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Threatened identities:
the interaction between
anti-Islam movements and
radical Islam

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1 Introduction

On 10 August 2014 the nationalist organisation 'Pro Patria' wanted to organise a march through the Schilderswijk area in The Hague, to demonstrate against the alleged Islamisation of this neighbourhood, and against Dutch jihadis who support the IS terrorist organisation. Police intervention prevented a violent confrontation between Pro Patria supporters and inhabitants of the Schilderswijk, which included several radical Islamists. This event in the Schilderswijk coincided with growing tensions in other parts of Europe that led to foiled terrorist attacks in Germany and the United Kingdom. As a result, The National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security commissioned the WODC (Scientific Research and Documentation Centre of the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice) to conduct a scientific study into the interaction between anti-Islam movements and radical muslims.

The researchers shifted their focus from movements and organisations to *fields*. The two movements are seen as opposing fields, i.e. social arenas in which one fights for appropriation of economic, social and cultural capital. Both fields are centred on specific interests. Both the 'anti-Islam field' and the 'radical Islam field' are extremely dynamic. Groups, organisations and networks come and go. Therefore the research focuses on the interaction between these organisations, as well as on the interaction between actors in the anti-Islam and radical Islam field.

2 Method

The following questions were crucial in the research: What is the interaction between the anti-Islam field and radical Islam field like in the four countries studied? To what extent does this interaction lead to polarisation and radicalisation of attitudes and action repertoires? Can escalation be detected? Which mitigation measures do governments in the countries studied take, and which lessons can be drawn for the Netherlands?

The conducted research includes an exploration of scientific literature, a comparative analysis of the four countries (Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Belgium – Flanders in particular), expert interviews, and an analysis of social media relevant content (Facebook and Twitter) in the four countries being examined.

Among other things, we based our choice of countries on the citizenship regime and the absence or presence of powerful anti-Islam movements or political parties. France and Flanders have a relatively strong political supply and a relatively weak movement supply. France does however have '*laïcité*', a strong movement against the fusion of religion and politics. Until the arrival of *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) Germany had a relatively weak political supply and a relatively strong movement supply. In the United Kingdom both political party supply as well as movement supply were absent for a long time, but with the rise of the *English Defence League* a strong movement emerged. However, this movement soon lost strength.

The research has some limitations, partly due to a restricted budget. This meant that the amount of literature that could be researched was limited. Furthermore, not all of the experts we approached were available or willing to collaborate. Also, sources in some

1 For literature references, see full report.

foreign languages, such as Arabic, could not be investigated, due to the language barrier. Moreover, in the online analyses we focused on Facebook and Twitter, and not on other social media platforms. And lastly, no research was conducted on the relationship between online and offline activities; this would have required an additional study.

3 Analytical framework

The two fields which were researched are not free-standing, but are embedded in a wider context which influences the fields and the interaction between the fields. Contextual factors, which we define as citizenship regimes and political and discursive opportunity structures shape the fields, as well as the actors in the fields in terms of their choices and developments. The citizenship regimes and political opportunities in question define the claims made by citizens, and define the discourse of existing and upcoming anti-Islam political parties and social movements. The researchers' basic assumption was that each country has anti-Islam sentiments, making the demand for anti-Islam more or less constant. Furthermore, international developments are included in the analysis.

3.1 (Inter)national context

International developments influence the anti-Islam and radical Islam field. The threat or terrorist attacks by jihadists, as well as the sexual assaults in Cologne on New Year's Eve in 2016 were a central theme in anti-Islam discourses. These events are referred to in order to support the argument that 'Islam' is a threat, and that action is necessary. International events are also a source of inspiration in radical Islam discourses. Radical Muslims see the reactions of western countries on the conflict in Israel as proof that western politics uses a double standard. A substantial amount of them sees the founding of a Muslim caliphate as the main goal. The situation in Iraq and Syria influences thus the interaction in the four countries examined.

3.2 Citizenship regimes

A citizenship regime refers to the degree to which cultural and religious groups get the space to practice their religious or cultural identity and practices. We identify two dimensions of citizenship models, *the accommodation of group rights* (monism vs pluralism), and *the access to citizenship rights* (right of soil, or ethnic vision [*jus soli*] vs right of blood, or civic territorial [*jus sanguinis*]). According to these dimensions the four countries studied were identified as follows: Germany combines an ethnic vision with a cultural monist vision (so is 'assimilationist'), France combines the monist vision with a civic territorial vision (so is 'universalist'), and Belgium (Flanders) and the UK combine cultural pluralism with civic territorial vision (so they are 'multiculturalist'). In France and Germany there is thus less space for religious and ethnic group identities, whilst in Belgium and the UK there is more space for these group identities.

3.3 Structure and political and discursive opportunities

The radical Islam field is subject to fast changes; due to repression, organisations disappear fast or carry on under another name. This applies to all four of the countries researched, and was confirmed by the online analysis. A lot of the radical Islam actors that we found in our literature study, were untraceable online. This was the case for almost all of the organisations and persons that were referred to in the literature study, in all four countries.

Institutional and discursive political barriers and opportunities determine the extent to which a political party or social movement can mobilise anti-Islam sentiments. If political parties mobilise and channel that sentiment there is less need for social movements to do so, according to Hutter (2014).

3.4 Direct and indirect interaction

The interaction between radical Islam and anti-Islam can be direct or indirect, and regulated or unregulated. Directly regulated would be for instance a television debate between the two parties; directly unregulated would be a confrontation between two demonstrating groups. Indirect interaction can entail either referral or non-referral. An example of indirect non-referral is when legislation limits the freedom of movement of a group; an example of indirect would be when there is referral to a negative post about the other organisation. All these forms of interaction can lead to escalation, whereby discursive and action repertoires polarise and radicalise. When this occurs online, which is nowadays often the case, the risk of polarisation and escalation is greater, due to the fact that the Internet lowers the threshold.

This is the analytical framework which is used to demonstrate the context, the two fields, and the interaction and escalation between the radical Islam field and anti-Islam field in the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Belgium (Flanders).

4 United Kingdom

4.1 Context

The United Kingdom traditionally has a cultural pluralist citizenship regime, with a relatively strong emphasis on, and space for, group rights and the interests of minorities, including the Muslim community (4.8 % of the total population).

On a political level far right and anti-Islam parties are only marginally represented. An explanation for this could be the electoral system and a strong civil/liberal oriented political culture.

4.2 Anti-Islam field

At the far right side of the political spectrum, far right splinter parties such as the *British National Party* are active. They claim that radical Islam poses a threat and fear Islamisation of the UK. They try to obtain political legitimacy and credibility in the formal, electoral arena. However, the anti-Islam noise manifests itself primarily in terms of social movements. A prominent organisation is the *English Defence League* (EDL), although at the time of writing it no longer plays an important role. They claim there is a threat from radical Islam, but also warn of a wider danger of the 'Islamisation of the UK', to which the 'establishment' and the 'left' have contributed. The action repertoire consists of demonstrative actions, like street protests ('march and grow') and confrontational actions. A new player is *Britain First*, an organisation that combines street activism with political participation. The high profile cases of Pavlo Lapshyn and Zack Davies, two 'lone actors' who committed violence against migrants, spring to mind. Both acted as individuals and were not directly linked to EDL.

The organisation EDL has by far the most prominent online presence in the UK, partly because many local branches of the EDL are active on Facebook. Furthermore, in contrast to

the other countries examined, the British anti-Islam actors form a dense network. This can explain why calls for action spread through the country so rapidly.

4.3 Radical Islam field

The radical Islam field in the UK has a fluid and fragmented character. At the same time, there are some ideological umbrella organisations that play a more constant role. In the last 20 years the most important one was *Al-Muhajiroun* (AM), founded by the former leader of the international organisation *Hizb ut-Tahrir*. AM has been dissolved, but under influence of leader Anjem Choudary various new follow ups have arisen, like *Islam4UK* and the international *Sharia4network*.

The discursive repertoire of the above-mentioned groups consists of emphasising the oppression of Muslims, and the double standards of the 'Western world'. They are in favour of the founding of a caliphate and introduction of Sharia law; Hizb ut-Tahrir Muslim countries only, the other types also in the UK. They reject democracy. Part of the action repertoire of Al-Muhajiroun is 'Spectacle activism': spectacular activism which has generating as much media attention as possible as its primary goal. The British media landscape plays a facilitating role. Furthermore, 'lone actors' in the margins of the movement have committed terrorist attacks, and via the Sharia4-network there is a recruitment network encouraging young people to leave for Syria and Iraq. Besides, there are grassroots networks inspired by IS and Al Qaida.

Compared to the network of anti-Islam actors, the radical Islam groups are barely linked to one another. They form a strongly fragmented network. Radical Islam groups tend to isolate themselves from more moderate or other types of groups and discussion pages.

4.4 Interaction and escalation

There are several examples of direct interaction between the radical Islam field and the anti-Islam field in the UK. The founding of EDL was a direct reaction to a protest action by members of Islam4UK. Another example of direct interaction are the 'Muslim' and 'Christian patrols'. For the anti-Islam movement (radical) Islam is a central opponent, whereas for the radical Islam field international developments are a greater motive.

The intensification of the debate surrounding Muslims under the influence of the anti-Islam movement comes under indirect interaction. On the other hand, within the radical Islam discourse this is used as 'proof' of the oppression and exclusion of Muslims, and forms a basis of recruitment for Jihadist networks.

An escalation of violence, such as the hate crimes against Muslims in the aftermath of the murder of Lee Rigby, as well as terrorist attacks (respectively inspired by EDL and AM), stem mainly from the margin groups of the movements.

5 France

5.1 Context

The principle of 'laïcité' determines the interaction in France and the shape of anti-Islam movements, which can be placed within the universalist citizenship regime. It means that the public domain should remain free from religion, and that the laws of the republic are what count. Since the beginning of the 21st century the focus in public and political debate in defence of 'laïque' values has been more and more on Islam. It had previously

been the political left that had defended *laïcité*, but since the ‘headscarf debate’ in 2004 it has also gained the attention of the political right, with an emphasis on Islam and its threat to the French republic.

Furthermore, we see that in the global radical Islam field France is seen as an important opponent. Reasons are its military presence in a large number of Islamic countries, the repression of French Islamists, and the ‘*laïque*’ policy, which has led to a ban on wearing a headscarf in the public domain.

5.2 Anti-Islam field

The most important player in the anti-Islam field is the *Front National*, now led by Marine Le Pen. Other actors in the anti-Islam field are the ultra-‘*laïque*’ *Riposte Laïque* and *Bloc Identitaire*, in which the political left and right join each other to defend the ‘*laïque* values’ of France, mainly opposing Islam and the presence of the perceived large numbers of Muslims. A dominant image is that Muslims plan to take over the country, and on a wider scale: the whole of Europe. In the action repertoire we see mainly a focus on the identity threat of Islam and the presence of Islamic symbols, for instance, with the organisation of public provocative events with pork as food.

However, if we take a look at the interaction, the most important actors in the anti-Islam field consist of ‘ultra-*laïque*’ opinion makers, including for example *Charlie Hebdo*.

The Facebook analysis shows that the prominent actors online differ little from the most visible actors offline. The online network shows that most of the Facebook pages are linked to the *Front National*.

5.3 Radical Islam field

On the radical Islam side, the most important existing actors are linked to *IS* and *Al Qaida* related networks. Besides that, there are a few organisations in the field that could be categorised as being more orthodox. An example of the latter is the *Union des Organisations Islamiques* (UOIF), which plays a role in indirect interaction. The biggest threat comes from ‘lone actors’ or small groups that are inspired by the radical discourse they tap into by getting in touch with others via social media. The action repertoire of these Jihadist groups consists mainly of the battle for a caliphate in Iraq and Syria. Besides this, France is also one of their targets, and there is a realistic risk that the ones that fought in Syria and Iraq go on to commit an attack on home ground, or inspire others to do so, as we have seen with the recent attacks on the editorial staff of *Charlie Hebdo* and the ones which took place in Paris in November 2015.

The French imam *Rachid Abou Houdeyfa* is also very active online, but it is questionable to what extent he can be called radical. He rejects violence, and supports an open debate between the Muslim and non-Muslim community.

5.4 Interaction and escalation

As a prominent far right party, the *Front National* influences the interaction between the anti-Islam and radical Islam field. This does not leave much space for social movements with similar agendas. On the one hand the political party has channelled anti-Islam sentiments, on the other hand the party has contributed to the normalisation of anti-Islam noise in politics and media.

The interaction between the radical Islam field and the anti-Islam field mainly consists of indirect interaction. Anti-Islam actors are focused mainly on Islam and Muslims in a

broader sense. Vice-versa, radical Islam actors target France (and the West) in general more, whom they blame to be anti-Islam. Besides, the 21st century has witnessed interaction between radical Islam actors and ‘ultra-laïque’ actors; such as *Charlie Hebdo*. This resulted in an attack on *Charlie Hebdo* editorial staff in 2015.

The most significant threat of anti-Islam violence in France doesn’t arise from organisations, but from individuals who are on the margins of the anti-Islam field, who legitimise their acts with the discourses of the above-mentioned movements, and the normalisation of an anti-Islam noise in politics and media. When discussing radical Islamic violence, the international context of the ‘War of Terror’ cannot be ignored: radical Islam actors use the attacks of Western countries on countries such as Iraq and Syria as a legitimisation for their use of (terrorist) violence against western countries, including France.

6 Germany

6.1 Context

For a long time far right parties could not gain a foothold in Germany, partly because of the deep political aversion against everything that looks like national socialism, and Germany’s role in the Second World War. A factor that plays a role in the international situation is Germany’s contribution to the war in Afghanistan.

6.2 Anti-Islam field

Not long ago a right wing party called *AfD* came onto the political scene. During one of its congresses it took an explicit anti-Islam stance. The most important anti-Islam organisation in Germany is *Pegida*, a strong movement in comparison to similar ones in the other three countries. It wants to oppose the Islamisation of Europe (‘the Occident’) and see terrorist actions as a threat, but they also fight against an ‘unlimited expansion’ of Islamic culture, and against the establishment that would collaborate with it.

Just like offline, the German online network consists of several anti-Islam actors, *Pegida*, *NPD* and *AfD* being the most prominent. *Pegida* has a central position, while the pages for *AfD* are further away from the other clusters. This shows that *AfD* has less affinity with the ideology of the other groups.

6.3 Radical Islam field

Equally, the international context influences the German radical Islam field, with links to Uzbek networks (related to German support for the dictatorial Uzbek regime, the Uzbek-Turkish relations, and the relatively high number of Turkish-German migrants), with Al Qaida inspired networks and German youngsters that join IS in Syria and Iraq. The discursive repertoire is similar to the other countries, with an emphasis on the oppression of Muslims. The action repertoire consists of ‘spectacle activism’, its goal being to create and mobilise supporters, and to claim public space. Furthermore, several terrorist plots were dismantled, in several cases the motive for the perpetrators being the distribution of Mohammed cartoons.

6.4 Interaction and escalation

There are not many examples of direct confrontations between actors from the anti-Islam field and the radical Islam field. The demonstration at the Pro-NRW electoral campaign,

where Mohammed cartoons were shown, is the only one known to the researchers. The various acts of violence committed by actors from both fields were not so much aimed at specific actors from the opponent fields, but more in the wider field; for instance non-radical Muslims. Right wing extremist violence (including anti-Islam), such as setting fire to mosques or refugee centres occurs relatively frequently in Germany in comparison to other countries. In Germany too it's mostly done by actors who are on the margin of the movement; Pegida, for example, officially rejects violence. Like the other countries, the interaction in Germany is mainly at an indirect and discursive level, and in both fields 'the enemy' is stretched into a major section of the society.

7 Belgium – Flanders

The long-standing presence of Flemish nationalism is particularly relevant when describing interaction in Belgium: the conviction that Flanders should be autonomous. This 'Flemish movement' has a far right wing, characterised by ethnic nationalism and the rejection of Belgium as a nation state. The strong organisational structure of this movement offered a structural framework in which the *Vlaams Blok* – 'Flemish Block' (and later *Vlaams Belang* – 'Flemish Interest') could emerge. The discourse of the *Vlaams Belang* (VB) has normalised over time; this partly influences the way that in public and political debate Muslims, and Islam, are portrayed as a problem for Belgium, often without a distinction between Islam and radical Islam.

7.1 Anti-Islam field

An important player in the anti-Islam field in Flanders is the *Vlaams Blok*, and its successor *Vlaams Belang*. Besides Flemish nationalist values, the focus of their discourse is on the failure of multiculturalism and the threat of a growing number of Muslims in the country, with Islam seen as being fundamentally radical.

The action repertoire of this party consists of methods which are within the law. Moreover, it is striking how the former party leader, Dewinter, had a dominant media presence, implementing mediagenic and controversial actions, for a considerable length of time. Furthermore, like in France, we see a perceived threat of Islamic customs, with symbolic actions which are targeted at them. The influence of the *Vlaams Belang* has decreased during recent years; at this moment in time the *N-VA* is the biggest party with a Flemish nationalist agenda, but has a more moderate attitude towards migration issues.

There are no prominent anti-Islam organisations. *Vlaams Belang* is supported by the organisation *Voorpost*. Besides, Pegida is a new, albeit marginal, player.

The online field of anti-Islam actors is limited, and basically only consists of Pegida Flanders.

7.2 Radical Islam field

In the Belgian radical Islam field there are several actors that have played a role in the interaction. The biggest threat comes from youth who went to Syria and Iraq, and subsequently returned. Belgium proportionally has the highest number of young people that went to these countries (at the moment of writing between 400 and 500).

The most prominent radical Islamic group in Belgium was *Sharia4Belgium*, which has meanwhile dissolved. It played an important role in initiating the departure of young people for Syria and Iraq. The discourse is based on the British *Al-Muhajiroun*, with the

implementation of sharia as a goal, seen as a solution for the perceived oppression of Muslims by the West. The action repertoire of Sharia4Belgium is similar to that of its British counterpart, implementing mediagenic controversial actions. Actors related to the organisation are linked to threats and the terrorist attacks in Brussels in March 2016.

In addition, there are some actions that are not connected to the above-mentioned groups, but which could be placed in the radical Islam field, and are legitimised by radical Islamic discourse. These are for instance the attack on the national Jewish museum in Brussels and the attacks in Paris (November 2015), committed by Moroccan-Belgian jihadists.

Like in the other countries examined, the above-mentioned radical Islam actors are no longer traceable online. The Flemish online radical Islam network is relatively big in comparison to the other countries, and it is fragmented. A prominent organisation within the online (radical) Islam network is *Al Mawada*, although we would not define it as radical.

7.3 Interaction and escalation

Worth noting is that in Belgium there has been (and is) a relatively strong direct/indirect, regulated/unregulated interaction between actors in the anti-Islam field and the radical Islam field. Two specific actors who played an important role are Sharia4Belgium and Vlaams Belang. Furthermore, also in this case the interaction is between the wider fields, i.e. 'the Islam' and 'the West'.

Furthermore, the presence of a far right political party influences the context in which the interaction takes place. The anti-immigration and anti-Islam discourse both became normalised under the influence of the Vlaams Blok/Vlaams Belang.

Escalation in the form of violence was mainly carried out by actors in the margins of one field, aimed at the wider opponent field, like 'Westerners' or 'Muslims', examples being the attacks in Brussels (March 2016) and violence against Muslims. Since 2012 two anti-Islam actions per week take place.

In addition, some escalations took place within the wider (radical) Islam field, resulting in what was perceived as unjust, and anti-Islam or racist acting of the state.

8 Social media analysis: comparative network analyses of Facebook and Twitter

Besides Facebook analyses of the two fields in the four countries, an analysis of the Twitter debate before and after the Paris attacks in November 2015 was carried out. In doing so, tweets before and after the attacks were compared. The most significant finding of these online analyses is that, just like offline, most of the interaction is indirect. In all of the investigated countries, the online discussion in both the anti-Islam field and the radical Islam field express a perceived threat of their culture and identity by the 'Other'. These messages and reactions about the out-group's 'threatened identity' are mostly indirect; they discuss the 'Other' but are not addressed to the 'Other'. A clear distinction between moderate and radical Muslims is rare.

Consequently, Muslims and Muslim organisations function as an object, not as a discussion partner. So more or less separate online communities co-exist, which have a relatively large number of strong links, but hardly any links actually between each other. The result is a so called ‘*echo chamber effect*’: one doesn’t read messages from other online communities and thus doesn’t get exposed to ‘counter voices’.

Supporters of anti-Islam movements often target *non*-Muslims. Indignation and criticism are aimed at the government or political establishment. On radical Islamic Facebook pages we see a similar image: it’s mostly ‘Western countries’ or ‘the government’ that are targeted. Government is thus an important third party, because it is held (partly) responsible for the ‘threatening of the identity’. The implication of this finding is that the legitimacy of the government is an important indicator of defensibility against extremist discourses, for both sides! The Twitter analysis before and after the attacks in Paris (2015) shows that after the attacks the focus shifts from refugees and migrants to Islam and Muslims. The tone didn’t change; this was already negative, with the crudest language in the UK and Flanders.

9 Analytical comparison between the countries examined

Following the online and offline analyses, we can conclude that the interaction between the anti-Islam field and radical Islam field is a *transnational phenomenon* that occurs in all of the four countries examined. On an international level the war in Iraq and Syria plays an important role at the time of writing: in the radical Islam discourse (the injustice that is done by the West against innocent Muslims), in the action repertoire of youth who left, and came back to Europe, and in the network structure. Besides a transnational nature it also has an individualised character, i.e. individuals radicalise individually via the internet, and involves primarily ‘lone actors’ and grassroots networks: networks that emerge relatively spontaneously, consisting of family and friends, inspired by jihadist discourse, and with the expertise of people that went to Syria (or other conflict areas) and received training. Radical Islam organisations are scarce, but that doesn’t mean there isn’t a radical Islam field. The radical Islam field is characterised by a fluid and fragmented network structure, with small cells. Organisations come and go. The field is transnational, diffused and fluid.

The anti-Islam discourse also has a transnational character, with an important role in the war in Iraq and Syria.

Although the transnational character shows parallels in the four countries, this doesn’t apply to the *national context*. *Citizenship regimes* and *political opportunity structures* varied between the countries, and caused the transnational phenomenon to obtain a local colour. In France the Front National and the ultra-laïque field is far-reaching (in both politics as well as media), because it can tap into two major French frameworks (nationalism and laïcité). In Flanders Flemish nationalism creates frameworks for more extreme forms of nationalism, with a prominent presence of Flemish nationalist parties (Vlaams Blok/Vlaams Belang) since the beginning of the 90s. Both contributed to the channelling and normalisation of anti-Islam discourse. Under the influence of these developments in both countries there is a ban on the headscarf in state schools (France) and various types of other schools (Belgium). For a long time there was a big taboo on everything related to the far right in Germany, due to its role in the Second World War. Consequently, and because of the German electoral system, far right parties lacked political opportunities. However, social

movements with a more radical character were able to emerge. More right wing extremist violence (including anti-Islam violence) takes place in Germany than in other countries. Despite the lack of a big political anti-Islam party in the UK, anti-Islam discourse has become normalised, partly influenced by the media.

There is relatively little *direct interaction* between the two fields in the four countries. Direct confrontations were most prominent in Germany, like the demonstration during Pro-NRW's electoral parade, and the numerous personal threats. They also occur relatively frequently in Flanders, for instance the threats to the Vlaams Belang carried out by Sharia4Belgium, and the disturbing of gatherings from both sides. In France the direct interaction, escalation and radicalisation took place between radical Islam and the ultra-laïque field. The attack on *Charlie Hebdo* is an example. In the UK one failed attack is known to us. Although terrorist attacks against the oppositional fields are few, the attack on, for instance, *Charlie Hebdo*, had a big national and international impact.

For the most frequently occurring forms of interaction we have to look further than direct interactions in which actors from one field aim at specific actors from the other field. Most of the interaction is *indirect*, by referring to the other in the discursive domain, and through influencing the context in which the other manifests himself. In reference to the latter, we can think of 'de-tabooisation' of the anti-Islam discourse, modifications in policy and law, modified political agendas and increased media attention. Most of the indirect interaction takes place in the discursive domain, whereby one field refers to the other field. These references between specific anti-Islam actors and radical Islam actors took place several times, the most prominent ones being in Flanders (including Sharia4Belgium and Vlaams Belang), and France (between radical Islamic actors and Charlie Hebdo). In these specific cases there is a longer standing interaction, with a big visibility of the actors on both sides.

9.1 Threatened identities: interaction between anti-Islam and radical Islam

If we look at the general interaction picture, we see that radical Islam primarily plays a central role in the anti-Islam field. In the threat scenario which is portrayed, terrorist actions in the name of Islam and changes in society that are due to the demands of radical Muslims are the focus. Anti-Islam emphatically brings up radical Islam in their argument that action and resistance is required. In doing so, Muslims are often generalised, and moderate Islamic organisations are deemed radical. Because of the cultural and terrorist threat of radical Islam, all Muslims are seen as suspects, and Islam as a whole is seen as backwards and reprehensible. Moreover, this anti-Islam sentiment is not unwarranted, and not only based on terrorist violence. Besides these attacks, many people also have a problem with Muslims who want to practice their religion in an 'ordinary' way. The resistance against the building of mosques in all of the countries examined springs to mind. Even before 9/11 (2001) many people had a negative attitude towards foreigners in general, and Muslims in particular. The radical Islam field on the other hand seems to refer less to the anti-Islam field. This is shown in Image 1 with a much thinner arrow pointing from the radical Islam field to the anti-Islam field. Although actors in the radical Islam field sometimes react to specific Islam hostile actions carried out by the anti-Islam field (and outside of it), radical Islam discourse is not determined by the anti-Islam field.

However, this is not the full picture. As we observed in the country chapters, radical Islam discourse is actually inspired by the threat of anti-Islam discourse and anti-Islam actions. However, it doesn't solely target the national actor that we called the 'anti-Islam field', but the whole Western world, which is supposedly hypocritical and anti-Islam. It labels the whole Western world as anti-Islam, which thus constitutes a threat that should be repelled. This demonstrates a parallel with the anti-Islam field, that is directed against the threat of Muslims in a general sense – not just radical or jihadist Muslims. Altogether, there is

interaction, but in a more complex way than direct confrontations between the representatives of both fields. Radical Muslims from the wider Islam field on the other hand target the Western world in general, and the anti-Islam field targets Muslims in general. Both camps however also direct themselves at national governments that respectively neglect to defend Western values, or oppose discrimination of Muslims. Thus overall, the interaction is more balanced than it would at first appear, in that it isn't carried out between the anti-Islam field and the radical Islam field (upper figure), but between two identities that oppose each other (lower figure).

Following this logic, the attacks such as the ones in Brussels (2016) and Paris (2015) can be categorised as direct interaction, since the radical Islam field considers 'ordinary' citizens to be part of the opponent field. And although they are small in scale, the impact of these attacks is huge. Also, violent actions towards 'ordinary' Muslims from the anti-Islam field are categorised as direct interaction.

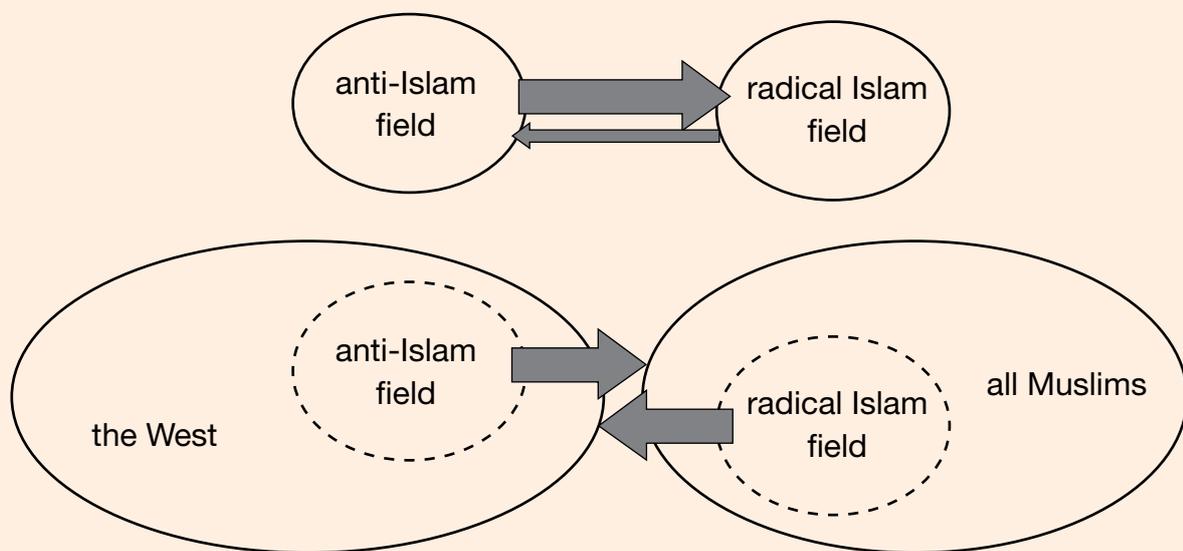


Diagram 1: schematic diagram representing interaction between the anti-Islam field and radical Islam field

But there is more to it. Actions don't always lead to counteractions and continuing escalation. This might be the case for the anti-Islam field, preoccupied as it is by the (radical) Islam field, but the radical Islam field does not let itself be provoked by actions carried out by the anti-Islam field. Furthermore, it's not necessarily the statements or actions from both fields that lead to radicalisation. After all, both discourses refer to parts of society that are bigger than the opponent field. So not just the statements by the anti-Islam field or radical Islam field radicalise interaction even further, but also statements and actions which come from the establishment. In fact, the statements and actions which come from the establishment will fuel the radical Islam field. They function as an illustration of the hypercriticism and anti-Islam attitude of 'the West', that is seen on the whole as a threat to Muslims. The anti-Islam field on the other hand, is not fed by jihadist actions only. For example, even before it was clear who had committed them, the sexual assaults in Cologne were used as proof that Islam incites transgressive behaviour. Besides, we see that the anti-Islam field reacts to politics and media, and radicalises in reaction to the feeling that they feel disadvantaged by them – they believe that they suppress their problems, and they support the Muslims.

What role does social media play in the interaction between the anti-Islam field and the radical Islam field? Our *a priori* division of countries into strong/weak party and/or strong/weak movement based on offline indicators (seats in parliament/ street protests) matches

what we see online. Furthermore, our analysis of anti-Islam Facebook pages shows that all actors that were prominently visible offline, were also visible online. The situation for radical Islam is more complex. In Germany online and offline actors are similar, but in the other three countries this is not the case.

Furthermore, the lack of reciprocal links shows that political parties and social movement operate relatively separately. Although they were not taken into account in the original research plan, the November attacks in Paris offered a special opportunity to investigate the relationship between ‘tweets’ and ‘streets’. To what extent did the attacks (streets) influence online debate (tweets). Obviously, this influence was big in France. In the other three countries however, this was limited; national and international topics drew more attention. Besides, the hype was soon over; within a few days social media returned to the order of the day. The reverse question is just as interesting. To what extent does online discourse influence what happens on the ‘streets’? Does intensive activity online mean that intensive action offline will follow? We were unable to answer this question, because we didn’t monitor offline action. Furthermore, the relationship between online and offline would require additional study, and besides, the data we obtained from studying literature is about past events, whereas data obtained from online study is about the present. We have not yet heard the last word on this, partly because the scarce empirical studies contradict each other. Some researchers didn’t find evidence for the claim that internet catalyses the process of radicalisation (Von Behr and colleagues, 2013), whereas others claim that social media can be a catalyser for violent extremism (Pauwels e.a. 2014)

This debate is related to the so-called channelling theory, which claims that discourse (online and offline) has a channelling function, i.e. that a strong online discourse lowers the chance of radical action offline. It is claimed that social media has a so-called ‘cathartic’ function. Social media channels anger, so people feel less inclined to express their anger offline. Our analysis shows that the opposite is also true, namely that (online) exposure to anti-Islam discourse (or radical Islam discourse) could cause actors from the margins of the movements to feel legitimised to commit violence against Muslims (or ‘Westerners’). In a polarised climate ‘lone wolves’ and grassroots networks on the radical Islam and anti-Islam side feel they are backed up by radical Islam and anti-Islam discourse respectively in their decision to commit violence against the ‘opponent’ field. For example, violence against women with headscarves, the murder of Muslims, or the setting fire to mosques by the anti-Islam field, and the attacks in Paris (November 2015) and Brussels (March 2016) by the radical Islam field.

Besides, due to a normalisation of anti-Islam discourse, the channelling of anti-Islam sentiments by political parties can in the long term contribute to successful radical Islam recruitment. The intensification and normalisation of the anti-Islam climate can be used by jihadists as propaganda, and extra proof of the increase of oppression and exclusion, which can function as a catalyser for radical Islam recruitment.

10 De-escalation

In the expert interviews about governmental mitigating measures, several points came up. The governments in the countries examined don’t seem to have an explicit, specific policy for preventing an escalation of interaction between the actors from both opponent fields. Reactions to the risk of escalation come primarily from long term policy. The distinction between dialogue (‘community policing’) and law enforcement (‘repressive policing’) is relevant here. France has more of the latter, while the other countries also have successful

community policing programs. The most important conclusion is that an approach based on dialogue is proven to be effective, but that at the same time a 'moderate' approach can contribute to a rise in tensions and radicalisation on behalf of the opponent side. After all, a moderate approach is 'proof' for them that authorities are less strict towards others. The image of an unequal and disproportional police approach just adds fuel to the fire in terms of the radicalisation of individuals or groups. It contributes to a consolidation of the anti-establishment sentiment, which is already strong amongst radical actors on both sides.

At the same time a repressive approach can in the short term lead to the decline of (violent) protest, but in the long term it can lead to more intense radicalisation or militarisation of groups and individuals. There are indications that this is the case for Germany; the ban on far right organisations caused far right wing radicals to become creative in finding a way to carry on regardless, despite the ban. We see the same process with Al-Muhajiroun in the UK, which when confronted with a ban, found new strategies to re-emerge under a different name. De-escalation requires an approach whereby the police enters into dialogue with the opponents. And it requires a balanced mix between dialogue and repression. Only repression without dialogue seems to have the contrary effect.

The de-escalation of opponent groups will be more successful if both groups are treated equally. Good communication about controversial repressive measures is important in this. It is crucial that authorities explicate their 'equal treatment', and communicate it clearly.

In the different chapters on each country we have seen that a strong 'us'-'them' division, and discourses about the individual role of the victim had a central place in the discursive repertoire of the actors from both fields. Hard repression, arrests and convictions only add to the victim role that both sides use as part of their discursive repertoire, and as a breeding ground for recruitment.

This research is about the interaction between the anti-Islam field and the radical Islam field in the four countries examined. The researchers show that this interaction is one of threatened identities. Both fields feel threatened – as to their identity and culture, and sometimes also physically. On the one hand this identity is rooted in Islamic values, the Ummah, the caliphate and jihad, or the western, 'Jewish Christian' civilisation. On the other hand, it is coloured by international and national events, national citizen regimes and political culture, and the application of de-escalation measures.

