repressed the resistance, and in the autumn of 2011 Salafist groups started an armed struggle and demanded the resignation of the Syrian president. It would culminate in a devastating and

¹⁴¹ Rapoport, ‘The Fourth Wave: September 11 in the History of Terrorism’, 422.

¹⁴² Rapoport, ‘The four waves of modern terrorism’, 62.

¹⁴³ Kepel, ‘Introduction to Jihad’, 68-69.

¹⁴⁴ Law, *Terrorism. A History*, 278. ; Kepel, ‘Introduction to Jihad’, 66-67.

¹⁴⁵ Law, *Terrorism. A History*, 287-288.

¹⁴⁶ Kepel, ‘Introduction to Jihad’, 72.

¹⁴⁷ Law, *Terrorism. A History*, 295; 326-328.

¹⁴⁸ Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 39.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

bloody civil war, which allowed ISIS to call for Muslims to defend their fellow believers.¹⁵⁰ When ISIS proclaimed the establishment of its caliphate in June 2014, it adopted a victor's rhetoric to inflate this success: the objective of an Islamic state had been achieved, and now it would only be a matter of time until all enemies of Islam would be defeated.¹⁵¹

It is evident that a context of crisis had already determined the situation in the Middle East for decades when the first jihadist terrorist organisations emerged. This environment of permanent war served as a powerful legitimisation of violence, which has been used by these terrorists ever since.¹⁵² The beforementioned invasions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the war in Syria, have provided terrorist organisations with a war discourse that allowed them to continue their armed struggles. The use of violence has been justified with religious arguments as well. Jihadist Salafists for instance, consider religious purification an Islamic duty to which violence is fundamental. Although it can be combined with non-violent methods, violence is an integral part of the process.¹⁵³ Jihadists criticise exclusively non-violent approaches to Islam: these are weak, corrupted, and hypocrite. The struggle between “the West” and “the Muslim world” should in fact be seen as an American war against Islam, and all western citizens collaborate against Islam by sustaining their democratic governments fighting this war. In this view, terrorist acts like the 9/11 attacks are righteous religious deeds: they are not even attacks, but must be understood as defensive jihad against the western aggressor.¹⁵⁴

Resistance against foreign, and particularly western, involvement in the Middle East and oppression of the Muslim world still composes a fundamental part of the jihadist narrative today. The political and religious ambitions and narrative are evidently intertwined and have been vocally broadcasted. But to what extent have Al-Qaeda and ISIS used propaganda as a recruitment tool by appealing to non-ideological decisions, too? Which examples of promoting a “rebel lifestyle” can be identified?

3.2 Propaganda published by jihadist terrorist organisations

Propaganda has been used by terrorist organisations of every wave since the 1880s. Rebel strategists recognised propaganda as an effective means to promote the rebel group's political objectives and to generate popular support for their revolution. It is aimed at shaping perceptions and polarising the

¹⁵⁰ Edwin Bakker and Peter Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen* (Amsterdam 2017) 34-35.

¹⁵¹ Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 107-108; 110.

¹⁵² Ingram, ‘An analysis of Islamic State's *Dabiq* magazine’, 466.

¹⁵³ Quintan Wiktorowicz and John Kaltner, ‘Killing in the Name of Islam: Al-Qaeda's Justification for September 11’, *Middle East Policy* 10 (2003) 2, 78.

¹⁵⁴ Wiktorowicz and Kaltner, ‘Killing in the Name of Islam: Al-Qaeda's Justification for September 11’, 80.

terrorists' audience. Ingram explains that, through appealing to pragmatic and identity-related matters, terrorists use propaganda to influence both rational and instinctive decisions.¹⁵⁵

The fourth wave movements have published more propaganda items than any of their predecessors. Obviously, the rapid development of technology is one of the major explanations for this increase in output.¹⁵⁶ The widespread availability and easy accessibility of internet and other means of long-distance communication, are among the most important facilitators of worldwide distribution of propaganda – and resulting radicalisation processes. Also significant is the size of the jihadist organisations' constituency: the global Sunni community, which comprises over a billion people.¹⁵⁷ To expand the potential reach of propaganda into non-Arab speaking societies, items have been published in different languages. This way, the movements ensured that their message could be received by an immense audience across the globe. This development accompanied an increasing trend of professionalisation.¹⁵⁸ Finally, the political ambition to establish one united Islamic state requires a massive production of propaganda: after all, targeted inhabitants of this state must be persuaded to come live in its territory. A consolidated image of the organisations' ability to represent a state of such scale arguably encourages that decision. Neither these ambitions and developments, nor the ability of terrorist organisations to quickly adapt to them are entirely new, but the scale of the constituency, the political ambition, the attacks, and the accompanying propaganda machine have been unprecedented.¹⁵⁹

What kind of items are being produced by Al-Qaeda and ISIS, and which media are being used to distribute them? The arsenal includes speeches of charismatic leaders like Osama bin Laden and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, manuals, magazines, songs, and video recordings varying from short clips to hour-long staged, documentary-style movies.¹⁶⁰ Initially, the groups relied on traditional media to broadcast its propaganda: they distributed videotapes and DVD's to news agencies and handed these out around mosques.¹⁶¹ With the rise of social media, propaganda has been spread by organisations and their sympathisers through chatrooms, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and the messaging service

¹⁵⁵ Ingram, 'An analysis of Islamic State's *Dabiq* magazine', 461.

¹⁵⁶ De Graaf and Van Buuren, 'Hatred of the System. Menacing Loners and Autonomous Cells in the Netherlands', 176. ; Conway, 'From al-Zarqawi to al-Awlaki: The Emergence and Development of an Online Radical Milieu', 14-15.

¹⁵⁷ Based on estimates released by the United Nations on 2015, see: 'World population by religion', <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/> (accessed on 22 May 2017).

¹⁵⁸ Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 109; 128.

¹⁵⁹ Kepel, 'Introduction to Jihad', 63-64.

¹⁶⁰ For references to these items see: Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*. ; Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 101-102; 106. ; Wiktorowicz and Kaltner, 'Killing in the Name of Islam: Al-Qaeda's Justification for September 11', 77.

'The Al-Qaeda Manual' is available through: https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/ag/legacy/2002/10/08/manualpart1_1.pdf, and issues of ISIS's magazines *Dabiq* (2014-2016) and *Rumiyah* (2016-2017) are accessible at: <https://clarionproject.org/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq-50/>.

¹⁶¹ Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 3; 127.

Telegram. The professionalism of magazines, audio and video material moreover tied in to the interpretative frames and worldviews of their, generally young, target audience.¹⁶²

Since a survey of all propaganda items neither fits within the scope of this thesis nor is relevant for its purpose, this study is based upon a selection of different items. Three sets of criteria have been taken into account in this selection: availability, authorship, and content. As for availability: terrorist propaganda has often been taken down by security services. Social media companies have also gradually become more alert to boycotting terrorist content.¹⁶³ Because recent studies have indicated that people are increasingly being radicalised and recruited in an online environment¹⁶⁴, I reduced the material to what was available online. Also important was availability in English, since the focus of this thesis is propaganda intended to radicalise western diasporas/constituencies. Concerning authorship, this thesis deals with propaganda published (or claimed) by terrorist organisations themselves, for these arguably approach the image that the group wants to present of itself the most. Hence, social media discussions are excluded from this analysis. Items published by cells, allied networks, and sympathisers however, will be examined in chapter four. Because my research method is qualitative, I selected items that include text. This may be presented in audio, video, writing or images, because they relate to the widest possible audience (youngsters). Moreover, it should cover both ideological and non-ideological topics, to be able to put the research on the lifestyle factor in perspective; and is a combination of items published in successful and crisis times of the groups' activities.

The examined Al-Qaeda-propaganda includes speeches of leader Bin Laden, the manual that the Manchester police found when searching an Al-Qaeda member's home (hereafter: the Al-Qaeda manual), the movie *The State of the Ummah*, and the statement that the group published in April 2002: 'A Statement from Qaidat al-Jihad Regarding the Mandates of the Heroes and the Legality of the Operations in New York and Washington' (hereafter: the Al-Qaeda Statement).¹⁶⁵ The selection of ISIS-propaganda includes the film series *Salil as-Sawarim*¹⁶⁶; the sermon that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi delivered in Mosul after the declaration of the caliphate; and ISIS-glossy *Dabiq*, of which fifteen issues have been published before the magazine's name was changed to *Rumiyah* in 2016. *Dabiq* is named after the city where, according to Islamic tradition, the end battle would be fought. It offers

¹⁶² Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 130.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 139.

¹⁶⁴ Sageman, 'The Next Generation of Terror', 41.

¹⁶⁵ Wiktorowicz and Kaltner, 'Killing in the Name of Islam: Al-Qaeda's Justification for September 11', 77.

¹⁶⁶ *Salil as-Sawarim* is translated as *The Clanging/Clash of the Swords*, and was released in four parts: the first three parts were released in 2012 and 2013 by ISI, the fourth part was released in 2014 by ISIS. I will refer to the series as *The Clanging of the Swords*.

ISIS's perspective on the world: it is aimed at radicalising its readers, and convincing them to support the organisation by travelling to its territory or to engage in terrorism domestically.¹⁶⁷

3.3 Promotion of the rebel lifestyle by Al-Qaeda and ISIS

To draw conclusions on the extent to which Al-Qaeda and ISIS have instrumentalised lifestyle-related components as pull-factors in their recruitment campaigns, I have studied the presence of the three components defined in the previous chapter in the selected propaganda materials. I have structured this analysis in three separate sections that correspond with these components: identity and image construction, subculture, and the prospect of rewards.

3.3a Identity and image construction

Both Al-Qaeda and ISIS have constantly invested in constructing a powerful image of their organisations and the members belonging to it. In doing so, they provide their audience with an identity, and encourage its desire to belong to these groups. First of all, especially ISIS invested in visible aspects of image construction. Its warriors wear black uniforms and masks to hide their faces, and generally carry flags with the ISIS logo, spears and other weapons.¹⁶⁸ Considering the group's territory largely consists of desert terrain, these uniforms do not serve camouflage purposes. Therefore, it is more likely that they are meant to stimulate a feeling of collective identity and to impress the group's audience. Which characteristics define this identity?

The identity that jihadist terrorist organisations propagate is based on the assumption of an ancient Islamic identity which has been eradicated since the fall of the last caliphate on March 3, 1924.¹⁶⁹ As Bin Laden expressed in an interview delivered at the American news agency CNN in 1997: "When we used to follow Muhammad's revelation, we were in great happiness and dignity."¹⁷⁰ Hence, today's jihadist organisations aim to establish a society in which the Muslim community can live in accordance with Islam again, and which will restore glory, dignity, honour, and strength for all Muslims. These characteristics are considered inherent to the true Islamic identity. They return in the Al-Qaeda manual, in speeches of Bin Laden, and in several issues of *Dabiq*.¹⁷¹ To strengthen the symbolic value of this ancient identity, Bin Laden and his fellow Al-Qaeda leaders have promoted

¹⁶⁷ Ingram, 'An analysis of Islamic State's *Dabiq* magazine', 459.

¹⁶⁸ See for instance: ISIS, 'Remaining and Expanding', in: 'Remaining and Expanding', *Dabiq* 5 (2014) 28.

¹⁶⁹ 'The Al-Qaeda Manual' [originally located by the Manchester police in 2000, translated fragments provided by US government website], https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/ag/legacy/2002/10/08/manualpart1_1.pdf (accessed on 31 March 2017) 7.

¹⁷⁰ Osama bin Laden, interview with Peter Arnett of CNN, March 1997, quoted in: Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 86.

¹⁷¹ See: 'The Al-Qaeda Manual', 8. ; Osama bin Laden, interview with Peter Arnett of CNN, March 1997, quoted in: Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 86. ; ISIS, 'Breaking News: Khilafah Declared', in: 'The Return of Khilafah', *Dabiq* 1 (2014) 6-9. ; ISIS, 'The Islamic State before al-Malhamah', in: 'A Call to Hijrah', *Dabiq* 3 (2014) 5.

themselves as modelled on the image of Muhammad. Like Muhammad had to flee Mecca in 622 to carry on his preaching elsewhere, Bin Laden fled Saudi-Arabia in the early 1990s, and relocated the centre of his holy war activities.¹⁷² The Al-Qaeda manual and issues of *Dabiq* moreover appeal to assumed shared sentiments among the Muslim constituency: regret and embarrassment over having lost its sincerity, anger against those who have humiliated Muslims and against Muslims who have neglected their spiritual heritage, and determination to restore honour and pride.¹⁷³

From this assumption follows that those Muslims who have committed themselves to the duty to restore honour and pride by waging jihad, are the heroes of the global Muslim community. Active participation in the jihad is considered an individual duty. Depending on where the potential recruits live, they can pursue jihad either by plotting domestic attacks in the name of Allah, or by giving *bay'at*, a pledge of allegiance, to a jihadist group.¹⁷⁴ However, physically joining jihadist groups and, since 2014, performing *hijrah* (migration) to ISIS's proclaimed caliphate to support its war, are evidently considered to be the most honourable acts a Muslim can devote his or her life to. For instance, the perpetrators of 9/11 were declared heroes in the Al-Qaeda Statement, and the film series *The Clanging of the Swords* promotes a similar view.¹⁷⁵ The idea that all members of Al-Qaeda and ISIS are courageous heroes has been elevated by ISIS in its propaganda magazine *Dabiq*. Each issue contains numerous images of soldiers who look joyful and proud to be taking part in the jihad, and who are always prepared for battle: in most photos they are carrying weapons, driving trucks and tanks, or participating in military training.¹⁷⁶ The magazine leverages its self-perceived heroism by presenting its constituency as superior to all other people. This notion of superiority is not new for violent groups, and dangerously legitimises the use of violence by a member to protect his or her equally superior brothers.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² Kepel, 'Introduction to Jihad', 75.

¹⁷³ 'The Al-Qaeda Manual', 8. ; ISIS, 'Breaking News: Khilafah Declared', in: 'The Return of Khilafah', *Dabiq* 1 (2014) 8-9.

¹⁷⁴ *Bay'at* explanation, see: ISIS, 'Foreword', in: 'The Flood', *Dabiq* 2 (2014) 3. ; Necessity of giving *bay'at*, see: ISIS, 'Foreword', in: 'Al-Qa'idah of Waziristan: A Testimony from Within', *Dabiq* 6 (2014) 5. ; Individual duty and different means of waging jihad, see: ISIS, 'Hijrah from Hypocrisy to Sincerity', in: 'A Call to Hijrah', *Dabiq* 3 (2014) 25;

¹⁷⁵ Al-Qaeda, 'A Statement from Qaidat al-Jihad Regarding the Mandates of the Heroes and the Legality of the Operations in New York and Washington', 24 April 2002, quoted in: Wiktorowicz and Kaltner, 'Killing in the Name of Islam: Al-Qaeda's Justification for September 11', 83. ; Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 109.

¹⁷⁶ Images of military training, see: ISIS, 'Report: Abu Hamzah al-Muhajir Training Camp', in: 'Al-Qa'idah of Waziristan: A Testimony from Within', *Dabiq* 6 (2014) 27.

Images of warriors posing with weapons and tanks are a constant feature in *Dabiq*, see for instance: ISIS, 'Islamic State Reports', in: 'The Flood', *Dabiq* 2 (2014) 12. ; ISIS, 'Islamic State News', in: 'The Flood', *Dabiq* 2 (2014) 37; 39. ; ISIS, 'My provision was placed for me in the shade of my spear', in: 'The Failed Crusade' *Dabiq* 4 (2014) 10; 11; 12. ; ISIS, 'Advice for the soldiers of the Islamic State', in: 'Al-Qa'idah of Waziristan: A Testimony from Within', *Dabiq* 6 (2014) 13. ; ISIS, 'Islam is the Religion of the Sword Not Pacifism', in: 'From Hypocrisy to Apostasy: The Extinction of the Grayzone', *Dabiq* 7 (2015) 24.

¹⁷⁷ Ingram, 'An analysis of Islamic State's *Dabiq* magazine', 466.

This is closely connected to another component of the branded jihadist identity: militancy. Violence plays a central role in the lives of Al-Qaeda and ISIS members: readiness to use violence, and at least endorsement of violence in the name of Allah, are expected from all followers. Embracing violence and militarism are thus considered an integral part of the rebel identity and as sources of personal and collective power. Despite the violent nature, both Al-Qaeda and ISIS perceive themselves to be altruistic as well. They consider themselves to be fighting to avenge the suffering of their Muslim brothers.¹⁷⁸ In one propaganda movie, ISIS members are even shown to act merciful against enemies that would admit they had been wrong in combating the jihadists.¹⁷⁹ Taking into account that *Dabiq* is full of images of the revenge carried out against *kuffars*,¹⁸⁰ this seems rather paradoxical.

3.3b Subculture

The subculture that the jihadist organisations are branding is equally heroic as the collective identity they propagate. The message that Al-Qaeda and ISIS broadcast is that their members will enter a culture of heroism and glory. Through joining the group, an individual can become part of this heroic environment, closely bonded to fellow members who share the same goals, religious practices, and anti-western worldview.¹⁸¹ Together, group members are pursuing retaliation for the harm done to Muslims and, since June 2014, can contribute to the expansion and professionalisation of the “Islamic state”.¹⁸² The instructions for leaders to distribute public rewards and acknowledgement as found in *Dabiq*,¹⁸³ leverage the idea that glory will not be merely individual, but is an integral part of daily life as an ISIS-member.

A second important aspect of the jihadist subculture is the glorification of violence. The Al-Qaeda manual is full of appreciations of death, slaughter, and destruction and explicitly requires potential Al-Qaeda recruits to be able to commit violent acts.¹⁸⁴ Obviously, violence is also inherent to Al-Qaeda’s and ISIS’s strategy: in several publications, group members have expressed that “an Islamic government would never be established except by the bomb and rifle”.¹⁸⁵ Islam, they say, is

¹⁷⁸ Bin Laden repeated this statement on Al Jazeera after the 9/11 attacks, quoted in: Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 92-93.

ISIS expressed a similar view in: ISIS, ‘Indeed Your Lord is Ever Watchful’, in: ‘The Failed Crusade’ *Dabiq* 4 (2014) 9.

¹⁷⁹ Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 111.

¹⁸⁰ See for example: ISIS, ‘Islamic State News’, in: ‘The Flood’, *Dabiq* 2 (2014) 33-34; 41. ; ISIS, ‘Islamic State Reports: Revenge for the Muslimat persecuted by the Coptic crusaders of Egypt’, in: ‘From Hypocrisy to Apostasy: The Extinction of the Grayzone’, *Dabiq* 7 (2015) 30; 31.

¹⁸¹ Wiktorowicz and Kaltner, ‘Killing in the Name of Islam: Al-Qaeda’s Justification for September 11’, 87.

¹⁸² Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 111-112.

¹⁸³ ISIS, ‘Advice for the Leaders of the Islamic State’, in: ‘From Hypocrisy to Apostasy: The Extinction of the Grayzone’, *Dabiq* 7 (2015) 15.

¹⁸⁴ ‘The Al-Qaeda Manual’, 5 ; 16.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

not a religion of peace but of the sword.¹⁸⁶ Since contemporary life is defined by *jahiliyyah*, the world is in crisis and life should be about fighting the unbelievers responsible for this evil. To ISIS, today's *jahiliyyah* is even more repulsive than the pre-Islamic world: after all, the world has been introduced to Islam but unbelievers consciously choose to neglect divine orders.¹⁸⁷ Hence, Muslims should seek confrontation with unbelief. Based on this historical justification, the groups' leaders continuously call for violent jihad, in which martyrdom is being encouraged fiercely.¹⁸⁸ Bin Laden argued that his organisation must attack the United States and its allies, as an act of revenge for the suffering they inflicted upon Muslims.¹⁸⁹ The Al-Qaeda Statement was even more vocal, by arguing anyone who opposed a violent approach to be corrupt and ignorant. Violence was inherent to the righteous path.¹⁹⁰ ISIS-leader Al-Baghdadi emphasised this again in the first sermon he delivered after the proclamation of the caliphate, by stressing that the world was divided into two camps and that it was a duty to defend Islam by the sword.¹⁹¹

A third and, in recruitment expectably important, aspect of the subculture is that it is being presented as offering an adventurous and exciting life. The al-Farouq training camp that is showcased in the movie *The State of the Ummah* comes across as an adventure camp for young men, where they spend the day running, shooting, swimming, and training on motorcycles.¹⁹² The film series *The Clanging of the Swords* equally contributes to the idea that living as a jihadist is like starring in a live-action movie, in which glorious parades with cheering audiences are everyday matters.¹⁹³ The lengthy list of security precautions provided in the Al-Qaeda manual appeals to similar imaginations. As this list consists of false documents, code names, counterfeit money, and a 22-point instruction plan to create safe hideouts, the life of a member seems to be a never-ending cat-and-mouse-game with enemy authorities.¹⁹⁴ The seventh issue of *Dabiq* assigns ISIS-leaders to provide the units under their command with slogans, a secret code language, and public rewards.¹⁹⁵ All these propaganda items

¹⁸⁶ ISIS, 'Islam is the Religion of the Sword Not Pacifism', in: 'From Hypocrisy to Apostasy: The Extinction of the Grayzone', *Dabiq* 7 (2015) 20.

¹⁸⁷ Ingram, 'An analysis of Islamic State's *Dabiq* magazine', 460.

¹⁸⁸ Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 125-126. ; Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 83.

¹⁸⁹ Osama bin Laden, 'Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places' (August 1996), and: Osama bin Laden, 'Dinner Party Tape' (December 2001), both quoted in: Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 92.

¹⁹⁰ Wiktorowicz and Kaltner, 'Killing in the Name of Islam: Al-Qaeda's Justification for September 11', 80.

¹⁹¹ Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, addressing Muslims in the Grand Mosque in Mosul [first video sermon], Mosul, 4 July 2014, parts of videorecording accessible through: <https://www.memri.org/tv/isis-leader-al-baghdadi-calls-muslims-wage-jihad-says-becoming-caliph-heavy-responsibility> (accessed on 4 June 2017) fragments: 02'22"-02'26".

¹⁹² Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 103.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁹⁴ 'The Al-Qaeda Manual', 22-27.

¹⁹⁵ ISIS, 'Advice for the Leaders of the Islamic State', in: 'From Hypocrisy to Apostasy: The Extinction of the Grayzone', *Dabiq* 7 (2015) 13; 14.

provide an exciting picture of the life recruits may expect when they join Al-Qaeda or ISIS. As such, they encourage the audience to embark upon a courageous adventure by joining these groups.

Fourthly, the documents published by Al-Qaeda and ISIS contain many references to a highly hierarchical subculture. The Al-Qaeda manual for instance emphasises that humans are essentially bad and that they need Allah's guidance and forgiveness for this: "we seek refuge in him [Allah] from our wicked souls and bad deeds".¹⁹⁶ Obedience is expected of the organisation's members not only to Allah, but also towards the group's leaders.¹⁹⁷ These claims of authority are justified religiously, and closely intertwined with the highly religious nature of the jihadist subculture. All members are required to pray several times a day, go to the mosque and attend other religious gatherings: the primary aspect of life is to follow the path of the prophet.¹⁹⁸

3.3c Prospect of rewards

The prospect of rewards seems an unlikely matter in jihadist propaganda: both Al-Qaeda and ISIS reject material interests and self-gratification on religious grounds. In 1998, Arabian news agency Al-Jazeera broadcast an interview with Osama Bin Laden. He responded to the statement that the US offered \$5 million for information leading to his arrest, stating:

"...these men left the world and came for the jihad. America, however, which worships money believes that people here are of this [same] calibre. I swear that we have not had the need to change a single man from his position even after these reports..."¹⁹⁹

In an interview delivered in the same year on ABC News, he repeated that Muslims "shall not want", and that they join the jihad as a matter of grace.²⁰⁰ ISIS-magazine *Dabiq* is equally vocal in its rejection of material motivations. For example, one of its returning columns, 'Wisdom', is devoted to *ghanimah* (booty) and *niyyah* (motives). A large quote of a man who allegedly asked: "Oh Messenger of Allah, if a man battles for booty and fame, what does he get?" is printed, and the messenger's response is "He will get nothing" three times.²⁰¹ Hereby, the magazine's editors reject self-gratifying motives to wage jihad.

Notwithstanding this explicit disapproval, both *Dabiq* and other ideological output can be considered at least ambiguous to the relevance of self-gratification. Three examples are important in this respect: the promise of comradeship, ISIS's approach to *ghanimah*, and Al-Baghdadi's

¹⁹⁶ 'The Al-Qaeda Manual', 6

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 15.

¹⁹⁸ This is justified with the concept *tawheed*, which means the unity of God. See the paragraph on: "Islam is a complete system", in: 'The Al-Qaeda Manual', 8.

¹⁹⁹ Osama bin Laden, interview broadcast on Al Jazeera (1998), quoted in: Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 44.

²⁰⁰ Osama bin Laden, interview with John Miller of ABC News (May 1998), quoted in: Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, 58-59.

²⁰¹ ISIS, 'Wisdom', in: 'The Failed Crusade' *Dabiq* 4 (2014) 30-31.

implications of glory. First of all, comradeship and brotherhood feature in many propaganda items. Belonging to the group entails elevation of any member's status to that of a *mujahid's* brother.²⁰² The beforementioned movies portray warriors as close friends, and “brother” and “sister” are regularly used terms to describe fellow members by both leaders and followers.²⁰³ In *Dabiq* 7, a story was published of Abu Qudamah al-Misri and Abu Mu'awiyah al-Misri: two young men from the United Kingdom, who travelled to Syria to join ISIS in 2012. As group members and “best friends”, they allegedly enjoyed adventures, shared experiences and had a lot of fun. At the end of the story, both of them are “rewarded” with the opportunity to die as martyrs, upon which they continued their companionship eternally in paradise.²⁰⁴ Recruits can thus expect the fulfilment of social needs, on earth and in the Hereafter.

A second example of rewards can be found in ISIS's approach to *ghanimah*. Although the group clearly states that warriors may not fight in pursuit of *ghanimah*, articles and images in *Dabiq* suggest that warriors will receive rewards for their contribution to the struggle. In the opening pages of the first issue, soldiers are portrayed dividing booty amongst each other.²⁰⁵ Several issues display how weapons and luxury items of defeated enemies are confiscated as a reward for military successes.²⁰⁶ With photo descriptions like “war booty captured from the apostate Egyptian army”,²⁰⁷ ISIS brags about its wealth while simultaneously justifying its right to possess such items. The group moreover emphasises its noble intentions by showing how its warriors give pieces of *ghanimah* to orphans in the villages under their control.²⁰⁸

A profound example of the ambiguous approach to self-gratification are ISIS-leader Al-Baghdadi's comments on glory, expressed in the sermon he delivered in a mosque in Mosul shortly after ISIS proclaimed the establishment of a caliphate in 2014. He presented himself as the new caliph, demanding his audience to obey him as long as he obeyed Allah, and called for Muslims all over the world to wage jihad.²⁰⁹ He added leverage to his call by presenting it through the perspective of the holy month of Ramadan, stating:

²⁰² Al-Baghdadi, addressing Muslims in the Grand Mosque in Mosul [first video sermon], fragments: 02'26"-02'53".

²⁰³ 'The Al-Qaeda Manual', 22. ; ISIS, 'To our sisters: A brief interview with umm Basir al-Muhajirah', in: 'From Hypocrisy to Apostasy: The Extinction of the Grayzone', *Dabiq* 7 (2015) 50-51.

²⁰⁴ ISIS, 'Among the Believers are Men', in: 'From Hypocrisy to Apostasy: The Extinction of the Grayzone', *Dabiq* 7 (2015) 46-49.

²⁰⁵ ISIS, 'Introduction', in: 'The Return of Khilafah', *Dabiq* 1 (2014) 4.

²⁰⁶ Among the examples are pictures in: ISIS, 'Islamic State Reports', in: 'The Flood', *Dabiq* 2 (2014) 12. ; ISIS, 'Islamic State Reports', in: 'A Call to Hijrah', *Dabiq* 3 (2014) 18-19. ; ISIS, 'Remaining and Expanding', in: 'Remaining and Expanding', *Dabiq* 5 (2014) 24; 29-30.

²⁰⁷ ISIS, 'Remaining and Expanding', in: 'Remaining and Expanding', *Dabiq* 5 (2014) 30.

²⁰⁸ ISIS, 'Islamic State News', in: 'The Flood', *Dabiq* 2 (2014) 33.

²⁰⁹ See: Al-Baghdadi, addressing Muslims in the Grand Mosque in Mosul [first video sermon].

“Oh Muslims, the arrival of the month of Ramadan is a great blessing and grace granted by Allah ... It is a month in which the marketplace of jihad opens ... your reward is doubled this month.”²¹⁰

Al-Baghdadi’s speech is illustrative of the ambiguity that is omnipresent in ISIS’s propaganda statements: that of a purified Islamist lifestyle in which earthly desires, emotional attachments to anyone other than Allah, and pursuit of material wealth are non-existent, versus the implicit promise of personal – spiritual *and* material – reward. The ISIS leader, elevating himself above earthly leaders by accrediting himself the status of caliph, stated: “I shall not promise you what kings and rulers promise their subjects: a life of luxury, tranquillity, security and comfort.”²¹¹ Yet in this same speech, he announced the beginning of Ramadan to be the opening of “the marketplace of jihad” in which those who wage jihad will be able to reap the fruits of war. Moreover, this reward will be doubled during the holy month. What exactly this reward will be is left to the imagination of his audience, but it is explicitly not exclusively spiritual:

“If you only knew what reward, honour, elevation, and glory there is in jihad – in this world and in the Hereafter – none of you would be remiss in setting out to wage jihad.”²¹²

Additionally, *Dabiq* is also quite suggestive in providing implications of glory: several articles and photospreads are devoted to crowds that celebrate their “liberation” from non-Islamist regimes by cheering for warriors and expressing their gratitude to these heroes.²¹³

Hence, although Islamists explicitly condemn western consumerism and actively target this way of life with attacks on nightclubs and other “hedonistic entertainment areas”²¹⁴, they also use the temptations of personal benefit to which they deem the human soul so vulnerable to mobilise support and trigger recruitment. Such implicit references might even increase the appeal of rewards: earthly desires are a taboo in the Islamist ideology, but are suggestively offered in a seductive way.

3.4 Conclusion

Political polarisation and crises in the Middle East, and the development of a political and cultural approach to orthodox Islam, jointly paved the way for the emergence of radical Islamism and jihadism. It was embraced mostly in ultraconservative communities. The terrorist organisations

²¹⁰ Al-Baghdadi, addressing Muslims in the Grand Mosque in Mosul [first video sermon], fragments: 00’30”-00’36”; 00’45”-00’49”; 01’07”-01’09”.

²¹¹ Ibid., fragment: 03’55”-04’05”.

²¹² Ibid., fragment: 04’40”-05’06”.

²¹³ ISIS, ‘Remaining and Expanding’, in: ‘Remaining and Expanding’, *Dabiq* 5 (2014) 24; 29-31.

²¹⁴ Versteegh, ‘Aanslag Manchester heeft precies het gewenste effect’, *NRC Handelsblad*, 25 May 2017, <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2017/05/25/aanslag-manchester-heeft-precies-het-gewenste-effect-10063732-a1560366> (accessed on 30 May 2017).

adhering to this ideology have distributed more propaganda than any of their predecessors to generate support amongst their constituencies.

Al-Qaeda and ISIS propaganda items distinguish a set of characteristics that define a genuine Muslim identity: glory, strength, pride, and dignity. These characteristics are based upon the example of the prophet and his followers, and the narrative of the *salaf*. Muslims who have committed themselves to restoring honour and power for the Muslim community, are presented as the *Ummah*'s contemporary heroes, especially when they wage jihad to this end. Hence, the individual picture is clear: wage or support jihad, and you may identify yourself with these idols. This collective identity is emphasised with visible items such as uniforms, flags, and weapons.

The collective experience or subculture that Al-Qaeda and ISIS promote is dominated by sensations of heroism and glory. Brotherhood and adventure are important themes in this respect, and should be taken into account when analysing radicalisation processes. Glorification of violence is omnipresent in speeches, movies, issues of *Dabiq*, and other official publications. It is intertwined with the hierarchical nature of the community recruits are about to enter, which in turn is based upon the *shariah*. Although the appeal of a violent hierarchy may seem questionable, it should be understood as an extension of the oversimplified worldview dominating the ideology, and as such, fits into the radicalisation processes of members. Moreover: in the offensive jihad, using violence is not only justified, but inevitable.

The prospect of future benefit can perhaps be considered the most ambiguous component of lifestyle-propaganda. In accordance with orthodox interpretations of the religion, jihadist organisations vocally reject material interests and self-gratification. Nevertheless, both Al-Qaeda and ISIS have made implicit and explicit references to the rewards awaiting recruits. Pictures of *ghanimah*, confiscated weapons, tanks and luxury items feature in many *Dabiq* issues, and martyrdom is claimed to be rewarded in paradise. References to brotherhood and recognition of members' contribution to the struggle are equally visible. Moreover, Al-Baghdadi promised jihadists that reward, honour, and glory would be beyond imagination. It must be emphasised that, in the propaganda items studied in this thesis, ISIS is hinting more suggestively at future benefits for recruits than Al-Qaeda.

These findings confirm that both Al-Qaeda and ISIS have invested heavily in constructing an image of their organisations with which recruits expectedly desire to identify, that they leverage collective experiences and other subcultural factors to intensify this desire to belong, and that they promote lifestyle-related rewards in ambivalent ways. The narrative of rebel lifestyle is rooted in a discourse of heroism, glory, and adventure. Al-Qaeda and ISIS use this narrative to legitimate their own existence, to stimulate a sense of community, and to persuade targeted recruits to join them. Does this discourse resonate among their constituency in The Netherlands? And if so, to what extent has rebel lifestyle played a role in radicalisation here?

4. Dutch “Soldiers of Allah”: Rebel lifestyle in jihadist networks in The Netherlands (2002-2015)

‘Wij zijn de soldaten van onze religie,
We komen er weer aan met een nieuwe strategie,
Met onze onverslaanbare ideologie,
Breken we voorgoed met de blanke tirannie.
(...)
Stop met je verhalen over democratie,
Alles lijkt te falen, het lijkt wel fantasie,
Die zogenaamde vrijheid is slechts een illusie,
En wij zien jullie daden als pure tirannie.’

– *Abou Hafs, ‘Onverslaanbare ideologie’ [Undefeatable ideology], 2011*²¹⁵

These lyrics are quoted from the song ‘Onverslaanbare ideologie’ [Undefeatable ideology] that was written by Dutch-Moroccan preacher Abou Hafs and published on YouTube in 2011.²¹⁶ The song can be considered an ode to the *mujahideen*, whose heroic images were admired by young Dutch supporters of radical Islamism. They proudly referred to themselves as “Soldiers of Allah”, and showed their allegiance in public by printing this title on their outfits.²¹⁷ Their comrades that had travelled to Syria and Iraq to join jihadist organisations, shared their experiences on social media like Facebook, Twitter, and Telegram. In a speech delivered at the Global Counterterrorism Forum, Dutch foreign minister Bert Koenders told his audience that these young radicals posed in pictures, “...waving flags and guns, sometimes burning their passports.”²¹⁸

Actually, individuals adhering to jihadist ideas constitute a marginal group in the Muslim community in The Netherlands.²¹⁹ The estimated number of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq has dropped significantly, and the Dutch *Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismedebestrijding en Veiligheid* (National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism, NCTV), reported that there have barely been

²¹⁵ Translation: ‘We are the soldiers of our religion, we are returning with a new strategy, with our undefeatable ideology, we will break with the white tyranny forever (...) Quit your stories about democracy: everything seems to be failing, it is like fantasy, this so-called freedom is merely an illusion, and we regard your actions as pure tyranny’, Abou Hafs, ‘Onverslaanbare ideologie’ [Undefeatable ideology], YouTube, uploaded by abelkarim honing, 31 May 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtntSPHaw1c> (accessed on 3 July 2017) 00’18”-00’32”; 01’21”-01’-36”.

²¹⁶ Abou Hafs, ‘Onverslaanbare ideologie’ [Undefeatable ideology], YouTube, uploaded by abelkarim honing, 31 May 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtntSPHaw1c> (accessed on 3 July 2017).

²¹⁷ Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 144.

²¹⁸ BZ, ‘Speech minister Koenders at the meeting of the Foreign Terrorist Fighter working group’, 4.

²¹⁹ Roex, ‘Should we be Scared of all Salafists in Europe? A Dutch Case Study’, 56.

any new cases of foreign fighters from The Netherlands since late 2016.²²⁰ Nevertheless, both the NCTV and AIVD still consider a terrorist threat to Dutch territory plausible, and are particularly alert on the potential threat of radicals living in The Netherlands or returning from the Syrian battlefield.²²¹ These people have one thing in common: they have been radicalised in a social environment that facilitated the development of jihadist ideas, and have been supported by local networks in their attempts to exchange their life in The Netherlands for that of *mujahid* in the Middle East.²²²

I start the analysis in this chapter with a concise introduction of the development of the Dutch political and societal climate since the late twentieth century. According to the AIVD, political and public polarisation have heavily contributed to the susceptibility of individuals for radical ideas.²²³ Experiences of discrimination and marginalisation have led social groups to feel excluded from society, a problem that has been put forward by former Islamic radicals in interviews conducted by Demant.²²⁴ I briefly explore this socio-political context and then introduce the two jihadist networks central to this chapter: the Hofstadgroup and *De Waarheid*. Next, I explain the role of propaganda in these networks: do the publications of Al-Qaeda and ISIS reach the Dutch constituency, and do Dutch jihadists contribute to propaganda production themselves? Subsequently, I move on to an analysis of the rebel lifestyle prevalent in the Dutch jihadist constituency in a method similar to the previous chapter. This will allow me to answer the question “To what extent has lifestyle played a role in the behaviour and radicalisation of the Dutch jihadist constituency, and its readiness to support jihadist terrorist organisations?” in this chapter’s conclusion.

Recently published studies on Dutch jihadist networks serve as the most important sources for this chapter. Among them are the analysis of individuals’ life stories by Bakker and Grol (2017) and Schuurman’s dissertation on the Hofstadgroup (2017).²²⁵ A selection of AIVD reports complements their studies, as the intelligence service identified jihadism as a potential security threat in the late 1990s and has since monitored the movement.²²⁶ Additionally, I have analysed a selection of

²²⁰ In its latest DTN, the NCTV even claims that there have not been any new cases of foreign fighting in between March and June 2017, see: NCTV, ‘Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland 45’ [Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands 45, DTN], 23 June 2017 (Den Haag) 4.

²²¹ NCTV, ‘Dreigingsbeeld Terrorisme Nederland 45’, 3.

²²² AIVD, ‘Transformatie van het jihadisme in Nederland: Zwermodynamiek en nieuwe slagkracht’ [The transformation of jihadism in the Netherlands: Swarm dynamics and new strength], June 2014 (Den Haag) 20.

²²³ AIVD, ‘Jaarverslag 2004’ [Annual Report 2004], April 2005 (Den Haag) 20; 36; 38.

²²⁴ Demant et. al., *Decline and Disengagement. An Analysis of Processes of Deradicalization* (Amsterdam 2008) 87. ; Also see the conclusions drawn about this study in: Froukje Demant and Beatrice de Graaf, ‘How to Counter Radical Narratives: Dutch Deradicalization Policy in the Case of Moluccan and Islamic Radicals’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33 (2010) 418.

²²⁵ These are: Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen* (2017) and Schuurman, *Becoming a European homegrown jihadist: a multilevel analysis of involvement in the Dutch Hofstadgroup, 2002-2005* (2017).

²²⁶ De Graaf and Van Buuren, ‘Hatred of the System. Menacing Loners and Autonomous Cells in the Netherlands’, 165.

propaganda produced by admirers of the *mujahideen*, predominantly the YouTube videos of Abou Hafs. Such videos are relevant to answer my research question, because they directly relate to the worldview and broader subculture of the youngsters belonging to the Dutch jihadist constituency.²²⁷

4.1 Dutch jihadist networks and their constituency

The political climate and public debate in The Netherlands has long been characterised as relatively calm and non-violent. Although the country had experienced some politically motivated violence, most notably the train hijackings carried out by radicalised Moluccans in the 1970s, these occasions were not labelled as fundamental threats to Dutch society.²²⁸ In particular, the Moluccan actions and the leftist-inspired sabotage operations of the *Rode Jeugd* (Red Youth), were not publicly labelled as terrorism. This view started to change around the turn of the millennium, and Dutch society was shocked after a left-wing activist murdered politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002.²²⁹ Fortuyn had been highly critical of Islam and had taken a provocative attitude in the public debate, which had sharpened since his participation in it. In hindsight, his critique is generally seen as one of the first public signs of societal unease with the multiculturalism policy The Netherlands had invested in during the previous decades.²³⁰

Over the twenty-first century, the political and public debate about multiculturalism and immigration in The Netherlands has hardened. Fear of terrorist attacks got hold of Dutch society following the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent Madrid bombings (2004) and 7/7 bombings in London (2005). The fact that these attacks were claimed by jihadist movements fuelled anti-Islamic views. On the other end of this increasingly polarised debate, the Dutch participation in the “War on Terror” in Iraq and Afghanistan contributed to a social environment in which jihadism could develop domestically.²³¹ The polarised debate, and resulting confrontations with discrimination, fed the idea amongst young Muslims that they were being deliberately excluded from Dutch society.²³² Some Islamic preachers tried to use this collective experience of victimhood to strengthen the religious bonds in their communities. An example is Abou Hafs’ song ‘Paradise is in my heart’ (2011), in which

²²⁷ Psychologist Anne Speckhard argues that, in both radicalisation and deradicalisation, it is crucial to level with the worldview and experiences of the subject. She emphasised these findings in her guest talk on the study of violent extremism [meeting organised by History of International Relations (Utrecht University), Dare To Be Grey, and the US embassy to The Netherlands], Utrecht, 20 June 2017.

²²⁸ De Graaf and Van Buuren, ‘Hatred of the System. Menacing Loners and Autonomous Cells in the Netherlands’, 159.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 156; 161.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 163-164.

²³¹ Bart W. Schuurman, ‘A History of the Hofstadgroup’, in: Bart W. Schuurman, *Becoming a European homegrown jihadist: a multilevel analysis of involvement in the Dutch Hofstadgroup, 2002-2005*, (Doctoral thesis Leiden University, Leiden, 2017) 49.

²³² Demant and De Graaf, ‘How to Counter Radical Narratives: Dutch Deradicalization Policy in the Case of Moluccan and Islamic Radicals’, 418.

he recites his steadfast conviction of Islam while playing fragments of a speech of Dutch politician Geert Wilders. Wilders is highly critical of Islam, and in this speech he expressed infamous statements such as “We should close the borders to Muslim immigrants” and “No more mosques in The Netherlands”.²³³ The song appeals to shared sentiments of marginalisation and is evidently intended to convince the audience that converting to Islam is the solution to this injustice.

Meanwhile, jihadism had drawn the AIVD’s attention since the late 1990s.²³⁴ The first terrorist attack motivated by homegrown jihadism in The Netherlands was carried out by the Hofstadgroup. This network of young Islamic radicals living mainly in The Hague and meeting regularly around the El Tawheed mosque in Amsterdam started organising in early 2002.²³⁵ The group had named itself *Leeuwen van Tawheed* (Lions of Tawheed; *tawheed* is the monotheistic unity of God): its narrative was that young Muslims were continuously confronted with structural discrimination, and that the adequate response to this injustice was to be found in violent jihad.²³⁶ Because the Hofstadgroup was loosely structured and most members had been under AIVD surveillance since 2003, planning terrorist attacks collectively was problematic. Nevertheless, Mohammed Bouyeri succeeded in carrying out an individual attack in 2004. He murdered filmmaker Theo van Gogh, whom Bouyeri, due to Van Gogh’s public criticism of Islam, regarded as an offensive blasphemer.²³⁷ In his recently published dissertation on radicalisation of Hofstadgroup-members, Bart Schuurman argues that only a small part of the group was interested in terrorist activities at all.²³⁸ Nevertheless, the group has been framed as a terrorist group in the media and the question whether or not the group should legally be considered a terrorist organisation was still examined in the trial in 2010.²³⁹

Just like the invasions in Iraq and Afghanistan and the resulting wars in these countries had provided jihadists with a powerful narrative of a war against Islam, the civil war in Syria incited public outrage from 2011 onwards. The Dutch participation in the anti-ISIS coalition served as another matrix for jihadist ideas to grow. Concurrently, ISIS had started a campaign to convince young Muslims in western diasporas to support the group. In The Netherlands, most of these recruits were youngsters who held high expectations for their future, but encountered discrimination and felt

²³³ Abou Hafs, ‘Het paradijs bevindt zich in mijn hart’ [Paradise is in my heart], YouTube, uploaded by NaseehaTi, 22 June 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t40GzegAB_I (accessed on 3 July 2017) 00’00”-03’10”. References to interviews with, and speeches from, Geert Wilders since 2004.

²³⁴ De Graaf and Van Buuren, ‘Hatred of the System. Menacing Loners and Autonomous Cells in the Netherlands’, 165.

²³⁵ Schuurman, ‘A History of the Hofstadgroup’, 50.

²³⁶ Ineke van der Valk, ‘Islamitisch extremisme in Nederland’, in: Peter R. Rodrigues and Jaap van Donselaar, *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme: Negende Rapportage* (Amsterdam 2010) 87; 97-98.

²³⁷ Schuurman, ‘A History of the Hofstadgroup’, 53.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

²³⁹ Janny Groen, ‘Hofstadverdachte Jason W. zweert moslimextremisme af’, *De Volkskrant*, 16 October 2010, <https://www.volkskrant.nl/magazine/hofstadverdachte-jason-w-zweert-moslimextremisme-af~a1033559/> (accessed on 14 July 2017).

alienated from the society in which they were raised. ISIS offered them an opportunity to an alternative future.²⁴⁰ Among them were youngsters with a criminal record, which were promised forgiveness if they would support ISIS.²⁴¹

In 2012, the AIVD informed the Dutch government of the first cases of people who had travelled to Syria to join the groups fighting Assad. In 2013, the intelligence services officially expressed their concern with the growing number of foreign fighters. In 2014, and especially after the proclamation of the caliphate, this number increased even faster. Security concerns were intensified by the fact that many of these foreign fighters had joined terrorist organisations like Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS.²⁴² Several loosely organised networks appeared to play a crucial role in facilitating the journeys of foreign fighters, and constituted a social environment in which radical ideas could develop. The network that I focus on in this study is *De Waarheid*, a network that was predominantly active in Delft and The Hague. *De Waarheid* started organising in 2012 and perceived itself as a “social organisation that pursued a better society.”²⁴³ Its objectives were political and religious: it was supposed to contribute to the preaching of the true faith and was fiercely anti-democratic. Muslims who did not actively reject democracy could be declared unbelievers (pronouncing *takfir*), and the use of violence was considered a duty in extreme cases. Street *da'wa* (preaching) and translation of religious texts were among the core activities to spread their interpretation of Islam in The Netherlands.²⁴⁴

4.2 Propaganda received and produced in The Netherlands

Intelligence reports confirm that propaganda plays an important role in radicalisation processes in The Netherlands.²⁴⁵ The active jihadist networks were quite security-conscious, and their political debates are largely conducted in secrecy. Nevertheless, radical ideas are available on countless online platforms, largely maintained by individuals participating in jihadist networks. The AIVD analysed the consequences of the transition to online communication, predominantly through social media, in a report published in 2014. Among its most important conclusions is that the ideological debate has become less hierarchical because of social media: anyone can contribute to the debate and publicly express opinions. The debate has since become more interactive and recognised ideological leaders with religious knowledge no longer are the only contributors.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁰ Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 223.

²⁴¹ Versteegh, ‘De terrorist is een altruïst’, 13.

²⁴² Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 39-41.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 74.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁴⁵ AIVD, ‘Jaarverslag 2013’ [annual report 2013], April 2014 (Den Haag) 9.

²⁴⁶ AIVD, ‘Transformatie van het jihadisme in Nederland: Zwermodynamiek en nieuwe slagkracht’ 17.

Propaganda published by Al-Qaeda and ISIS has been actively distributed in The Netherlands. Radical Islamist networks formed environments in which ideas on jihad and violence could develop.²⁴⁷ Although many networks operated domestically, their orientation increasingly shifted to international crises such as the war in Syria. Both Al-Qaeda and ISIS encourage sympathisers to attack in their country of residence through these communication channels.²⁴⁸ Fighters in the Syrian civil war and recruiters of terrorist organisations stayed in touch with Dutch sympathisers of the cause, in which social media again played an important role.²⁴⁹ Their propaganda contributed to sustaining the myth of a prosperous future in the caliphate, and ensured that the readiness to travel to Syria and join the fight remained steady until the beginning of 2016.²⁵⁰

Dutch jihadists have also produced ideological propaganda themselves. On social media, combat experiences, religious texts, and political views are being expressed that fit the jihadist discourse and can contribute to the radicalisation of others. Dutch foreign fighters in Syria have published a booklet, *De Banier*, and Bouyeri was known to have translated religious texts for *da'wa* purposes.²⁵¹ Several jihadists published images that can be considered recruitment posters, of which the image on the cover is but one example. They label themselves *mujahideen* in these items, and refer to the caliphate as “paradise”.²⁵² On YouTube, numerous Dutch Islamist and outright jihadist songs can be found. These items can arguably contribute to the image of jihadists, and particularly foreign fighters, as the heroes of the oppressed Muslim community – in The Netherlands and beyond. A selection of these items has been taken into account in this thesis, because these items are popular among potential recruits and therefore are relevant to comprehend the impact of “rebel lifestyle” upon their radicalisation processes.

4.3 Rebel lifestyle in the Hofstadgroup and *De Waarheid*

The radical Islamic networks in The Netherlands appear to be have been strongly embedded in a specific youth culture, which serves as the basis for new recruits and is being used as a vehicle to carry out a collective Muslim identity. Several examples from the Hofstadgroup and *De Waarheid* confirm

²⁴⁷ AIVD, ‘Jaarverslag 2013’, 11.

²⁴⁸ AIVD, ‘Jaarverslag 2015’ [annual report 2015], April 2016 (Den Haag) 14.

²⁴⁹ AIVD, ‘Jaarverslag 2014’ [annual report 2014], April 2015 (Den Haag) 17.

²⁵⁰ AIVD, ‘Jaarverslag 2015’, 16.

²⁵¹ AIVD, ‘De gewelddadige jihad in Nederland’, 38. ; AIVD, ‘Transformatie van het jihadisme in Nederland: Zwermodynamiek en nieuwe slagkracht’, 19.

²⁵² ‘Oppeens heb je het...je toekomst ligt in het paradijs. Van MU-zikant naar MU-jahid!’ [Spelling conform original image], Facebook-page Marouane B., printed in: Pieter Hotse Smit, ‘Van onthoofdingen verdachte jihadist Marouane B. rapt voor zijn moeder: “Ik kom ooit terug”’, *De Volkskrant*, 12 July 2017, http://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/van-onthoofdingen-verdachte-jihadist-marouane-b-rapt-voor-zijn-moeder-ik-kom-ooit-terug~a4505910/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=shared%20content&utm_content=free (accessed on 13 July 2017).

this.²⁵³ Similar to the structure of the previous chapter, I will explore the role of lifestyle in these networks by focusing on identity and image construction, subculture, and the prospect of rewards.

4.3a Identity and image construction

Those involved in Dutch jihadist networks have identified themselves using visible symbols such as appearance. They started wearing either traditionally religious clothing, or items that symbolically represented the group ideology. An example of the first type is Bouyeri, who started to dress in correspondence with religious prescriptions during his radicalisation process in 2003.²⁵⁴ Thijs and Rudolph²⁵⁵, two converts whose life stories have been reconstructed by Bakker and Grol, acted in a similar way. Thijs, who converted to Islam in the late 1990s and radicalised in the first decade of the twenty-first century, started to adjust his appearance to orthodox examples around 2010: he grew a beard and wore several traditionally Salafist items.²⁵⁶ Rudolph started to dress in traditional religious clothing in 2012, profiling himself as a pious Muslim when he would take to the streets to perform street *da'wa*, to introduce people to his religion.²⁵⁷ A young woman interviewed for the 2008 research project 'Decline and Disengagement' stated that she experienced wearing a headscarf as a step in discovering her identity. She explained that she would expect young women in twenty-first century Dutch society to wear a headscarf even it was for the sake of rebelling alone. The negative portrayal of Muslims by several politicians and in the media led her to feel Muslims were structurally being stigmatised as a group. Hence, she considered dressing provocatively orthodox a vehicle to make a political statement.²⁵⁸ Her observation applies to the experiences of Bouyeri and Rudolph as well, who were confronted with discriminatory remarks because of their notable appearance. Such experiences confirmed their perspective that Dutch society was deliberately intolerant towards Muslims, and intensified their radicalisation processes.²⁵⁹

The urban networks in The Hague and Delft acted more provocatively: they used clothing and other visible symbols to express their adherence to the jihadist ideology. When police and youth workers thought they finally had managed to control the Delft group's criminal problems, the youngsters radicalised further and later appeared wearing sweaters with the print "Soldiers of

²⁵³ Schuurman, 'A History of the Hofstadgroup', 50. ; Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 224.

²⁵⁴ Schuurman, 'A History of the Hofstadgroup', 53.

²⁵⁵ Following requests of the relatives of jihadists that contributed to their study, Bakker and Grol have only provided the first names of the jihadists in their publication. Sometimes they have anonymised the individuals completely through using fake names. When I refer to examples of Bakker and Grol's study, I use the names they provided.

²⁵⁶ Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 98.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.

²⁵⁸ Demant et. al., *Decline and Disengagement. An Analysis of Processes of Deradicalization* (Amsterdam 2008) 153.

²⁵⁹ Schuurman, 'A History of the Hofstadgroup', 53.; Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 120-121.

Allah”.²⁶⁰ More provocative were the incidents in 2013 and 2014, in which groups in The Hague waved Al-Qaeda and ISIS-banners. People were shocked by these “*Schilderswijk* jihadists” and the public indignation about the incident even led to a debate in the Dutch parliament.²⁶¹ Several members of parliament questioned Minister of Security and Justice Ivo Opstelten about the intentions of the group and the extent to which these acts were punishable.²⁶² The fact that they had not used any violence in their demonstrations did not eliminate political and public suspicion about the group’s intentions. Politicians from several parties were worried that the group’s outright allegiance to Al-Qaeda would pose a threat to Dutch national security and it was debated whether these individuals should be considered participants in terrorist activity – and persecuted as such.²⁶³

Several adherents to the jihadist ideology directly derived their personal identity from the examples set by their heroes: the *mujahideen* fighting in the Middle East. Marouane B., the one who posted the image on the cover on his Facebook page, is one example of a Dutch youngster who flaunted his allegiance to jihadist networks to boost his own image. Another example is Soufiane, who had been monitored by the AIVD since his first attempt at travelling to Syria in 2011. He was highly dedicated to the ideology and has been recorded pressuring his peers to wage jihad, and to not give up once they had reached the battlefield.²⁶⁴ His behaviour illustrates the pride he took from identifying as a jihadist. When he finally succeeded in travelling to Syria in 2014, he posted photos of his arrival online. He could not resist the opportunity to mock the AIVD on Twitter: “Greetings from Syria! Years of intensive monitoring, sent back four times and now drinking Pepsi in Syria? *Que pasa* what went wrong?”²⁶⁵ Soufiane took his duty as a rebel very seriously: once in Syria, he started recording a documentary called *Oh Oh Aleppo* to show the world his experiences and “what was really going on in the Syrian civil war”. Calling himself a “fighting journalist”, his footage shows him and his companions in Aleppo, passing by destroyed houses and recording the suffering of Syrian citizens. He ascertains his spectators that it is probably for the best that they are here to fight these “monstrous enemies” and protect the people from further harm.²⁶⁶ By portraying themselves as heroic, honourable warriors, this documentary is an important example of the creating and sustaining of their own image.

²⁶⁰ Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 144.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 15; 84.

²⁶² AH-TK, 2013-2014, 1443-Kamervragen over dat Jihadisten in Den Haag trouw aan Al-Qaida zweren, 1; 4.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

²⁶⁴ Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 80; 85-86.

²⁶⁵ The AIVD reported this Tweet in: AIVD, ‘Transformatie van het jihadisme in Nederland: Zwermodynamiek en nieuwe slagkracht’, 20.; Bakker and Grol confirm that the Tweet was Soufiane’s, see: Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 87.

²⁶⁶ Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 88-89.

4.3b Subculture

Recently, several Dutch scholars have studied radicalisation processes of jihadists in The Netherlands. They all agree that, to a large extent, religious conviction was not the primary instigator of radicalisation. Rather, individuals got dragged into a radical milieu through pre-existing social bonds with friends, family, and general acquaintances.²⁶⁷ Sometimes these bonds originated in mosques, but especially in the case of youngsters they developed on soccer fields and in youth centres. In other words: the already present subculture in which they were involved appears to have been an important factor in their radicalisation process. These academic findings correspond with AIVD reports on the topic.²⁶⁸

In The Netherlands, the youngsters that decided to travel to Syria to join the armed struggle were often able to do so because of their connections in a radical network that already operated on the brink of illegality. The Hofstadgroup for example is regarded as having emerged out of an existing “circle of acquaintances”, many of whom were monitored by the police.²⁶⁹ In some urban neighbourhoods, youth cultures exist that, in terms of social cohesion and intensity of rebel culture, are reminiscent of the districts in 1960s Munich. Popular radio stations provide a stage to young artists from these neighbourhoods, thereby functioning as a vehicle to formulate critique on social circumstances. Youth workers in these areas were shocked to notice how familiar these rapping youngsters appeared to be with criminality.²⁷⁰ Drug deals, illegal possession of weapons, and confrontations with the police featured in their lyrics, alongside references to their “brothers” fighting in Syria. For example, lyrics like “Half my neighbourhood is locked-up, the other half is fighting Assad”²⁷¹ indicate that the war in Syria was an issue that kept these youngsters occupied. Moreover, the openness on this topic suggests that their social environment did not necessarily disapprove of sympathising with those that were waging violent jihad.

The criminal network in which these youngsters became entrenched led to social isolation, which in turn dragged them deeper down the criminal path. Eventually, for most of them only a limited social network remained, from which there was little to no escape.²⁷² Growing up amidst the urban street culture in their neighbourhoods was a crucial facilitator for radicalisation of these youngsters. Even Soufiane, who would grow into a dedicated Muslim and one of the core facilitators of jihadist travels to Syria, originally enjoyed a western youth lifestyle in this subculture. During high

²⁶⁷ With regard to the Hofstadgroup, this is confirmed in: Schuurman, ‘A History of the Hofstadgroup’, 50-51. ; Concerning *De Waarheid*, see: Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 224-225. ; 14.

²⁶⁸ See: AIVD, ‘De gewelddadige jihad in Nederland’, 39.

²⁶⁹ Schuurman, ‘A History of the Hofstadgroup’, 50.

²⁷⁰ Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 140.

²⁷¹ See for instance recordings from a rapper from Delft: ParaMocro, ‘Spitsessie CCXII Zonamo Underground’, Youtube, uploaded by ZonamoUnderground, 20 March 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzXp5kQU7SY> (accessed on 14 July 2017).

²⁷² Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 139-140.

school, he listened to rap music, played video games with his friends, and played soccer on the streets. Only over time he started to radicalise, which was for a great deal influenced by the discrimination he encountered in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. In the years that followed, he started visiting mosques where orthodox imams were preaching. For Soufiane and his friends, the approach of these imams was too soft. They regularly collided with the leaders of the mosques and even got expelled from one. Their parents started to worry about the radical ideas of their children. This development did not go unnoticed by the AIVD either: the organisation started tracking them since 2008.²⁷³

In the meantime, the radical networks around *De Waarheid* invested in internal group bonding through organising activities. Not only did they meet regularly to discuss ideological and religious matters, they also organised barbecues and survival weekend trips in Belgium.²⁷⁴ Together, the young people involved in these networks experienced the transition from a western way of life to orthodox Islamic life.²⁷⁵ This was strongly encouraged by the jihadist networks. In an open letter to Islamic youth for example, the Hofstadgroup urged youngsters to boycott working in supermarkets. The letter appealed to their religious conscience, stating that if somebody would buy alcohol at their supermarket counter and commit a sin when they were drunk, the cashier would share the responsible for this sin.²⁷⁶

The desire to translate ideas into action increased, too. The idea of adventure when joining the war in Syria appealed to many and was intensified by movies published on YouTube. Some jihadists had already succeeded in travelling to Syria and shared exciting stories with their friends back home.²⁷⁷ Once arrived, it moreover became clear just how dense the Dutch jihadist network was: even people who had exclusively “met” through internet debates would recognise each other in the Syrian and Iraqi training camps.²⁷⁸ The jihadists at the battlefield considered it their duty to stay in touch with their networks in The Netherlands, which posed important radicalisation stimuli among their subcultures.²⁷⁹ By making extensive use of social media, these warriors cleverly played upon the lifestyle of their constituency. Soufiane arguably did the same with *Oh Oh Aleppo*, and sustained the image of collectively experienced adventure which was worth risking a dangerous journey for.

Foreign fighting was not the only violence in which Dutch jihadists participated. As mentioned before, the murder of Theo van Gogh on November 2, 2004, was the first incident of domestic jihadist violence. It was followed by the arrests of most of the suspected Hofstadgroup-members on the same day. The arrest of two others followed a week later and entailed a violent clash with the police. One member threw a hand grenade at the police, which injured five officers. The

²⁷³ Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 77-79.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 82.

²⁷⁵ AIVD, ‘De gewelddadige jihad in Nederland’, 39.

²⁷⁶ Van der Valk, ‘Islamitisch extremisme in Nederland’, 99.

²⁷⁷ AIVD, ‘Transformatie van het jihadisme in Nederland: Zwermodynamiek en nieuwe slagkracht’, 19. ; Stern and Berger, *ISIS. The State of Terror*, 84.

²⁷⁸ Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 146.

²⁷⁹ AIVD, ‘Transformatie van het jihadisme in Nederland: Zwermodynamiek en nieuwe slagkracht’, 19.

suspects threatened to blow up the entire street, and were seen waving a sword and firearm. The weapon would turn out to be fake, but the message was clear: these men were prepared to defend themselves with violence.²⁸⁰ After this incident, actual jihadist violence in The Netherlands remained limited. However, glorification of violence was advocated by some more ideologically radical activists. For example, in ‘Undefeatable ideology’, Hafs threatens that the *mujahideen* will defeat the western system, and honours the warriors who have set out to combat “democracy”, “white tyranny”, and “so-called freedom” with violence.²⁸¹ Such ideological lyrics clearly approve and inspire violence.

4.3c Prospect of rewards

Keeping in mind that both Al-Qaeda and ISIS, to a certain extent, use the promise of rewards in recruitment strategy, it is relevant to examine whether this seems to play a role in the decision of constituency members to support these organisations. In reports published by the AIVD, a connection is presumed between the promoted image of good life in ISIS territory and the decision to travel to Syria. Jihadists uploaded photos and videos on social media: images of the war, of training with weapons, and of daily issues such as food. The AIVD concluded that these materials contributed to a more direct and personal experience of waging the violent jihad at home, and that they sustained the image that life with ISIS was better than in The Netherlands.²⁸²

Concerning material rewards, especially the promises of a prosperous future in ISIS’s caliphate appear to have had significant impact on the Dutch constituency. Entire families performed *hijrah* in expectation of houses with free electricity, plenty of food, and available medical services, as promoted by ISIS’s propaganda directors.²⁸³ In reality, the situation has been found disappointing. Food was expensive, houses were in deteriorated condition, medical support was inadequate, and control over the caliphate’s inhabitants was exercised violently. Such complaints however barely reached the Dutch constituency: it was, and still is, too dangerous for inhabitants to communicate critically from within ISIS-territory. The idea of an Islamic utopia, where Muslims would neither be confronted with demoralised western standards, nor with discrimination because of their religion, therefore kept attracting Dutch foreign fighters until early 2016.²⁸⁴ Evidence on the popularity of material rewards other than houses and food is scarce. Fighters are being paid a salary²⁸⁵, but the literature and sources studied do not confirm that this formed a motive for recruits.

For young people, fighting in Syria offered a chance to escape a pointless life in their neighbourhoods. They were attracted by the idea of adventure, that they expected to find as members

²⁸⁰ Schuurman, ‘A History of the Hofstadgroup’, 58-59.

²⁸¹ Hafs, ‘Onverslaanbare ideologie’, 01’21”-01’-36”.

²⁸² AIVD, ‘Transformatie van het jihadisme in Nederland: Zwermodynamiek en nieuwe slagkracht’, 19.

²⁸³ AIVD, ‘Leven bij ISIS, de mythe ontrafeld’ [Life with ISIS: the Myth Unravelling], January 2016 (Den Haag) 3; 10.

²⁸⁴ AIVD, ‘Leven bij ISIS, de mythe ontrafeld’, 14.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

of a jihadist group.²⁸⁶ Young foreign fighters who were motivated by this image soon found disillusionment. Especially those who did not look Arabic and did not master the language found that their freedom in the group was limited. Upon arrival, the friends Royston and Mahmood for example were treated with suspicion by warriors in the ISIS-camp. The language barrier probably forced them to resort to household tasks, which was not as exciting as they hoped: they returned within a couple of months.²⁸⁷ People who had already completed an education or had experience in certain jobs, were sometimes selected to become an engineer or doctor in ISIS's territory.²⁸⁸ It is therefore plausible that the expectation that skills and knowledge would be acknowledged in the caliphate, functioned as a pull-factor for potential recruits. The same accounts for the fulfilment of personal social needs: especially youngsters involved in *De Waarheid* clearly were looking for friends, and aspired to become part of a group with a powerful identity.²⁸⁹ The Hofstadgroup fulfilled a similar role in providing comradeship, meaning, and social affiliation for youngsters that were insecure about their future in a society from which they felt alienated.²⁹⁰

The idea that belonging to the *mujahideen* would entail glory resonated in the Dutch constituency. Prestige among peers was important for the youngsters in the urban subcultures, and some of them had already established a reputation. In a radio show, a performing artist called for the release of a youngster who had been imprisoned upon returning from Syria in 2013.²⁹¹ His friends also boosted their own reputations as powerful individuals who were not afraid of using violence and acting outside the law: one of them bragged to a potential affiliate that “his Kalashnikov was his best friend”.²⁹² The expectation that joining a jihadist network would bestow glory upon them was shared in both the Hofstadgroup and *De Waarheid*. Several Hofstadgroup documents stated that jihadists would receive a great reward in paradise.²⁹³ Members actively studied martyrdom and expressed their desires to die as martyrs amongst each other.²⁹⁴ One *Waarheid*-member was recordedly excited about the martyrdom mission he wished to embark upon.²⁹⁵

During the past decade, the Dutch jihadist constituency has actively sustained its own heroic image in several ways. Soufiane's self-labelling as a “fighting journalist” in his documentary *Oh Oh Aleppo* is an example, but songs produced by members of the constituency are even more significant of this self-gratifying behaviour. ‘Undefeatable Ideology’ is an example of indirect glorification.

²⁸⁶ Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 145.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 147-148.

²⁸⁸ AIVD, ‘Leven bij ISIS, de mythe ontrafeld’, 4 ; 7.

²⁸⁹ Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 145.

²⁹⁰ Van der Valk, ‘Islamitisch extremisme in Nederland’, 89.

²⁹¹ Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 156.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 150.

²⁹³ Van der Valk, ‘Islamitisch extremisme in Nederland’, 102.

²⁹⁴ Schuurman, ‘A History of the Hofstadgroup’, 52.

²⁹⁵ Bakker and Grol, *Nederlandse jihadisten. Van naïeve idealisten tot geharde terroristen*, 90-91.

During the entire song, photographs of people fighting in the jihadist movement are portrayed, heroising these individuals in the lyrics. The soldiers are referred to as “lions”, who would rather die than to live under western rule, and as “sons of the *Ummah*” who are eagerly lined up to teach Christians and Jews a lesson.²⁹⁶ A direct ode to the *mujahideen* is found in one of Hafs’ earlier releases. In 2010, he cooperated with Abou Anas and produced ‘*Jundullaah, Soldiers of Allah*’. This Arabic song is accompanied by Dutch subtitles in the YouTube video. It gives the impression of a hymn that glorifies the Islamic warriors that pursue jihad. Hafs and Anas sing that the soldiers of Allah are ready to wage jihad in pursuit of Allah’s satisfaction, success and victory.²⁹⁷ They present jihad as an intrinsic purpose in life by claiming: “we yearn for jihad since our youth”, and argue that jihad is rooted in altruistic motivations by stating: “we sacrifice our capital and lives to combat injustice and unbelief”.²⁹⁸

4.4 Conclusion

The image construction analysed in chapter three arguably resonated among the Dutch constituency, and influenced the behaviour of those identifying with it. Young people that identified themselves primarily as a Muslim started to dress religiously in their daily lives. Some were motivated by orthodox beliefs, others considered it to be a vehicle of provocative rebellion against stigmatisation and prejudice. The fact that all of them consequently encountered discriminatory remarks intensified the radicalisation processes of these individuals. Members of urban networks in Delft and The Hague showed their admiration for jihadists by wearing sweaters with the text “Soldiers of Allah” and waving the flags of Al-Qaeda and ISIS in public. Provocation was important not only in visual appearance, but also in communicating with the Dutch audience: Tweets insulting the AIVD and self-recorded documentaries of their duty as heroic warriors in Syria were intended at criticising the security policy and capability of the Dutch government. Simultaneously, these examples contributed to the image of a dedicated rebel, fulfilling an adventurous destiny in pursuit of the greater good.

The experience of a subculture appears important in the radicalisation processes of Dutch recruits. Many radicals had initially come in touch with jihadist networks through family, friends, and neighbourhood acquaintances. Criminal experience was relevant especially for youngsters from underprivileged urban districts, since it narrowed the gap between their pre-radical lives and joining the radical group. Many of the people who joined became gradually isolated from mainstream society and deeper entrenched in their marginal radicalised group, which contributed to collective legitimisation

²⁹⁶ Hafs, ‘Onverslaanbare ideologie’, 00’44”-00’-48”; 00’50”-00’55”; 02’09”-02’26”.

²⁹⁷ Abou Hafs and Abou Anas, ‘Jundullaah Soldaten van Allaah’ [*Jundullaah, Soldiers of Allah*], YouTube, uploaded by JihaadNasheedNL, 1 December 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2THD1bEfSBo> (accessed on 3 July 2017) 00’26”-00’36”.

²⁹⁸ Hafs and Anas, ‘Jundullaah Soldaten van Allaah’, 00’48”-00’57”; 01’23”-01’27”.

of provocative behaviour, and approval of violence and jihad. The internal cohesion in the group was actively boosted by organising group activities, such as debates, barbecues, and weekend trips.

Expected rewards feature in several ways in the Dutch case study, especially concerning immaterial rewards. The promise of brotherhood, adventure, and a purpose to life motivated several youngsters to attempt to reach the Syrian battlefield. Recognition and glory amongst peers were also important: idolisation of martyrs and other holy warriors motivated recruits to pursue an equally heroic destiny. Youngsters like Soufiane tried to contribute to their own glory by presenting themselves as heroes. The songs published by Abou Hafs contributed to the expectation that *mujahideen* would be rewarded with fame. Material rewards do not frequently appear as a pull-factor in the sources studied. Based on what foreign fighters shared on social media, the idea of a good life in ISIS-territory seems to have been most influential.

This chapter confirms that rebel lifestyle influenced individual radicalisation processes and functioned as an intensifier of social cohesion within jihadist networks in The Netherlands. The leaders of these networks invested in community-building through organising group activities that combined ideological debate with leisure. Thereby they arguably provided the conditions for the group members to radicalise politically while entertaining themselves. Moreover, they invested in the creation of a powerful image and a way to openly adhere to this identity as a means of provocation. In the sense that jihadists deliberately provoked their social environment by symbolically rejecting western society, their behaviour can also be considered a means of breaking with taboos. The image of the *mujahid* as a heroic example was sustained by both foreign fighters who shared their experiences and by their admirers at home.

5. Conclusion

In order to answer the question guiding this thesis, I will first summarise the most important findings of chapter three and four. The studied propaganda items of Al-Qaeda and ISIS first of all promote an image of Islamic group identity, which is based on dignity, pride, power. Muhammad, the *salaf*, and the *mujahideen* are presented as heroic examples. These aspects contribute to inspiring an individual desire to belong to jihadist groups. Secondly, Al-Qaeda and ISIS have branded their group subcultures as defined by heroism, adventure, and glory. Also, both groups use propaganda to glorify the use of violence. This is being justified with religious arguments, which arguably intensifies the polarisation between those who belong to their constituency and those who do not. Thirdly, lifestyle-related rewards are being promoted in ambivalent ways. Although both Al-Qaeda and ISIS reject self-gratification on religious grounds, they make implicit and explicit references to rewards for warriors in their propaganda. Amongst others, warriors are being promised glory, brotherhood, and recognition for their contribution to jihad. Readers of *Dabiq* may even expect that *ghanimah* will be distributed amongst ISIS-warriors.

The analysis of the Hofstadgroup and *De Waarheid* points out that individuals involved in these networks strongly adhered to what they perceived the Islamist identity to be. The *mujahideen* were considered heroes and many aspiring foreign fighters wanted to identify with them. It is evident that youngsters involved in Dutch jihadist networks used their personal idea of jihadist identity as a vehicle to rebel against what they considered the unjust position of the Muslim community in The Netherlands. The second aspect, the collective experience of belonging, appeared significant in these networks, too: social bonds with friends and neighbourhood mates were crucial in the radicalisation processes of several youngsters. Especially the leaders of *De Waarheid* deliberately invested in community-building through organising group activities like barbecues and debates. This appeared effective: members who had reached ISIS-territory stayed in touch with their companions in The Netherlands. Foreign fighters' adventurous stories and photos on social media encouraged jihadists at home to follow suit. Third, Dutch recruits hoped that becoming a jihadist would entail recognition, glory, purpose, and new friendships. Such immaterial rewards appeared more significant than material rewards: the main example of the latter was the promise of houses, good food, and other benefits in ISIS's caliphate.

With regard to the research question "To what extent does rebel lifestyle play a role in propaganda distributed by contemporary terrorist organisations, and in the behaviour and radicalisation processes of their (potential) recruits?", these findings confirm that Al-Qaeda and ISIS deliberately used the rebel lifestyle as a strategic recruitment tool. Their narrative of rebel lifestyle is rooted in a discourse of heroism, glory, and adventure. The groups used this narrative to legitimate their own existence, to stimulate a sense of community, and to persuade targeted recruits to join them.

This narrative resonated in their Dutch jihadist constituency, who wished to identify themselves with their heroes and expressed their loyalty through clothing, songs, and social media posts. Moreover, radicalisation amongst this Dutch constituency was often influenced by their shared subculture, and by lifestyle-related motivations. As such, the rebel lifestyle was not a one-dimensional narrative that the larger terrorist organisations advocated: it was a dynamic concept that inspired behaviour, could intensify the sensation of belonging, and was sometimes strategically employed to this end by both leaders and followers within the networks. Even though ideological motives and lifestyle-related motives arguably coexist in radicalisation processes, it thus stands out that lifestyle plays a more influential role in these dynamics than has been acknowledged in academic research until today.

My research points out that identity and image construction posed an important component in both recruitment strategies and for radicalised individuals' self-perception. For example, the heroic example of the *mujahid* was sustained by both foreign fighters who shared their experiences and by their admirers at home. This corresponds with Ingram's claim that identity narratives and an increasingly polarised worldview are crucial in radicalisation processes: Al-Qaeda and ISIS connected an absolute approach to good and evil to their perspective on the jihadist identity. For youngsters involved in the Dutch networks, their allegiance to the group identity was pivotal for their perspective on violence. This also relates to Anderson's idea of the imagined community: because these youngsters perceived themselves as belonging to the prestigious *mujahideen*, they were prepared to legitimise the use of violence. In extreme cases this resulted in real involvement in violence, like fighting in the Syrian civil war and the murder of Van Gogh.

Subculture appeared important in Al-Qaeda and ISIS-propaganda and for the Dutch constituency. The rebel culture was promoted as one of heroism and glory, which corresponds with Bowyer Bell's conceptualisation of underground culture. Moreover, the terrorist organisations leveraged collective experiences to intensify the desire of targeted recruits to become a part of this subculture. This can be clarified with Brubaker's approach to groupness: because the terrorist organisations recognise the value of a support base and the fact that internal cohesion is subject to change, they constantly invest in group-bonding through propaganda. Within their Dutch constituency, the leaders of the jihadist movements applied a similar strategy: they organised group activities to intensify the experience of belonging.

As for the prospect of rewards, contributing to a revolution could fulfil individual ambitions: it promised glory, prestige, recognition amongst peers, and for several recruits filled the void of the purpose in life they were seeking. Moreover, the prospect of new friendships was an important factor in fulfilling personal social needs. The studied propaganda items promoted such lifestyle-related rewards in ambivalent ways, and they were shared amongst the Dutch constituency. These findings confirm Bjørge's conclusions that social needs like friendship and confirmation by others can stimulate individuals to pursue the fulfilment of these needs through membership of a radical group. Especially when they believed that they had low chances of achieving a better future in the society

they were living in, the step to isolate themselves from society and rebel against it instead was small. Hence, nuancing the assumption that self-gratification is completely irrelevant to most terrorists seems appropriate.

Although many parallels exist between the lifestyle narrative of Al-Qaeda and ISIS and that resonating within Dutch jihadist networks, some crucial differences can be distinguished as well. For example, violence as inherent part of the jihadist identity and subculture was emphasised vocally in the propaganda published by Al-Qaeda and ISIS, but seems to have not been prioritised equally by their Dutch followers. Violent incidents, like the clash around the arrest of Hofstadgroup-members and the murder of Van Gogh, occurred at a later stage in the radicalisation processes of those involved. Foreign fighters did expect to become involved in violence on their missions, but the violence itself seems to have been less influential in their decisions to go to Syria than the adventurous warrior culture they associated it with. Violence thus appears to have been more fundamental for the leaders of the terrorist organisations, than for their constituency. Another example is the perspective on material rewards: especially ISIS rejected *and* promoted the pursuit of self-gratification in an ambiguous way, which ties in to both their religious roots and their view on western society as driven by consumerism and other earthly desires. However, my study does not imply that material rewards were important for precisely this western constituency in The Netherlands. To some extent, the promise of a better life in ISIS-territory seems to have been relevant – but only after ISIS could use its proclamation of a caliphate to its advantage. This might either imply that material gain simply was not considered as important, perhaps because material needs in The Netherlands were not so dire, or that jihadists have not been open about this factor because earthly desires are in contradiction with the religious prescriptions that define their movement.

Following Della Porta and Pekelder in arguing that terrorist organisations need a societal support base to legitimise themselves, as representatives of their constituency and as the vanguards of their movement, it is worth to take a closer look at the relation between lifestyle and politics in these dynamics. For example, Al-Qaeda and ISIS stimulated the sense of belonging by creating a powerful image of themselves, with which recruits wanted to identify. In that, exemplary heroes like Muhammad and the *mujahideen* were cleverly used as a connection between ideology and lifestyle. The Dutch networks similarly invested in the creation of a powerful group image and a way to openly adhere to this identity as a means of provocation: expressing an individual's conformation to the group image via dress code was also considered a political rejection of western society. Another example is the leisure activities that *De Waarheid* organised to stimulate group bonding: these arguably provided the conditions for the group members to radicalise politically while entertaining themselves. Al-Qaeda and ISIS have cunningly intertwined their lifestyle-propaganda with their religious narratives, from which they derive justifications for their acts. Thereby, they succeed in blurring the lines between ideological and non-ideological frameworks. For instance, although both criminality and material

rewards are denounced by orthodox Islam, ISIS held an ambiguous view of the latter and is known to promise criminals forgiveness for their sin if they support the group.

This politicisation poses a striking parallel with the historiography of the West-German New Left groups that helped develop my analytical perspective on rebel lifestyle. Both New Left and jihadist networks used idols and heroes in a similar way: to set powerful examples that posed a connection between apolitical aspects of lifestyle and the political struggle they were waging. Recruits desired to identify with these heroes and became prepared to meet the terrorist organisations' demands, such as accepting the use of violence. The adventurous rebel lifestyle, and the influence of social bonds on engagement in militant behaviour are other examples of parallels between these ideologically incompatible groups. More importantly, rebellion has to a certain extent been defined by the lifestyle of the rebel group. Just as New Left movements were consciously flirting with taboos, Al-Qaeda and ISIS connect their heroes and broader narrative to values and practices that are criticised or illegal in western democracies – and present this as resistance against oppression of their true identity. It thus seems that the analytical framework developed in this thesis is indeed applicable regardless of ideological background.

However, I explicitly do not propose that the influence of lifestyle implies that ideological motives are irrelevant in radicalisation processes. Rather, this research points out that ideological motives are not the exclusive starting point for radicalisation: legitimising rebellion with an ideology like jihadist Salafism can enter the process at a later stage, when individuals have already distanced themselves from society. In my case studies, religion provided an alternative worldview that radicals would eventually adhere to, but was not necessarily the *primary* instigator for rebelling against the society they were living in.

As a reflection upon my method, it must be mentioned that the three components of rebel lifestyle that I identified are not always strictly distinct. For example, sometimes individual and collective experiences of belonging overlapped. Also, rewards like finding purpose and recognition were partly intertwined with experiences of belonging. A second point of reflection is that this research covered only a specific part of the radicalisation process. This was the point where individuals, personally or collectively, seek connection to an identity narrative, and consider rejecting established values, breaking taboos, and creating a counter-identity satisfactory vehicles to carry out their rebellion. My conclusions on the relevance of rebel lifestyle in this process might be confirmed or challenged if the scope of this research is widened to a later stage of radicalisation: to what extent do lifestyle-related motives and political motives overlap or even overrule each other in the phase of actually fighting as a member of a terrorist group? This did not fit within the scope of my research, but might definitely enhance insight on the topic of rebel lifestyle.

Plenty of opportunities for further research on the topic of rebel lifestyle exist. First of all, the scope of the radicalisation phase could be widened: what happens “one step ahead” down the radicalisation path: which lifestyle changes are required if you aspire to become a member? Are these

actively promoted by terrorist groups as well? Another suggestion is to look at what potential implications lifestyle-related pull-factors may hold for deradicalisation processes. Can they be effectively applied to improve counterterrorism policy? In the context of contemporary developments, it might also be promising to study the role of lifestyle in the targeted recruitment of youngsters. Recent studies confirmed that young people in western societies appear vulnerable to terrorists' cunning recruitment strategies. It might be valuable to conduct research on this topic with an interdisciplinary approach, for instance in cooperation with social scientists.

Finally, I would like to point out that, since the idea of a rebel image and lifestyle can be considered a pull-factor in radicalisation and recruitment, scholars and policymakers should take lifestyle-related motives into account when dealing with these issues. Lifestyle is particularly relevant in the early stage of radicalisation, when individuals have not necessarily resorted to violence yet. Therefore, it could be valuable to take this into account when constructing counter violent extremism policies.

6. Bibliography

6.1 List of abbreviations

AH-TK	<i>Aanhangsel van de Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal</i> (record of meetings of the House of Representatives of the Dutch Parliament)
AIVD	<i>Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst</i> (General Intelligence and Security Service)
BZ	<i>Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken</i> (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
ICCT	International Centre for Counter-Terrorism
NCTV	<i>Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid</i> (National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism)

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