RADICALIZATION: TRACING THE TRAJECTORY OF AN 'EMPTY SIGNIFIER' IN THE LOW LANDS

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In the spring of 2013, the mayors of the Flemish towns of Vilvoorde, Antwerp, Mechelen and Maaseik presented at a largely attended press conference the brochure *Beheersen van Moslimradicalisering: Handreiking voor Beleid en Praktijk* (*Controlling Muslim Radicalization: A Guide for Policy and Practice*). The brochure was a hasty publication that came out a few months after the news about a hundred Belgian Muslims, who had left the country in order to join the fighting forces in Syria against the regime of Bashar al-Assad, had started dominating the news coverage. While the initial reasons for this preoccupation were undetermined, many policymakers and commentators feared that some of these youths could return to take up arms against the local authorities – something that would be proven a few years later with the attacks in Paris in 2015 and Brussels in 2016. Yet what seemed to be of a bigger concern for the policymakers were the ideas that informed the youngsters' decision to leave, and which came to be captured by the concept of *radicalization*.

In the definition they offered of the term, the Belgian policymakers understood radicalization as the '*growing ability to strive towards and/or support deep-seated changes in a society that stand in contradiction with the democratic order and/or where undemocratic means are being used*' (p. 9).[1] The definition given by the Belgian policymakers was neither unique nor new, but directly borrowed from the Dutch coordinating agency of security and counterterrorism (NCTV – *Nationale Coordinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid*) which had employed the definition introduced by the Dutch security services (AIVD – *Algemene Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdiensten*) in 2004. When coining the term in 2001, Dutch security officials had hoped to find a concept that would account for the possible relationship they saw between a failing integration of (especially Moroccan) migrants and what they categorized as growing security threats.

While this connection was highly hypothetical at the time of its introduction, the 9/11 attacks and especially the murder of Theo van Gogh in 2004 and the London bombings in 2005 were seen as evidence of this link, which spurred a

further investment into this question. Radicalization thus became understood as a process that precedes the possible usage of violence, and fits within an ever more expanding reach into these preventive measures and policies by the security services. By the time the term, and its definition, had been used in the Belgian brochures mentioned above, it had become a well-established concept in several policymaking circles, the scientific literature and in the public debate throughout Europe.[2]

This book seeks to offer an account of how the discourse of radicalization has been introduced, adopted and disseminated and has reframed practices of power of authorities, scientists, social workers, Muslim preachers and civil actors since its introduction into the Dutch-speaking countries (Belgium and the Netherlands, also referred to as the Low Countries) at the turn of the twenty-first century. This critical take on radicalization, which is more attentive to interrogating the discourses, the policies and their effects rather than alleged forms of radicalization, has been at the heart of several recent scholarly contributions.[3] Over the years, several authors have indeed sought to account for the ways in which the 'war on terror' has come to produce its own discourses, vocabularies and policies which particularly target Muslim populations in the diaspora.[4] Recent scholarship has also addressed the increasing influence of the counterterrorism imperative in other professional fields, such as education,[5] healthcare,[6] social work[7] or prison and probation services.[8] Studies have indeed attended to the important paradigmatic shift that occurred in the discourse on security throughout the nineties, i.e. that the presence of political violence – especially that of opponents – becomes increasingly perceived and explained through the lens of belief systems and ideology, rather than political actions and causes.[9] The discourse of radicalization figures as the most recent articulation and materialization of this shift.

In what constitutes one the key genealogies of the discourse of radicalization, Arun Kundnani critically unpacks the circulation of this master signifier in the English-speaking countries to show how it generates analytical frameworks that fail to account for the political dimensions of the existing social and political tensions.[10] By subsuming these questions to a privileged focus on individual motivations, ideologies and religious views, radicalization becomes conceived of as a 'virus'[11] that can be reinforced by a mobilizing network of friends and theological beliefs and which can ultimately lead to the use of political violence. A similar critical take can also be found in the texts collected by Baker-Beall, Heath-Kelly and Jarvis,[12] who note that radicalization functions as an exonerating discourse that enables politicians to 'externalise responsibilities for, and the origins of, political discontent'.[13] The authors similarly highlight how the latter circulates through the construction of a religious, racialized Other. Building upon this critical turn, this edited volume seeks to expand the scope of these studies geographically and methodologically.

Geographically, first, this edited volume takes the Northern-European countries Belgium and the Netherlands, a linguistic ensemble often referred to as the 'Low Countries', as an empirical site to examine the discursive and material circulation of practices and policies around (de-)radicalization. Whereas the region of the

Low Countries carries a historical depth that continues to inform certain political and cultural imaginaries,[14] our interest in this region is more informed by the pioneering role of the Netherlands in the development of the discourses and policies of (de)radicalization worldwide. The influence of the Netherlands on Belgium is materialized in a shared political language that addresses the 'problems' of multiculturalism and integration, as well as a circulation of expertise between these two countries.[15] The bulk of existing studies on radicalization focuses on the UK and English-speaking countries such as Australia or the US. The geographical concentration of these studies, however, only partially reflects the dynamics of the policies' diffusion. The choice of these cases reflects more the domination of Anglo-American scholarship and the easy access to English-language sources rather than the prominence of these countries in the broader counter-radicalization international context. As this book will show, developments in several other European countries, such as France, Austria, Germany, Denmark – and of course Belgium and the Netherlands – have been important, if not more important, at least in the early years, than those in English-speaking countries. The aim of this book is thus not only to shift the analytical lens to understudied geographical regions relevant to the process, but mainly to contribute to de-centring current debates concerned with counter-radicalization policies and their impact, showing the importance of processes that have thus far remained out of sight for an English-speaking readership.

A second aim of this edited volume is of a theoretical and methodological nature, and is to reaffirm the importance of a critical, reflexive approach to counter-radicalization discourse and policies. This book intends to contribute to the often marginalized – yet ever more necessary in the current security context – approach that locates these policies within a broader reflection on the social construction of categories of knowledge and practice. Building on the traditions of critical security studies and critical studies on terrorism, the approach adopted in the current volume does not treat security as a given, but rather as a process.[16] Following the broadening and deepening debates from the 1980s,[17] it conceives of security as more than just the security of states, but as processes that affect individuals and ethnic groups. Building on the linguistic turn of the 1990s brought about by securitization theory, security is viewed as a signifier that is more often than not used to justify exceptionalist politics[18] which extends the notion of what security is,[19] and in some cases brings about new laws and suspends or transforms existing laws.[20] The current volume is however also attentive to the sociological dimension of security discourses and practices, and aware that 'radicalization discourse' does not occur in a vacuum: it is embedded in bureaucratic struggles and technological apparatuses and ultimately reflects the specific visions of social actors that have cards to play in the field of security.[21] As such, the perspective adopted in this book can therefore broadly be defined as 'social constructivist', in that it aims to examine the ways in which terms circulate and come to be used by social actors.

Lisa Stampnitzky explains that examining the social construction of key categories such as terrorism doesn't imply dismissing their empirical validity, but it rather concerns 'asking how problems, concepts and institutions came to be, and

what makes them powerful'.[22] Inspired by this approach, and more broadly by the genetic structuralism of authors like Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault,[23] this edited volume seeks similarly to denaturalize the usage and application of this term by unpacking its genealogical circulation among circles of expertise, and its diffusion at different levels of the state apparatus – not necessarily following a top-down trajectory but rather reinvesting the 'local' as a key site of political experimentation – and finally its translation in specific practices of power. Whereas the concept can be understood as a 'floating'[24] or an 'empty' signifier[25] – that is to say a word that might not necessarily refer to something existing in the real world[26] – in this book we propose to precisely analyse what the notion does, what it enables and how it (re)organizes and reframes the relation between political violence and the government of cultural diversity.

The focus on the Netherlands and Belgium

The Netherlands has played a pioneering role in the conceptualization of the term *radicalization*.[27] The introduction of this term in the 2001 BVD [*Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*] (Internal Security Service) report was explicitly tied with the growing perception that the integration of postcolonial (especially Moroccan) migrants represented a particular challenge, and that the evolution towards a 'multi-ethnic society' could result in security hazards. An explicit reference to this question is made in the 1999 and 2000 BVD Reports, as the necessity to 'signal and (help) prevent threats linked with the integration process' was mentioned as a an important task of the BVD, which also fits in its desire to develop a more comprehensive approach in tackling security issues.[28] This view on multiculturalism, as a possible problem and threat, was not isolated but resonated with a broader change in the public rhetoric on cultural diversity that took place throughout the nineties and early noughties. Like several other Western European countries, the Netherlands attracted a significant number of migrants after the Second World War. Although the presence of migrants was initially tied to a shortage of labourers in the country, the worldwide recession from the seventies and the end of the Cold War produced an international climate wherein immigrants – especially from Muslim countries – were increasingly viewed as suspicious. In the context of the Netherlands, this was reflected in a growing questioning of the institutionalized presence of Islam. In line with the model of pillarization that prevailed in the country, Muslim minorities (often of Moroccan and Turkish background) had set up mosques, schools, civic organizations and media that explicitly aimed at catering to the needs of Dutch Muslims. The idea that migrants and their culture pose a danger was however asserted from the earliest days of the Dutch minority policies.

The idea of danger initially pertained mainly to the idea that migrant cultures were a potential threat to the rule of law. For example, as Duyvendak and Scholten show, in the early eighties, members of the WRR [*Wetenschappelijke raad voor het Regeringsbeleid*] (The Scientific Council for Government Policy) had concerns

about the relationship between 'cultural diversity' and the 'rule of law'.[29] According to them, the rule of law was the result of the codification of 'cultural achievements' – something that had to be protected. The 'compatibility of Islam and the rule of law' was challenged, and it was believed that a 'conflict of values and norms' could emerge. After internal deliberations, the threat presented by migrant cultures was acknowledged, but only conditionally. Rather than assuming such a threat was all pervasive, the WRR thus stated that the danger migrant cultures could present might occur when conflicts came about and, if this were to occur, 'cultural achievements' would have to be defended.[30] Later, during the nineties, political parties across a broad political spectrum questioned whether an increase in 'cultural diversity' would threaten social cohesion.[31] The involvement of the WRR in the early years and later on was also significant, as it helped politicians to treat the incorporation of migrants as a non-political issue that could be dealt with in a technocratic, problem-solving manner.[32] The idea that the culture and practices of migrants – and in particular Islam – posed a problem was also vehiculated by influential Dutch protagonists such as Frits Bolkestein (in the early nineties) and Pim Fortuyn (in the late nineties) who played a significant role in challenging what they considered as a period of 'laissez-faire' towards cultural diversity in general, and Islam in particular. This discursive shift towards a 'new realist discourse'[33] will state that a 'politically correct' attitude towards cultural diversity and Islam prevailed for too long, and that now the time for a more critical attitude had come. A strong attachment to liberal-secular values, combined with a growing hostility towards the presence of religious (and Islamic) norms within public life would characterize this new form of *parler-vrai* (frank discussion). Although this idea of the Netherlands as having been too accommodating and lenient towards any form of cultural diversity has been deconstructed and challenged by a number of analysts for being fraught,[34] this perspective would nevertheless continue to circulate and be adopted by politicians and analysts to discharge what they consider to be 'apologetic trends' within progressive milieus.

The southern neighbour of the Netherlands, Belgium, equally faced similar challenges related to the presence of cultural diversity at the turn of the twenty-first century. Like the Netherlands, Belgium also welcomed a significant number of migrants from North Africa (Morocco) and Turkey throughout the sixties and seventies. And although the country doesn't count as many Islamic schools as the Netherlands, the official recognition of Islam by the Belgian state in 1974 did result in the active inclusion of this religion in the Belgian institutional landscape.[35] From the eighties onwards, several tensions related to migration started capturing the public attention – especially through (and because of) the electoral successes of the right-wing party Vlaams Blok, an offshoot of the Flemish nationalist movement that would achieve important electoral successes from 1988 until 2004. Several analysts have described how the rise of this movement lay equally at the basis of a more generic semantic shift towards migration – which became increasingly viewed and framed as a problem.[36] In their important work *Debating Diversity*,[37] Jan Blommaert and Jef Verschueren describe how the dominant frame that prevailed in popular media and state politics throughout the late eighties/

early nineties drew on a similar set of presuppositions that considered 'migration towards Europe' as 'dramatic and exceptional'.[38] The dominant ideology that informed these policies – and that they describe as *homogeneism* – drew on a monocultural understanding of Belgian and Flemish society, which consistently marked 'others' as a possible threat or pollution to the social fabric that could only be overcome through integration. This was, in particular, the case for '*moslem cultures*' (i.e. Turkish and Moroccan migrants) whose values were consistently seen to conflict with those of the West. Their study furthermore shows how this ideology of *homogeneism* even extended to diversity-promoting institutions such as the Royal Commissariat for Migration policy, installed in 1988 right after the first electoral success of the Vlaams Blok. In the trainings offered by the institutions, migration is primarily approached and conceived as a problem and a general attitude was adopted that sought to curtail the cultural beliefs and practices of the minorities – especially when they were Muslim.[39]

The Flemish-Belgian and Dutch discussions on the multicultural model were, however, not entirely cut off from one another but were often deeply interlaced and interacting. A clear example can be found in Paul Scheffer's seminal essay 'Het Multiculturele Drama' published in 2000 in the Dutch daily *NRC Handelsblad* which provides a telling example of how critiques on multiculturalism circulated across the border to reinforce local dynamics. In this essay, Scheffer challenged what he viewed as a 'politically correct attitude' in the Netherlands. His critique not only gained resonance in the Dutch media but was also hailed by 'progressive' and 'left-wing' Flemish intellectuals who felt that a similar 'politically correct attitude' had been nurtured in Flanders in order to counter the electoral successes of the Vlaams Blok.[40] The 9/11 attacks, the escalation of the 'war on terror' and the murder of Theo van Gogh in 2004 would give further credence to the already circulating idea that the failure of integration not only poses a problem for social cohesion, but that it might occasionally also result in real security threats. Another example is the emergence of the Arab European League (1999–2005), a civil rights' movement created in the late nineties in Antwerp and which reverberated throughout the Low Countries and had chapters both in Belgium and the Netherlands.[41] A brief reference to this movement is noteworthy because of the importance this organization had in channelling some of the societal tensions on multiculturalism and security at the turn of the twenty-first century. The movement was an offshoot of the *Federatie Marokkaanse Verenigingen*, an established Belgian-Moroccan cultural organization in Antwerp, and gained national attention through its provocative stances – especially by its leader Dyab Abou Jahjah – on integration and racism. The organization also garnered quite a lot of media attention in the Netherlands and created its own local chapters there. Some of its actions consisted of the monitoring of police violence towards ethnic minorities and various anti-war and pro-Palestinian demonstrations. They also ran for the regional elections in 2003 on a joint ticket with the communist party (PVDA – Partij van de Arbeid). Its outspoken anti-racist and anti-Zionist positions were, however, considered controversial and Dyab Abou Jahjah was also briefly arrested on the accusation of having instigated riots in November 2002 (these claims were later proven unfounded). The climate of suspicion and criminalization that existed around the Arab European League lead to an active listing by both the Belgian and the Dutch security agencies.[42] The Dutch Christian-Democrats and the party of the late Pim Fortuyn (Lijst Pim Fortuyn) also called for banning the organization in the Netherlands in 2004.

The (inter)national trajectories of an 'empty signifier'

While the notion of 'radicalization' with its connotations of failed migrant integration, urban relegation and marginalization, religious fanaticism and ultimately political violence is not new, it has recently acquired an overwhelming pre-eminence in media and political discourse in Europe. As Baker-Beall, Heath-Kelly and Jarvis have suggested, we do, as we write this introduction, live in what could be defined as an 'age of radicalization'.[43] The omnipresence of the term however should not stop us from tracing its genealogy, and specifically how from its origins in the intelligence circles of the Netherlands, it gradually infiltrated the European policy arena in Brussels, ultimately finding its way into the everyday of ministries of interior and justice, prison and probation services, education boards and city councils across Europe and the world.

The Dutch counter-radicalization discourse and expertise, known as the 'comprehensive approach' (*brede benadering*) that had developed between the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s,[44] was promptly imported in the UK in the aftermath of the London bombings of July 2005. The Dutch influence is such that according to some, it served in large part as the basis for the British 'Prevent' section of the UK's comprehensive 'Contest' counterterrorism strategy devised under the leadership of Sir David Oman. It is only then, as Rik Coolsaet shows in more detail in Chapter 1 in this volume,[45] that counter-radicalization, as a particular structured project of broadening counterterrorism to societal actors beyond the law enforcement circles, broke onto the European scene with the British presidency of the Council of the European Union. In December 2005, the *European Union Strategy for Combating Terrorism* took up the British strategy virtually point by point, also defining four areas of action: Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Respond. Immediately afterwards, the Council of Europe adopted the *European Union Strategy for Combating Radicalization and Recruitment to Terrorism*.[46] While high policy was decided between ministers and heads of governments, counter-radicalization discourse spread through other, more horizontal networks.

Two networks are of particular relevance and both of them are tightly linked to the Netherlands. The first is the *Policy Planners Network on Countering Polarization and Radicalization* (PPN), a grouping of interior ministry mid-level officials from ten European countries (United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Belgium, Finland, Spain) and Canada, coordinated by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a think tank based in the United Kingdom. It was created in 2008 as a Dutch-British initiative to organize the sharing of

information and 'best practices' among its members, to pool research and expert reports and ultimately to advise the Coordinator for Counterterrorism for the European Commission. The PPN still meets three times per year, and is a space for direct contact between actors that are directly linked to the day-to-day design and monitoring of counter-radicalization policies. The second is the better-known *Radicalization Awareness Network* (RAN), launched by the European Commission in September 2011 as an umbrella organization connecting several networks of actors involved in preventing radicalization and violent extremism (social workers, religious leaders, youth leaders, police officers, etc.). The aim of the RAN, discussed in more detail in the chapter by Rik Coolsaet (Chapter 1 in this volume), is again to exchange 'best practices' and share 'experience' among the different countries (European Union Member States plus Norway).[47] Since the early 2010s, the European Union has developed or participated in other smaller initiatives, such as the network 'Strong Cities'.[48]

While some countries in the EU resisted the notion that terrorism should be framed as a problem of radicalization – France, for example, until 2014 considered terrorism to be purely a law enforcement problem, before performing a 180-degree turn and adopting the Anglo-Dutch position. It has now become the dominant, single discourse through which terrorism and counterterrorism is conceptualized. In 2014, the United Nations (UN) adopted Security Council Resolution 2178, which gave the radicalization narrative a global resonance, and encouraged all UN Member States to adopt preventive policies.[49] The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), a counterterrorism organization launched in 2011 to shadow the UN's counterterrorism efforts, adopted a series of memoranda, listing 'best practices' in relation to radicalization. These memoranda were widely circulated within international organizations and around the mid-2010s, when several regional or international organizations felt they needed to engage in what was becoming a new policy paradigm, these texts served as a basis for many initiatives. The counter-radicalization discourse then started to proliferate: In 2015, the Council of Europe (the Strasbourg-based regional organization of the European Court of Human Rights, which counts forty-seven members, including Turkey and Russia) adopted an 'Action Plan on the fight against violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism' and issued in 2016 the *Guidelines for Prison and Probation Services Regarding Radicalization and Violent Extremism*. In 2016, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) issued a 'guidebook' to community approaches to counter-radicalization,[50] and it is likely that the coming years will bring more handbooks, guidelines and best practices.

Radicalization and/as Islam

Despite its claims to the contrary, there exists a tacit – and at times explicit – link between the use of the term radicalization and the political militancy of Muslims in Europe. In its circulation in policy and scientific circles, and the further conceptualization as a process, the notion of radicalization has been largely

developed in order to account for viewpoints and practices that might be considered as threatening within Islam, although connections have also occasionally been made with right-wing and other forms of militant actions.[51] Several scholars have noted how this focus on Islam and Muslims as threats to social cohesion has triggered a securitization of Islam and Muslims and an 'Islamization of security' – which means that any debate on Islam focuses on the threat it represents and that any debate about security is reduced to Islam. This makes Islam the centre stage in public debates and policies concerning national security.[52] This is certainly not an exclusively Dutch or Belgian development. Recently, several researchers throughout Europe have delved into the issue of the process of securitization of Islam[53] and how radicalization consists of an externalization of violence into racialized 'others'.[54] Transforming a particular social group from being treated as an ordinary political issue into a security matter legitimates the adoption of exceptional measures that may go beyond (or even undo) existing legal benchmarks and rights.[55] But, crucially, at the same time it also allows it to become part of the daily political, bureaucratic security logic.[56] In understanding how such current practices of surveillance seem to find a privileged entrance point towards Islam, it is important to not only situate them against shifting geopolitical conjunctures after the Cold War, which turned political Islam into a new global threat, but to also place them in an older (post)colonial framework, where Orientalist representations of Islam[57] have consistently informed the colonial administration in Muslim territories. Indeed, Hajjat and Mohammed[58] remind us that when French ethnologists, working for the colonial administrations in West Africa in the early twentieth century, coined the term Islamophobia, it was to describe a differential mode of treatment of Muslim subjects based on a view that Islam was fundamentally 'other'.[59] This view extended into several policies – of which the French Algerian civil code *Statut Juridique des indigènes en Algérie* (1865) remains the most telling example.[60] This decree administered the legal rights of the 'indigènes' whereby staunch distinctions were drawn on confessional grounds. Jews were naturalized after 1870, yet a similar naturalization for Muslims as a group remained inconceivable – even for Algerians who converted to Catholicism. One's identity as Muslim was indeed not viewed solely as a confession but something akin to what the French historian Patrick Weil describes as an 'ethnic-political' category,[61] and which strongly conditioned their access to French citizenship.[62] Orientalist representations of Islam as 'other' also fed into how violence was being framed and treated by the colonial administrations. Paul Silverstein describes how violent forms of resistance by Algerians were understood by the French colonials as a reflection of Islam's vindictive nature and the duty upon Muslims to be engaged in a perpetual 'holy war' against 'infidels'.[63]

Although in many cases we can find a problematization of Islam in its entirety, in many colonial policies a recurring distinction was made that boils down to a simple opposition between 'acceptable' and 'non-acceptable' Islam to a large extent determined by local and global interests of the ruling elites and their desire to maintain peace and order.[64] By the end of nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, the Dutch 'pillarized' society into socio-religious denominations, while

in the colonies there was a strong preference for implementing secular rule (although the Dutch churches were by no means absent from the scene).[65] Albeit in different ways, Dutch administrators and missionaries made a distinction between an 'acceptable' and 'non-acceptable' Islam based upon ideas of what was compatible with Dutch colonial rule or Christianity.[66] Alexanderson's account of how the Dutch colonial authorities tried to regulate the hajj maritime networks between the East Indies and Jeddah shows how worried the Dutch authorities were about Hadrami Arabs and Meccan sheikhs who travelled within those networks on the same ships as the people from the East Indies.[67] In the words of the Dutch academic and alleged convert to Islam Snouck Hurgronje (who was particularly influential in shaping colonial policy and writing about the 'question of Islam' that emerged out of the necessity to prepare the indigenous population for modern culture and life), the distinction between 'acceptable' and 'non-acceptable' Islam was one between Islam as a religion and Islam as a political doctrine.[68] While the Islam of the local population was seen as apolitical and inferior to 'Europeanness', it was the Islam of the Hadrami Arabs and sheikhs that was seen as potentially disrupting the social order because of its pan-Islamic and anti-colonial ideas.

Such Orientalist representations, we want to argue, continue to resonate with contemporary surveillance practices. Indeed, (de)radicalization policies often draw on the presupposition that certain *belief systems*, which hold antagonistic views towards liberalism and secular modernity, can potentially stimulate forms of resentment that can translate into violence. And in this context, the focus on 'Salafism' emerges as one of the most telling examples of such continuities. While during the 1980s and 1990s Salafis shied away from any public visibility in the Netherlands, and certainly from participating in public debates, from 2002 onwards Salafi visibility increased in the public image of Islam and Muslims because of a number of incidents.[69] It wasn't until 2003, however, that the term 'Salafism' became apparent to a wider audience. That year, in the Netherlands, a trial took place that concerned twelve people accused of recruiting young men for military jihad, in particular for the violent struggles in Kashmir, after two young men from the city of Eindhoven were killed there in 2002. According to the newspapers, the public prosecutor stated that the twelve men belonged to 'Salafism', a 'radical Islamic branch with extreme ideas about Qur'an interpretation and Islamic law'. The question of how dangerous 'Salafism' is or 'Salafis' are has been in the background of much of the media coverage and policy attention. In the public debates, Salafism is often equated with radicalism and vice versa, so-called radical Muslims are often called Salafi or Salafists. In this way Dutch Salafi networks became *hyper-visible*,[70] referring to processes which make racialized people intensely visible as objects of attention, fear and desire through the gazes of media and state. Hyper-visibilized subjects are invisible in their individuality but highly visible as repositories of fear and desire.[71] In this logic, gender and the body play an important role; Muslim men who refuse to shake hands are thought to be 'Salafi' and are often referred to as 'beards of hate' (*haatbaard*), and wearing the niqab is seen by the Dutch government as a symbol of a form of Islam that does not fit Dutch society.[72] These traits are often regarded as features of Salafism, and people who refuse to shake hands or wear the niqab are thought to be Salafi, albeit with a clear gendered difference.

Most of the policy reports about radicalization do not explicitly refer to gender, although some note that women may 'also' be open to radicalization and that some play an active role in, for example, translation work.[73] In the case of women however issues of radicalization are often raised in the context of other debates that are sometimes also exclusively linked to debates on Islam and/or Salafism such as forced marriage,[74] (the partial ban on) the face veil,[75] and 'Islamic marriages'.[76] These indirect links with radicalization and Islam/Salafism are important as they show how the debates on radicalization are often informed and shaped by broader concerns and fears about 'our way of life' being threatened: a phrase that is sometimes invoked after events of political violence and during integration debates. As Brown and Saeed note for the UK and USA, such fears and concerns are highly gendered and sexualized.[77] Not only does the stereotype of the oppressed Muslim woman prevail (but with the veiled Muslim woman as a threat at the same time), notions about freedom and 'our way of life' are also often raised in opposition to gender and gay rights in relation to Islam.[78]

Yet besides addressing how counter-radicalization projects selectively target and include Islam as one of the main centre points, this volume also seeks to show how such policies often draw on the active involvement of Muslim actors and organizations. Few studies have documented how Muslim networks as well as individuals have consistently cooperated with the state and local authorities to signal and prevent radicalization among 'vulnerable' youth.[79] Most have rather tended to place Muslim actors as the passive recipients of a repressive policy. Whereas such accounts are understandable in light of the hegemonic weight of discourses that primarily target Muslims as 'other', they do not offer a valid account of the complexity of these policies and how they are being implemented through the mobilization of a heterogeneous set of actors – Muslim and non-Muslim. With the instalment of a policy on radicalization in 2015, the Flemish government, for instance, also assigned a well-known and popular imam the task to coordinate a Flemish network of Islam experts to produce a counter-discourse on radicalization.[80] In the Netherlands, after the murder of Theo van Gogh in 2004, a large project was initiated by the government called 'Binding Society' (Maatschappelijke Binding), which required all the government departments to devise projects countering radicalization and furthering social cohesion. Mainstream Muslim organizations were partners in these endeavours, but all Salafi networks were excluded (although some local contact between the networks and local authorities remained, see Chapter 2 by Fadil and De Koning in this volume) as they were seen as the main agents responsible for radicalizing Muslim youth. Also, several prominent Muslims have been solicited by the Dutch authorities to take up individual cases to de-radicalize, and in 2016 the main umbrella organization of mosques was asked to organize meetings to create awareness among Muslims about 'radicalization and alienation'.

Such an active – and often prominent – inclusion of Muslim actors in public policies on de/radicalization is understandable in light of the pillarization model

that prevails in the region and which understands religious movements as a vital component of civil society. But these examples also show how some Muslim actors often have a vested interest in producing counter-narratives and supporting state-sponsored initiatives on radicalization. The departure of youngsters from Belgium and the Netherlands to Syria from 2012 resulted, for instance, in an unprecedented series of Muslim-led initiatives on *jihadism* and radicalization in Belgium and the Netherlands.[81]

If we are to understand, following Foucault, radicalization as a *dispositif* or an apparatus, it is important to consider this critical alliance between these heterogeneous sets of actors, who seem to share a common agenda of creating distinctions between 'acceptable' and 'non-acceptable' forms of Islam, yet in many cases also often draw on distinct imaginaries and languages in doing so. What might appear at first glance as simply a co-optation of Muslims, who are consequently turned into governmental subjects or docile/good Muslims,[82] is equally mediated by intra-Muslim contestations.

Yet these are, we want to suggest, rarely taken into account in much of the literature. An example can be found in the current discussions about the Salafi *manhaj* or 'Salafism' as a clearly defined ideology. Salafi or Salafist as a label is highly contested among Muslims. Some refuse to use it, some use it to denounce other Muslims and some (even those who refuse to use the label in religious circles) use it in public debates to describe themselves. Furthermore, many groups of Muslims, other than the Salafis, regard the Prophet Muhammad and the first three generations of Muslims as exemplary Muslims and their teachings as an inspiration for current day reform. These range from other Islamic movements, to socialists and feminists in the Middle East. For many individual Muslims, whether affiliated with a particular branch or movement or not, the lives and teachings of the first generations and the Prophet Muhammad are attractive 'ideals'; there is no clear concept of what form they actually take. In recent years, the departure of youngsters to Syria from Belgium and the Netherlands has resulted in an exceptional series of discussions and 'internal debates' within the Muslim communities both in Belgium and the Netherlands on the circulating discourses and narratives concerning the obligation to perform the *hijra* or the *jihad* or the relationship to non-believers or what a Caliphate should be like.

These discussions often draw on older debates on the position of Muslim minorities in a non-Muslim majority context.[83] In some cases, they also explicitly target discourses produced by Salafi-jihadi groups by challenging their views on war, violence and non-believers through counter-examples from the Qur'an and the Sunna. These discussions have occasionally also resulted in calls for a 'reform' of the existing methodologies and ways of approaching religious texts.[84] One of the central aims of this volume is therefore to shed a complex light on the Muslim implication in the discourses and practices of (de)radicalization by documenting and demonstrating the public (and private) involvement of these actors in these policies. The perspective upon which we draw is one that understands Islam as a vibrant and complex discursive tradition,[85] where the question of how to behave properly as a Muslim has been a constant point of inquiry for lay Muslims and

scholars. These discussions have often resulted in concepts and theological vocabularies that have sought to problematize modes of reasoning or practices that are seen to contradict the teachings of Islam and that occasionally seem to find new points of articulation in the current discussions on radicalization.[86] Our aim is to show how initiatives on radicalization provide a site of interaction (or even collusion) between state-led attempts at regulating (and securitizing) the Muslim field and intra-Muslim discussions and debates on 'acceptable' forms of Islam.

Outline of the chapters

This volume is organized in three sections, which all seek to address the history, practices and co-optation of these discourses and practices of radicalization. The first part of the volume offers a history of the term by showing both its starting point in the Netherlands and its expansion to other European countries. The contributions of Rik Coolsaet (Chapter 1) and that of Nadia Fadil and Martijn de Koning (Chapter 2) trace the evolution and dissemination of the concept in the European and Dutch context respectively. The contribution of Rik Coolsaet (Chapter 1) looks at the European trajectories of the term radicalization. It shows how the term was introduced shortly after the 9/11 attacks within European police and intelligence circles and found its way through the EU institutions, where it appeared for the first time in May 2004. The attacks in Madrid, two months before, and in London, in July 2005, pushed the concept to centre stage in EU counterterrorism thinking and policies. But Coolsaet equally contends that the concept – despite its spread and use – remains ill-defined, complex and controversial. This also applies to its American twin 'CVE', countering violent extremism. Both concepts are usually taken for granted and considered self-evident, but they are not. Because of its apparent simplicity, but also its ambiguity, it became entwined with the public disenchantment over immigration that had been developing since the 1980s, and with the unease over Islam and Muslims boosted by the 9/11 attacks. The concept was all the more tantalizing because of the pre-existent popular idiom: 'radical Islam' and the ubiquity since 9/11 of the 'clash of civilization' paradigm.

In their contribution, Fadil and De Koning (Chapter 2) examine how the notion of radicalization was developed by Dutch intelligence in 2001 and how it came to gain scientific legitimacy in the Dutch scientific field from 2005 onwards. Their genealogical investigation shows that although the term radicalization was explicitly coined with reference to Islamic forms of militancy, a subsequent attempt at expanding it into other forms of activism will also consistently mark and characterize its trajectory. Yet despite these attempts at different articulations of the term, the dominant reference to Islam and Muslims continues to inform the primary usage of this term. They thereby conclude that the ambivalence of the term radicalization is similarly one of the persistent hallmarks of this floating signifier.

The concept of radicalization does not only circulate in and between policy and academic circles, translations also occur within mosques and other Islamic institutions as Mieke Groeninck (Chapter 3) shows. In her chapter, she describes the debates and discussions that followed the departure of youngsters to Syria and the Paris and Brussels attacks in Brussels-based Muslim circles between 2013 and 2015. Groeninck identifies two different discourses that dealt with the 'radicalist' and 'Salafist' sites of contestation, which were brought in direct relation to the resurgence of terrorism. A first position links radicalization (and terrorism) with a lack of knowledge of the *adab* (ethics) of divergence, which may lead to 'radicalism' understood as extremely exclusivist behaviour and dehumanization of non-Muslims and Muslims alike, possibly resulting in violence. Another position considers the main cause of radicalization to lie in the exclusivist behaviour promoted by a particular hermeneutical understanding of the Islamic sources, proclaimed by what they described as Salafism. Groeninck reflects in her chapter on both positions through ethnographic examples from teachers, fellow students and debates that clarify both lines of thinking.

The second part of the volume attends to the public policies and practices of deradicalization. As stated earlier: The perspective we adopt in this volume draws on a pragmatic theoretical and philosophical tradition, which seeks to understand how concepts and ideas reconfigure existing policies and material realities. In analysing how this notion of radicalization is introduced, recuperated and applied, our aim is two-fold. The first is to demonstrate how a securitization logic gradually becomes inserted as a fundamental prerogative of different kinds of professional activities – i.e. judges and lawyers, social workers, civil servants and local policies. Several authors have already pointed towards this development – and in re-posing this question in the Dutch and Belgian context, we seek to show how such dynamics take place in a particular setting. The contribution of Beatrice de Graaf (Chapter 4), who examines the juridical effects of the radicalization paradigm in the Netherlands, provides a case in point. Drawing on the preventive lens that figures as a starting point and core mission of the radicalization narrative in the notion of radicalization, this chapter seeks to show how an idea of 'preventive sanctioning' gradually seeps into the juridical domain transforming trials into ways of managing risk. De Graaf examines the terrorist trial as a performative space where potential future terror is imagined, invoked, contested and made real. By focusing on the cases against terrorism suspects involved in attempts to join or recruit for the Caliphate between 2013–16, she is able to show how present criminal offences involving terrorist aims and intent are constituted through the appeal to potential future violence, assemblages of evidence and linear projections of radicalization models. This chapter teases out how techniques of actuarial justice – including appropriating scholarly concepts and theories – are applied to transform these trials into instruments of managing the risk presented by the offender.

Equally, a second aim of this part is to demonstrate the active agency of local actors vis-à-vis these securitizing mechanisms. Indeed, the different chapters in Part II show that the adoption of the radicalization narrative is far from a straightforward process, but often entails an active negotiation – and contestation –

by the local actors. This is illustrated through the contribution by Ineke Roex and Floris Vermeulen (Chapter 5). Their chapter offers an account of how the implementation and instalment of public policies of deradicalization in Antwerp, Flanders, equally meant the rise and co-optation of new public actors that were otherwise deemed illegitimate. The growing anxiety around extremism and terrorist attacks as well as the Syria fighters provoked an unprecedented demand for pre-emptive measures that were considered as an adequate and indispensable anticipatory security practice to counter the threat. This also resulted in the need for new forms of partnership between local authorities and new organizations. Through the discussion of a few examples, the authors seek to understand to what extent these measures eventually result in certain 'democratic innovations' at the local level. In their chapter, Francesco Ragazzi and Lili-Ann de Jongh (Chapter 6) show how the demands made by radicalization policies place Dutch civil workers and front-line workers in a perpetual and unresolvable tension between their roles as 'confidants' and 'informants'. Their chapter, based upon empirical work, draws on the work of Simmel, Foucault and Bourdieu. Ragazzi and De Jongh argue that a project of bending, harnessing or hijacking existing or supposed relations of trust that form the basis of specific social settings is at the core of contemporary counter-radicalization rationality. This invites them to understand counter-radicalization as a form of 'government through trust' which opens up a new perspective wherein the management and instrumentalization of trust relations as a central anticipatory technology for both intelligence gathering and social control becomes a key site of investigation. The chapter by Silke Jaminé and Nadia Fadil (Chapter 7) examines, in turn, the practices of negotiation that lie at the core of the implementation of public policies of deradicalization. Set in a Flemish city among civil servants and a team of youth and family coaches in a youth care centre, it seeks to map the different ways in which radicalization becomes defined and apprehended in this particular context. Indeed, this work of constantly defining and determining 'whether someone is radicalized' was one of the main activities of the team. These negotiations also extended to the constant quest for a stable theoretical definition in the discussion with public servants, which was however rarely reached. The nature of deradicalization as negotiated practice can partly be explained by the fact that the field of deradicalization has emerged only recently and that public opinion is still divided. But the authors also locate these negotiations in a larger restructuring of the field of social work and youth work, where the question of expertise becomes an ever more important method of distinction.

The final part of this volume turns, at last, to the ways in which this *dispositif* of radicalization produces effects on Muslims – who often figure as the target of these policies. Whereas much has been written on the securitization effects of these measures, very few studies have explored the daily routines and practices which these forms of surveillance produce. Drawing on years of fieldwork with Dutch Muslim militant activists, the chapter by Martijn de Koning (Chapter 8) shows how these militant activists feel scrutinized not only by these state institutions, but also by the debates on Islam more generally. The chapter explores these two different modes of interpellation as forms of hard and soft surveillance (as they

occur within the context of securitization of Islam). Based upon the question of how to live when defined as a 'security problem', De Koning's chapter shows how militant activists can have different types of responses: routinization and mobilization. Both routinization and mobilization are driven by a sense of injustice but pertain to different types of reactions. While the first response is invoked by the desire not to let surveillance affect daily life, the second one is conjured by the need to speak out. Muslims are not only the target of deradicalization strategies, but in many cases, they are also active actors in these policies. One of the main ways through which this idea of 'radicalization' resonates with Muslim practices is through a recurring concern about what counts as 'acceptable' forms of Islam.

The final two chapters, by Jaafar Alloul (Chapter 9) and Annelies Moors (Chapter 10), each try to disentangle the workings of the hegemonic de/radicalization discourse and explore the im/possibilities of letting the '*muhajir*' speak. Jaafar Alloul takes those who have been dubbed FTF ('foreign terrorist fighters') by the dominant political discourses and media as the starting point of a digital ethnography, and inquiries into some of their self-portrayals in new (online) media over the course of 2012–14. He observes how their digital portrayal remains fixated on Belgium and the Netherlands despite their relocation and the abundant public talk on their exogenous 'Islamist' nature. Rather than encountering substantiated ideas about Middle Eastern politics, one can trace an understudied social critique of the *home society* in Europe, not least the majority–minority relations and their treatment as an 'abjected' Muslim Other. In their online posts, a pertinent dialogical relationship can be identified in opposition to the political discourse of the far right in Europe. Syria, or '*sham*' as they romantically code their newly found 'home', facilitates a reconstitution of selfhood and community, of which the vernacular dispositions and ritual processions make *relational* testimony to, if not partly reproduce, a 'lived space' in Europe. As such, this contribution runs against the prevailing focus on the (ideological) 'pull factors' often found in security and terrorism studies by exploring how *hijra* to Syria constitutes a form of racial (emigration and) status exchange.

Whereas Alloul's contribution provocatively raises the Spivakian question about the possibility of letting the *muhajir* speak in the European public space, Annelies Moors' chapter reflects on this question through the spectrum of anthropological scholarship and the im/possibility of conducting fieldwork with subjects considered as abject, such as Islamic State (IS) fighters. Her auto-ethnographic account recounts her difficult journey through a public and political controversy, following the publication of an academic peer-reviewed paper in *Anthropology Today* on the marriage practices of the *muhajirat* under IS. The public controversy came about after a journalist accused one of the co-authors of Muslim background of having sympathies for Islamic State. According to the journalist this could have resulted in a bias, downplaying the danger of women who left for Syria. These accusations resulted in a public and political denunciation of the methodology and objectivity of the concerned researchers and led to a public and academic investigation. More than being simply incidental, Moors's account is telling of the risks scholars – and in particular anthropologists (and

even more in particular, researchers with a Muslim background) – take in upholding a neutral and objective stand towards groups and individuals who have been called out as a public enemy. As she notes quite astutely in her auto-ethnographic entry, this raises important questions not only about scholarly deontology, but also about who is entitled to represent particular groups, and from which normative positions scholarship may or may not be conducted. She concludes with some reflections on the possibility of escaping this securitizing gaze, even within the most qualified academic scholarship.

Echoing Moors' contribution and reflection, one of the explicit hopes of this volume is that this geographically situated, historically informed and ethnographically grounded account of the deradicalization framework will enable a new, and critical, conversation about the operation of this discourse and its effects. We believe it to be our role, as scholars, to keep the possibility open for a complex understanding of the various predicaments of social life, also (and in particular) when these run against the dominant doxa. This volume is an experiment in this direction and, we hope, only the start of a new conversation.

Notes

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(Amsterdam: Societal Security Network, 2018). Most works have rather adopted a national focus. See, for instance, Nisha Kapoor, *Deport, Deprive and Extradite: 21st Century State Extremism* (London and New York: Verso, 2018); Yasser Morsi, *Radical Skin, Moderate Masks: De-Radicalising the Muslim and Racism in Post-Racial Societies* (London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017); Jocelyne Cesari, *Muslims in the West after 9/11: Religion, Politics and Law* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2010); Tufyal Choudhury, *Impact of Counter-Terrorism on Communities: UK Background Report* (London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2012); Ralph Grillo, 'Backlash against Diversity? Identity and Cultural Politics in European Cities', *COMPAS Working Papers* 14 (Oxford: Centre of Migration Policy and Society, 2005); Frank Peter, 'Political Rationalities, Counter-Terrorism and Policies on Islam in the United Kingdom and France', in *The Social Life of Anti-Terrorism Laws: The War on Terror and the Classifications of the 'Dangerous Other'*, ed. Julia M. Eckert (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2008); Francesco Ragazzi, 'Suspect Community or Suspect Category? The Impact of Counter-Terrorism as "Policed Multiculturalism"', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42, no. 5 (2016): 724–41.

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10 Kundnani, 'Radicalisation: The Journey of a Concept'.

11 Ibid., p. 21.

12 See also Charlotte Heath-Kelly, 'Can We Laugh Yet? Reading Post-9/11 Counterterrorism Policy as Magical Realism and Opening a Third-Space of Resistance', *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 18, no. 4 (2012a): 343–60; Heath-Kelly, 'Counter-Terrorism and the Counterfactual'; and Heath-Kelly, 'Reinventing Prevention or Exposing the Gap? False Positives in UK Terrorism Governance and the Quest for Pre-Emption', *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 5, no. 1 (2012c): 69–87.

13 Christopher Baker-Beall, Charlotte Heath-Kelly and Lee Jarvis, eds., *Counter-Radicalisation: Critical Perspectives* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 7.

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22 Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror*, p. 5.

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27 For a fuller account, see Fadil and De Koning (Chapter 2 in this volume).
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44 See also Fadil and De Koning (Chapter 2 in this volume).
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