

Summary

This report addresses the complex relation between crime on the one hand and violent radicalism and terrorism on the other. Complementary to the existing literature on the nexus between criminal and terrorist organizations, this report deals with the individual and his or her immediate social environment. The research aims to provide (1) an overview of the possible individual level links in the scientific literature between crime on the one hand and violent radicalism and terrorism on the other hand, (2) an analysis of the Dutch context, yielding insight in the applicability of the identified links for understanding the relationship between crime and salafi jihadist radicalism in the Netherlands.

Accordingly, the present report addresses the following questions: (1) What individual level links are assumed in the scientific literature between crime and criminal behavior on the one hand and violent radicalism and terrorism on the other? (2a) Does the literature on crime and violent Salafi jihadist radicalism in the Netherlands suggest a relation between crime and criminal behavior on the one hand and violent radicalism and terrorism on the other? (2b) and if this relation exists, how can it best be described?

An overview of the links between the two phenomena as described in the scientific literature may help to form a balanced picture, and contributes to focused research questions for the study of specific cases. This report is divided into two parts. After an introductory first chapter, Chapter 2 focuses on the links between individual criminality and violent radicalism and terrorism as described in the academic literature. In Chapter 3, the identified links are further examined in relation to the Dutch context, particularly in relation to the violent radical Salafi jihadist movement in the Netherlands.

The literature survey of Chapter 2 yields a complex and dynamic picture. The picture is complex, because multiple links between crime and violent radicalism and terrorism are

identified. The relationship between crime and violent radicalism and terrorism is also dynamic, because at different times in the radicalization process different links between crime and violent radicalism may exist. Building on a phased radicalisation model of John Horgan (2007), which distinguishes five stages of radicalisation and deradicalisation (openness to involvement in radical organization, further involvement, role within the organization, carrying out terrorist acts, and deradicalisation) and identifies for each stage relevant variables, the literature review traces the nexus between criminal involvement and violent radical engagement.

Several theoretical links are identified:

(1) Crime and violent radicalism are sometimes assumed to have a shared origin in certain personality traits (i.e. thrill seeking and antisocial personality) and shared circumstances in which the phenomena occur (situations of deficient authority, inadequate social services, and lack of interaction with the outside world).

(2) Prisons are sometimes assumed to play a role in the transition from "ordinary" crime to radicalization.

(3) Push factors in combination with pull factors are assumed to direct criminals to join a violent radical organization. Pull factors involve active recruitment by an organization in an effort to acquire expertise. Push factors involve feelings of discrimination and injustice, or a quest for self-respect or purpose in life.

(4) A criminal act is sometimes assumed to be part of a rite of passage within a violent radical or terrorist organization.

(5) Criminals are sometimes assumed to be used by terrorist organizations to carry out illegal activities such as the smuggling of goods, the falsification of documents, or carrying out an act of violence. Criminal organizations are sometimes assumed to use former terrorists who obtained criminal experience within a terrorist organization.

(6) It is sometimes assumed that within terrorist organizations a division of labor occurs, with ideologically committed individuals of the organization providing the leadership and criminals providing operational expertise and survival skills.

(7) Organizational structure of a terrorist organization may be important for understanding the relationship between terrorism and crime at the individual level.

(8) Voluntary or involuntary termination of membership of a terrorist organization could lead to the terrorist individual to develop a criminal career.

Systematic research on the links identified above appears to be sparse. The identified hypotheses are either based on case analysis, or are simply assumed without any reference or empirical basis. In many cases, a statement is illustrated by a single example. It remains unclear whether these examples generalize to other terrorist organizations. Follow up research, that systematically assesses the identified hypotheses among multiple individuals of multiple organizations, may reveal the empirical merit of the suggested links.

The assumed links in the scientific literature described in Chapter 2 at least provide a meaningful direction to study specific cases. Chapter 3 uses the suggested links to analyze the case of salafist jihadism in the Netherlands. Especially in relation to crime among young Moroccan-Dutch Muslims, the prevalence of jihadism appears to be limited. This suggests that for many young Muslims in the Netherlands, crime is certainly not a step towards jihadism. A good job and care for family are perceived as a more attractive alternative to crime than joining a violent radical organization. There seems little "bottom-up" movement from crime to violent radicalism. Recent research based on police reports does appear to indicate a top-down movement, whereby a terrorist organization or a leader within the organization relies on an executioner to achieve the organizations' goals. This executioner, possibly someone with criminal expertise, must be receptive for the mission of the leader.

By describing the identified theoretical links and evaluating the links in the light of their empirical basis and a case, the gaps in the understanding of the crime-terrorism link(s) become visible. These gaps can direct future research.

The gaps not only relate to content but also the methodological aspects of the research.

Perhaps herein lies one of the main conclusions of the report. The vast majority of research lacks the systematicity to elucidate the link between crime on the one hand and terrorism and radicalization on the other hand. A prerequisite for such a systematic approach is a nuanced definition of the concept of crime, and recognition of the complexity of the concepts of terrorism and radicalism. An important step towards a nuanced picture of the link between the two phenomena is made when various manifestations of crime and various types and stages of violent radicalization are placed against one another in a single design. It is opportune to also take into account within the same design, conditions in which there is no crime and radicalization. Above all, to assess within this structure the relationship between crime and violent radicalism, it seems of importance to interview those involved rather than to rely on secondary sources.