THE BROAD-BASED APPROACH TO COUNTERTERRORISM: ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT, AND STATE OF AFFAIRS

No one is born as a terrorist. Before someone decides to risk one’s own life and the lives of others by pursuing a political or religious goal with the use of violence, he or she will go through a radicalisation process. This basic idea forms the basis of the so-called ‘broad-based approach’ in Dutch counterterrorism policy. The aim is the early recognition of radicalisation processes in groups and individuals in order to prevent them from committing terrorist violence by means of targeted intervention strategies. In respect of those who have already made the move to commit acts of violence or who are on the point of doing so, other types of interventions of a more repressive nature are required. The fact that terrorist groups encourage radicalisation processes and use them to recruit new followers, and that government action against terrorists in its turn can also influence radicalisation, shows that there is a strong substantive relationship between both domains of counterterrorism policy, and that a coherent approach is required.

By now, the broad-based approach has served as a guideline for Dutch counterterrorism policy for approximately ten years and has also gathered a considerable number of followers at the international level (Great Britain, Germany, European Union, and even the United States\(^1\)). The term has turned up in many policy documents, parliamentary papers, and annual reports, but, remarkably, a document detailing all the aspects of the broad-based approach does not exist. The result of this is that the term has been used or interpreted incorrectly fairly often, for instance by construing the term ‘broad’ as the involvement of a vast number of parties in the policy area. So far, the boundaries of this domain have also not been demarcated clearly until now. Although the broad-based approach originally related to the phenomena of terrorism, recruitment, and radicalisation in general, an overconcentration on the issue of radical Islam dictated by new developments has resulted in the fact that in some people the view has taken root that the broad-based approach allegedly related - or should be related - to this specific part of the counterterrorism field.

This document will outline the origin, development and scope of the broad-based approach, with the aim of giving this line of policy a more solid foundation, of updating it, and of providing it with a clearer demarcation so that it will continue to be usable as a strategic guideline for Dutch counterterrorism policy, in the future, as well.

Origin

The foundation for the broad-based approach to Dutch counterterrorism policy was already laid down by the General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) at the end of the last millennium. In a time when little attention was as yet being paid to the security risks of radical Islam in Dutch society, the AIVD already warned political circles and society in several of its public and annual reports about ‘the dangers of an ideology-based position adopted by small numbers of radical Muslims in the Netherlands, with the aim of waging the Islamic war (jihad) against paganism in a vigorous way.’ According to the AIVD, the detrimental effect of their actions with respect to the image of Islam and consequently to the integration process of Muslims in the Netherlands should not be underestimated either.\(^2\) This warning from 1998 was followed in 2001, six months before the attacks of 9/11 in the United States, by the assessment that Dutch society, too, was a breeding ground for terrorism. For the longer term, the AIVD saw, at that time, the risk that a social divide along ethnic dividing lines would cause frustrations which could create a breeding ground for radicalism and extremism. The AIVD assumed ‘a certain continuum between failing integration, intensified segregation, increased polarisation, and violent confrontations.’\(^3\) In this constellation, account was taken of the risks of radicalisation on the part of both Muslims and non-Muslims.

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The views of the AIVD with regard to the existence of such a continuum increased the need to graft Dutch counterterrorism policy onto these views. The problem encountered in this context was that, in the Netherlands, counterterrorism as a social problem had slipped into the far background after the turbulent seventies and eighties, and that there were hardly any policy areas that dealt with this matter. It did not take long, however, before the observations of the AIVD were translated into policy documents through its actions. Due to a serious incident concerning two boys originating from Eindhoven, who had travelled to Kashmir to join the jihad at the end of 2001 and who were killed in a confrontation with Indian troops, a wider circle also came to realise that in the Netherlands too, there were young people who were becoming radicalised and who could be recruited by terrorist organisations. This also led to a general acceptance of the necessity of identifying and stopping the radicalisation processes at an early stage, as well as of depriving recruiters of the chance of getting a grip on young people who were open to their influence. In several answers to parliamentary questions, the term ‘broad-based approach’ was used for the first time; it was described as ‘an approach to prevent radicalisation processes from developing into the most extreme form of radicalism, namely terrorism.’

The emphasis of this broad-based approach was initially on measures tackling recruiters, as the most concrete ‘brokers’ between radicalising individuals and terrorist networks. This was also apparent from the policy letter sent to the Lower House of Parliament on 9 December 2002 by the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations accompanying the presentation of the public report of the AIVD ‘Recruitment for the jihad in the Netherlands, from incident to trend.’ In this letter, the Minister stated that the measures for tackling recruitment were an important way to intervene at an early stage: ‘In order to achieve this, the recruiters will be stopped, wherever possible, by judicial means, efforts will be made to help those who had been recruited to turn away from their disastrous undertaking, those who provide inspiration will be called to account, and radical-Islamic networks will be dismantled.’ The local and judicial authorities were also expected to give special attention to sermons inciting hatred, and discriminating statements made in mosques, on videotapes and audio-cassettes, and through the Internet. In addition, alien law would be used to keep out or remove radical Muslims from the Netherlands.

The substantiation for this line of policy is furthermore apparent from the report of a General Consultation with the Lower House of Parliament about the report of the Committee on the Intelligence and Security Services (CIVD), which took place on 30 January 2003. With reference to the case of the Eindhoven boys, the Minister Remkes of the Interior and Kingdom Relations stated that this incident had exposed a disturbing development of a terrorist threat against the Western world from the inside. It showed that some Muslims residing in the West appeared to be extremely susceptible to radical ideas, in particular second or third-generation young people who were experiencing an identity crisis. The radicalisation process was furthermore encouraged and exploited by terrorist cells. This problem analysis had caused the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations to opt for ‘early intervention in the “preparatory phase”, identifying and combating the processes of radicalisation and recruitment on a broad front.’

The development of international terrorism after 11 September 2001 and the ensuing effects on the rule of law in Europe in general and the Netherlands in particular resulted in the fact that the Minister of Justice, as well, started to involve himself intensively in counterterrorism policy, a domain that is traditionally considered to be his primary responsibility in the Netherlands. It became increasingly clear that the seriousness of the terrorist threat demanded the realisation of a number of new laws, regulations, and legislative amendments. In addition to this, new or amended partnerships and agreements were required between the various actors in this field, both in the policy and operational field. The policy document ‘Terrorism and the Protection of Society’, which was presented to the Lower House of Parliament by Minister Donner of Justice on 24 June 2003,

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provided a policy framework for a large number of measures to be taken in this field. Against the background outlined above, it is not surprising that the emphasis in this document was on amending the statutory instruments and organisation of, in particular, the repressive aspect of the broad-based approach. With regard to prevention, he furthermore pointed to the importance of civic integration ‘as an element of a broad-based approach aimed at the prevention of radicalisation and extremism in our society.’

The repressive and preventive aspects of the broad-based approach were linked conceptually together and placed in a context for the first time in the same month – June 2003 – in an article on counterterrorism in the Netherlands (‘Contraterrorisme in Nederland’), which was published in the Police Journal Het Tijdschrift voor de Politie and written by the former Director of the Democracy and Rule and Law Department of the AIVD (currently the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV)), Erik Akerboom. In this article, Akerboom puts prevention first: ‘Counterterrorism consists to a significant extent of recognising and, where necessary, gaining control over radical cores and networks, and early identification and prevention of radicalisation.’ New to the substantiation of the broad-based approach at the time was the attention for the security risks of polarisation. Akerboom pointed to the purposeful strategy of radical groups to realise a divide between the Muslims who had taken up residence here and the rest of the population, to thwart integration, and to create religion-based differences between the Muslims and their non-Islamic environment.

Akerboom concisely described the broad-based approach as efforts to counter terrorism, not as an isolated phenomenon, but in combination with associated phenomena of radicalisation and recruitment. ‘For interventions to be effective, the signs must be recognised at an early stage. In counterterrorism, a varied set of instruments is furthermore used that includes political, administrative, and financial, criminal, and disruptive means, which will have to be used individually or in combination.’ As the strategic response required in this context, the former Head Counterterrorism at the AIVD presented the so-called ring model, which distinguished between the surrounding society, sympathisers, supporters, and terrorists. In his article, Akerboom argued for strategies tailored specifically to these rings, which together were to result in effective Dutch counterterrorism policy.

On 30 September 2003, the Standing Parliamentary Committees on the Interior and Kingdom Relations and Justice held a joint meeting on terrorism. The debate and the answers to unanswered questions that were sent to the Lower House of Parliament on 20 November 2003 revealed that the Lower House of Parliament had accepted all aspects of the broad-based approach, and that it had adopted this approach as a starting point to assess the plans of the government in this field. A new element that was added from the Lower House of Parliament by Labour Party member Kalsbeek was the necessity of a ‘well-thought out communication strategy.’ Both Ministers endorsed the necessity to inform Dutch society well and to alert them to terrorist risks. They also stressed the importance of the political and social debate on terrorism and the manner in which the government should counter terrorism. This was to increase the necessary resilience of the population, and in particular that of the Muslim communities, against radicalisation and terrorism.

Further developments of the broad-based approach

The bloody attacks on the underground and several trains in Madrid on 11 March 2004 marked a new phase for Dutch counterterrorism policy. Now that the threat had also manifested itself on the European continent, an increasingly stronger urgency was felt to link the many lines of Dutch counterterrorism policy with the actors who had to implement these lines. This assignment was given to a National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb, currently the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV)) in the person of Mr Tjibbe Joustra, who was assisted by an office with the same name. In keeping with the broad-based approach which had been used until then, Joustra had to perform his activities for both the Minister of Justice and the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, ensuring that the repressive and preventive aspects of this

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8 Lower House of Parliament 27 925, no. 94: Letter of the Minister of Justice.
10 Lower House of Parliament 27 925 no. 104: Letter from the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations.
approach could be linked together in the best possible way. Even before the Coordinator was able
to detail his plans, the Netherlands itself was hit by a terrorist attack. The murder of Theo van
Gogh, on 2 November 2004, showed in a gruesomely manner how the radicalisation of a young
person who had grown up in the Netherlands could result in a terrorist act being committed within
a relatively short period of time. With such a concrete manifestation of home-grown terrorism, it
was evident that even more strenuous efforts had to be made than before to include the
prevention of radicalisation as a basic element of Dutch counterterrorism policy.

The legal instruments that had been tailored to terrorism in the previous years currently proved
their value during the investigation and prosecution of the network of which the murderer of Van
Gogh had been a part, and of similar associations. This set of instruments was, however, not
appropriate for combating radicalisation. The intervention strategies should not be imposed by the
Ministry of Justice, but had to be developed by local administrators, with the cooperation of many
organisations in the area of the police, welfare, and education. It was therefore obvious that the
Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations took the lead in this development. A new public
report of the General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD), titled ‘From Dawah to Jihad’, which
was sent to the Lower House of Parliament on 22 December 2004, proved to be very useful.11 This
report revealed the connection between radical sermons and violent actions of jihadists and
consequently provided an important conceptual framework for the policy-related elaboration of the
broad-based approach.

The preventive aspect of the broad-based approach, i.e. the measures to combat radicalism and
radicalisation, which had somewhat been lagging behind the elaboration of the repressive
counterterrorism measures, was elaborated further in the document ‘Radicalism and
Radicalisation’. This document was written by the Strategy Development Department (DAJS) of the
Ministry of Justice, and sent to the Lower House of Parliament on 19 August 2005 by its Minister.12
A month earlier, various bombs had been set off in London in the underground and on a bus. These
attackers were also Muslims who had grown up in the West and had radicalised in Great Britain.
This further underlined the urgency to continue to make serious efforts to combat radicalisation.

With reference to the DAJS document, the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and the
Minister of Justice therefore sent a letter to the Lower House of Parliament on 29 September 2005,
in which they announced a long series of measures.13

The letter on radicalisation from both Ministers included several concepts that would influence
further elaboration and application of the broad-based approach. First of all, radicalisation and the
broad-based approach were not confined to Islamic radicalism. Also two other forms of
radicalisation that could be observed in society at the time, namely right-wing radicalism and
animal rights extremism, were included in this policy. This further underlined that the broad-based
approach did only relate to radical Islam, but was also aimed at other ideologies that involved the
risk of further radicalisation into terrorist violence.14 The murder attack on Pim Fortuyn by an
environmentalist had confronted the Netherlands with the dangers in this area as early as 2003.

A second concept that was elaborated in the letter from the two Ministers to the Lower House of
Parliament and that was based on the above-mentioned AIVD report ‘From Dawah to Jihad’ was
that radicalisation did not necessarily end in terrorist violence. The AIVD also highlighted other
forms of radicalisation that adopted the strategy of intolerant isolationism instead of violence to

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11 From Dawah to Jihad. The Various Threats of Radical Islam to the Democratic Legal Order General
Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD), Leidschendam, December 2004.
12 S358374/05/AJS Document on Radicalism and Radicalisation (Nota radicalisme en radicaliseren). Strategy
Development Department (DAJS) Presented to the Lower House of Parliament on 19 August 2005.
13 Lower House of Parliament 29 754 no. 30: Letter from the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and
the Minister of Justice, 29 September 2005.
14 The applicability of the broad-based approach to all radical movements also took shape in the public
campaign ‘Netherlands against Terrorism’ of the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb), which also
touched upon animal rights extremism in one of the campaign spots. The Minister of Justice and the Minister of
the Interior and Kingdom Relations answered critical questions on this subject from the Party for the Animals by
stating that this message had to be viewed in the light of the broad-based approach in Dutch terrorism policy.
realise a political or religious goal. According to the AIVD, such non-violent forms of radicalisation, which turned down the democratic rule of law, also involved security risks, although these risks were not found in the area of terrorism.

All this does not affect the fact that there is often considerable interaction and overlap between the different forms of radicalisation, and that examining and combating these forms of radicalisation will only be effective if they are combated in connection with actual terrorism. That is why the NCTb and its organisation have adopted the phenomena of radicalisation and terrorism, linked together in the broad-based approach, as starting points for the substantiation of the task since the institutionalisation of its coordinating function in January 2005. As regards the contents, the Coordinator’s choice is supported by the Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands which was drawn up for the first time in May 2005 and has since been sent to the Council for National Security (currently the Council for Intelligence and Security Services) every three months. This Threat Assessment is made and adopted on the basis of an assessment of recent developments regarding both terrorism and radicalisation, in which the aspect of polarisation is also considered. In this context, polarisation is not considered a threat, but a factor that may influence radicalisation.

In keeping with this substantiation of the broad-based approach, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations presented a ‘Polarisation and Radicalisation Action Plan 2007-2011’, which stated how the government intended to prevent, impede, and control polarisation and radicalisation. ‘If a radicalisation process is not deflected or curbed, in the worst case scenario there is the risk that a person or group will use violence and commit a (terrorist) attack,’ read the most important argumentation for the action plan. The plan placed much emphasis on the necessity of counter narrative, in order to encourage resilience against radicalism and terrorism also from one’s own community or environment. With the action plan (which ran until 2012), the broad-based approach was also given a full counterpart on prevention, in addition to the repressive component, with the amendments to laws and regulations and the expansion and equipment of the competent agencies in this field. By now, the entire policy has clearly paid off, if the successful approach to recruiters, the dismantling of the different networks, and the fact that new attacks have not occurred in the Netherlands may be qualified as such, just as the small number of new followers for terrorist networks which operate in and from the Netherlands, and the small number of jihad travellers compared to surrounding countries.

Although not new, the phenomenon of the radicalised individual has become increasingly more prominent as a terrorist risk in the past few years. The broad-based approach provides conceptual starting points for a preventive approach in this field, too. At the same time, it should be noted that it is even harder to identify individual or ‘solo’ radicalisation than to detect radicalisation processes of persons who interact with their environment. Some form of risk reduction may at least also be achieved by increasing the possibilities of early detection in this field as well by providing indicators, and zooming in on specific risk domains.

The broad-based approach in 2012
It would appear that the attention for the terrorist threat in politics and society will be substantially reduced in 2012, not in the least because of the influence of the economic crisis which keeps everyone occupied nowadays, and by the absence of new manifestations of terrorist violence in Europe. Yet, there is still a terrorist threat, although it has been ‘limited’ for a considerable time. New dangers are looming on the horizon, also with terrorist risks. The broad-based approach should therefore be left as it is and also be used for new threats that involve risks of further radicalisation into terrorism. This could be right-wing extremism, but it could also be animal rights

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16 The scope and function of the Terrorist Threat Assessment Netherlands is confirmed once again in: Lower House of Parliament 31 200 VI Adoption of the budgets of the Ministry of Justice, no. 2: Explanatory memorandum.

17 Lower House of Parliament 29 754 no. 103.
extremism or ideology-based radicalism which might find a breeding ground in the current economic slump.

A continuation of the broad-based approach requires the following elements:

- Continued vigilance for the dangers of terrorism. Experience shows that terrorists take their time to prepare their acts, and prefer to strike at times when a society thinks it is safe (again).
- An open and alert attitude towards the risks. In the past, counterterrorism measures were fairly often a response to a previous attack, and were subsequently surprised by attacks from an entirely different corner. By focusing one’s attention not only on terrorist acts but also on a broad area of radicalisation processes (as the broad-based approach implies), tunnel vision is prevented and the possibilities of proactive intervention are increased.
- The willingness of all parties and organisations involved to continue to view and curb the dangers of radicalisation and terrorism together and to provide information on this subject and exchange views.
- A sharp awareness among all parties and agencies that operate in the area of counterterrorism that the efforts must always be proportional. This applies in particular to interventions in the area of radicalisation, where the use of judicial means is not primarily required, but developments should be curbed in a more subtle way. If proportionality in this area is lost sight of, this may result in increased radicalisation.
- For the purpose of combating radicalisation, it is important to gain more in-depth knowledge about the relevant ideologies. Once the roots of the ideas and actions of the followers of radical views are exposed, it will be easier to develop strategies to realise delegitimising measures and a counter-narrative.
- More knowledge about and attention for the Umfeld, in which radical views thrive, and the discussions about inadmissibility of violence will increase the possibilities of encouraging a counter-narrative and resilience within these circles themselves.
- The importance of the Internet for the spread of radical ideas and stirring up radicalisation processes should not be underestimated. Moreover, the Internet has become by far the most important means of propaganda for terrorist groups by now. For this reason, the government should follow the ‘Internet community’ closely and continue to develop new strategies to curb excesses.
- In this information era, the importance of communication about terrorism and radicalisation should not be underestimated. Now that the public campaign against terrorism has been behind us for several years, different – or new – ways should be used or created to keep the population alert to and aware of the risks.
- Terrorism and radicalisation are outstanding examples of cross-border phenomena. The international division of tasks and cooperation which have been achieved in the area of counterterrorism in the past few years require maintenance and revision. Now that various countries have developed a form of broad-based approach, it is important to ensure that this approach is also reflected in the areas in which cooperation is sought and entered into. The establishment of increasingly more coordinating agencies such as the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV) in other countries provides important opportunities to achieve this.
- The development and deradicalisation programmes will continue to be of great importance. This will enrich counterterrorism policy with an important new means of intervention, of which the effectiveness for the long term must, however, still be proved.

In Conclusion

Finally, it is feared that the economic crisis and the advance of xenophobe parties and groups in Dutch society will result in increasingly tense social relations in our society, with all the associated risks in the field of confrontations and outbursts of violence. In this field, the broad-based approach requires all parties involved in counterterrorism policy to have an ‘open mind’ and a sharp eye for radicalisation trends and the ensuing risks, irrespective of their nature and background. If they succeed in this, the broad-based approach will also prove its special value in the next decade.

P.A.
The Hague, 3 January 2012