ISLAMIST EXTREMISM AND ETHNICITY

THE RELEVANCE OF NATIONALISTIC SELF-IDENTIFICATION

A comparative and explorative study on why Dutch Muslims of Turkish descent are underrepresented in the statistics on Dutch Islamist foreign fighters compared to Dutch Muslims of Moroccan descent

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is based on the observation that Dutch Muslims of Turkish descent are less often represented in the statistics on Dutch Islamist foreign fighters compared to Dutch Muslims of Moroccan descent. This study aims to use theoretical and empirical evidence to explore and understand this underrepresentation of Dutch Muslims of Turkish descent. In order to achieve this aim, this study utilized a multilevel theoretical approach on the causes of Islamist extremism. The results suggest that the Turkish population in the Netherlands has a strong Turkish nationalistic orientation, whereas the Moroccan population has a strong religious orientation. Stated differently, Dutch people of Turkish descent have the tendency to value their nationalistic identification over their religious (Muslim) identification, whereas this the other way around for Dutch people of Moroccan descent. This study argues that the nationalistic self-identification of the Turkish population is a key finding to understand the relatively low number of Dutch foreign fighters with a Turkish background. In addition, this study concludes that the organizational structure of Turkish religious institutions limits the likelihood of radical and extreme interpretations of Islam to resound within the Turkish religious community in the Netherlands.

FOREWORD

This thesis is conducted in fulfillment of the Master program Crisis and Security Management at Leiden University. It discusses why Dutch Muslims of Turkish descent are less often represented in the statistics on Dutch Islamist foreign fighters compared to Dutch Muslims of Moroccan descent. It was in the spring of 2016 when I was first introduced to this notable observation while I was reading a Dutch governmental report on foreign fighters. Even though surprised, I then had no way of knowing that this would be the very same subject that would keep me occupied during the fall and the winter of that same year. Nonetheless, I did enjoyed writing this thesis over the past six months. It not only helped me to grow academically, but also personally and professionally.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor Bart Schuurman for his advice, guidance and his critical but fair feedback during the process of writing this thesis. It is an understatement to say that it was a pleasure to be supervised by Mr. Schuurman. I would also like to express my gratefulness to all the individuals I had the privilege to interview. Our dialogues enriched my understandings of your perceptions and attitudes, and the challenges you have to deal with.

I truly hope that this thesis may contribute to a more nuanced and evidence based approach when it comes to discussing why people get involved in Islamist extremism, especially as a foreign fighter. That nuanced and evidence based approach starts with us as academia, policymakers and media professionals. A good example will be keenly followed.

Rotterdam, January 11, 2017

Earvin Goudzand

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OUTLINING THE PROBLEM

Between the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011 and the fall of 2016, around 270 Dutch citizens travelled to Syria and Iraq to either join or fight against Islamist extremist movements, such as Islamic State (NCTV, 2016). According to the Dutch General Intelligence and Security service (hereafter AIVD), the vast majority of so-called "foreign fighters" have an Islamic background, including numerous converts. Moreover, it is also believed that almost 80% of the Dutch foreign fighters have a Moroccan background, while "only" 6% are of Turkish descent (Soetenhorst, 2015). These statistics on the Dutch foreign fighters become even more interesting considering that of the 850,000 citizens with an Islamic background in the Netherlands, 34% have a Moroccan background and 35% have Turkish roots (CBS, 2016). Thus, given the fact that people with Moroccan and Turkish backgrounds comprise an almost equal part of the Dutch Muslim population, the question is why Dutch citizens of Moroccan descent are overrepresented when it comes to involvement in Islamist extremism as foreign fighters. Stated differently, and perhaps even more interesting, why is the Turkish community in the Netherlands apparently less prone to joining foreign Islamist extremist movements than the Moroccan community is?

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This question forms the foundation of this Master thesis, which aims to explore why the Turkish population in the Netherlands is seemingly less prone to joining Islamist extremist movements than the Moroccan population in the Netherlands is. One may assume that both groups follow and adhere to the same religion (Sunni Islam), and at the same time face the same social and economic challenges that come from their belonging to a minority group in the Netherlands. Yet the number of foreign fighters amongst them differs significantly. The aim of this thesis is to explore this remarkable observation. However, it is important to stress that this is an explorative study, meaning that it is not intended to provide conclusive evidence, but instead to provide a better understanding of this phenomenon. Nonetheless, by doing so, this study contributes to the greater body of knowledge on Islamist extremism.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

To examine why, in comparison to the Moroccan population, the Turkish population in the Netherlands is less often represented in the statistics on Dutch foreign fighters, the following research question will be addressed:

Why are Dutch Muslims of Turkish descent underrepresented in the 2016 statistics on Dutch Islamist foreign fighters compared to Dutch Muslims of Moroccan descent?

1.4 SCIENTIFIC AND SOCIETAL RELEVANCE

Over the past few years, considerable research has been conducted on the process of Islamic radicalization and Islamist extremism. However, scholars tend to approach the Muslim community as an organic unity, without differentiating between distinctive ethnic groups (see Mares, 2015; Bleich, 2014). As previous paragraphs illustrated, this is a problematic assumption, particularly in case of the Netherlands. The significant difference between the number of foreign fighters with a Turkish background and those with a Moroccan background in this country, despite both communities being roughly equally large, requires a more nuanced view of the Muslim community in order to find answers regarding this discrepancy. By addressing the research question above, this thesis aims to contribute to closing the current knowledge gap on this important subject. It will in particular help to understand why certain groups of Western Muslims – especially in the Dutch case – are less inclined than others are to join foreign Islamist extremist movements.

The findings of this research will not only be beneficial to the academic community, but will also be relevant for society in general and for policymakers in particular. By exploring why Dutch citizens of Turkish descent are less prone to joining Islamist extremist groups than Dutch citizens of Moroccan descent are, insights into other aspects of both groups' societal status can be gained. For example, the empirical findings of this research may also provide insights into the relatively lower number of criminal offences perpetrated by the Turkish population compared to the relatively high number of crime rates amongst people of Moroccan descent in the Netherlands (CBS, 2016). Dutch citizens of Turkish descent are less prone to displaying delinquent and violent behavior in general, and not only with regard to joining extremist groups. Although the causes of

extremism and criminal behavior are not one and the same, this research might provide criminologists and other social scientists with a modest contribution to their attempt to explore and understand the differences in criminal behavior between these two groups.

Finally, as the field of security studies is closely linked to other academic disciplines, such as public administration and criminology, this research may, directly or indirectly, advocate for policy measures to limit the number of Islamist foreign fighters travelling outside of the Netherlands. Indeed, this is a wicked problem for which an easy solution is not at hand. However, it remains a shared responsibility to develop feasible and thoughtful solutions.

1.5 DISTINGUISHING DIFFERENT CONCEPTS

The concepts of radicalism, radicalization, extremism, and terrorism are often confused with one another and are often used interchangeably by both the public and policymakers. Before conducting research on one of these topics, it is important to distinguish the different concepts from each other to avoid conceptual confusion. This section does so by providing a brief discussion of the aforementioned concepts.

1.5.1 Radicalism

Although considerable research has been conducted on the concept of radicalism, scholars and professionals have yet to agree upon a universally accepted definition. Schmid (2013:8) defines radicalism as "advocating sweeping political change, based on conviction that the status quo is unacceptable while at the same time a fundamentally different alternative appears to be available to the radical." Another definition sees radicalism as "the active pursuit or acceptance of the use of far-reaching changes in society, which may or may not constitute a danger to democracy and may or may not involve the threat of or use of violence to attain the stated goals." (Veldhuis & Staun, 2009:4)

While both of these commonly used definitions acknowledge that radicalism concerns bringing changes to society, they disagree on one important notion: the use of violence. In Veldhuis and

Staun's definition, radicalism is linked to the use of violence, whereas Schmid's definition does not necessarily make this connection. This is an important distinction, because history illustrates that radical behavior does not always mean using violence or force. In their time, dr. Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi were considered to have radical ideas, yet they never used violence. Nevertheless, they did bring fundamental changes to the societies in which they lived. With that in mind and with regard to this thesis, the concept of radicalism will be understood in the way Schmid (2013) defines it: advocating for political change without necessarily using violent means.

This definition is a useful starting point, but one problem that it does not address is that radicalism is a relative concept. One's understanding of this concept depends on, amongst others, one's ideological, political, and social position. Therefore, when analyzing radical behavior, it is important to do so in relation to a certain reference point. From a Western point of view, this would include anything that differs from mainstream values such as liberty, freedom of expression, and equality (Schmid, 2013).

1.5.2 Radicalization

Whereas the concept of radicalism refers to a set of ideas about bringing profound changes to society, the concept of radicalization refers to the process of adopting and adhering to these ideas. However, as noted earlier, radicalism – and therefore radicalization – does not necessarily involve adopting violent means. With that in mind, radicalization can be defined as "a process that leads to ideological or religious activism to introduce radical changes to society." (Schmid, 2013:12) This definition does acknowledge a change in an individual's ideological and religious thinking, but does not per se link that change to adopting violent ideas. Stated differently, someone can radicalize without wanting to use violence or force to achieve the sought changes to society.

1.5.3 Extremism

As noted earlier, radicalism is often confused with extremism. This not entirely incompressible, since both concepts refer to some sort of distance from what is considered to be moderate and mainstream in a given time period and in a given place (Schmid, 2013). Moreover, both radicalism and extremism concern bringing fundamental changes to society. However, what sets them apart in particular is that extremists, unlike "ordinary" radicals, often do so by rejecting the democratic

rule of law and using violent means (Schmid, 2013). Thus, while both radicalism and extremism refer a set of ideas that are considered to be removed from what is seen as moderate and mainstream, the latter is distinct due to the preference for the use of violence to achieve its goals. Moreover, Schmid (2013) also argues that extremists – unlike many radicals – tend to oppress any form of opposition in their attempt to make society conform. Extremism can thus be understood as "striving to create a homogenous society based on rigid, dogmatic and ideological tenets" by using violent means (Schmid, 2013: 8).

1.5.4 Terrorism

Although this thesis is not about terrorism as such, it is still important to briefly define this concept. It is not surprising that the concept of terrorism also lacks a universally adopted definition. The following definition by the European Commission (EC) is perhaps a broad and long one, but it does indicate the key difference between terrorism and extremism: "criminal offences against persons and property that, given their nature or context, may seriously damage a country or international organization where committed with the aim of: seriously intimidating a population; or unduly compelling a government or international organization to perform or abstain from performing any act; seriously destabilizing or destroying the fundamental political, economic or social structure of a country or an international organization." (European Commission, 2002:4)

This EC definition of terrorism makes clear that terrorists have different aims and objectives than extremists do. While the latter reject the democratic rule of law by using violent means – in order to bring about changes – terrorists go even further. They usually aim to disrupt the course of events in a society and to incite fear in people. Stated differently, unlike many extremists, terrorists often use large-scale violence, not just to spark fundamental changes, but also to disrupt and paralyze society as much as possible.

1.6 TOWARDS USING ISLAMIST EXTREMISM AS A CONCEPT

The distinction between radicalism, radicalization, extremism, and terrorism helps to separate certain individuals and groups from one other. While it is clear that there is some overlap between the different concepts, it is also inevitable to conclude that some are worse than others. For

example, people with violent ideas are far more dangerous to society than people with simply opposing or radical ideas. This is not to say that radicalism is desirable and without consequences; it can, under certain circumstances, lead to extremism. However, the focus of this study is on the involvement of Dutch people of Turkish and Moroccan descent as a foreign fighter in movements that are not reluctant to use violent. They can therefore be discussed as extremists instead of as radicals.

Moreover, since this study is based on the assumption that both the Turkish and Moroccan populations in the Netherlands adhere to the same religion, it is important to briefly discuss the phenomenon of religiously inspired extremism. According to Wellman and Tokuno (2004), religiously inspired extremism refers to cases in which religion is either the subject or the object of violent behavior. Stated differently, religiously inspired extremism is often either motivated by or in reaction to certain religious aspects. The phenomenon of Dutch foreign fighters travelling to foreign battlegrounds can be described as religiously motivated violence. This is not to say that Islam justifies such actions. It is, however, the perception of those individuals that this is the case. Therefore, this study will use the term "Islamist extremists" to refer to individuals who perceive justification and motivation in Islam to use violence (as a foreign fighter) in their pursuit to bring about changes to society.

Before proceeding with the next section, an important point needs to be made. In the previous parts of this chapter, a clear distinction has been made between radicalism and extremism. However, some academic scholars and professionals often use these two concepts interchangeably, or use different definitions. This study focuses on Dutch foreign fighters as Islamist extremists, and, by doing so, builds upon previous findings of academic scholars. These, however, sometimes use the word radicalism while referring to what is defined here as Islamist extremism. Therefore, when referring to other academic scholars, the word radicalism may be used instead of extremism. It is, however, important to keep in mind that whenever this happens, it is always about using violent means, religiously inspired, in an attempt to achieve certain goals.

1.7 THE CAUSES OF ISLAMIST EXTREMISM: A BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

The factors leading to Islamist extremism are various and numerous. Pick (2010) identifies dozens of different explanations for extremist behavior. These explanations vary from identity problems to poverty, war, and overpopulation. This section aims to provide a general overview of the causes of Islamist extremism. This is not a complete or comprehensive overview, but it does present the most commonly accepted causes of Islamist extremism.

Many scholars have tried to narrow the wide variety of factors leading to extremism down to a smaller number of main themes. For example, in their study, Burhani, Muhamad, Sudarjat, Zada, and Hidayah (2005) identify four overarching factors that may lead to Islamist extremism: theology, socio-economics, media, and socio-cultural conditions. With regard to theological factors, they argue that a moderate Muslim is more likely to radicalize if he interprets the Quran as a set of scriptures that need to be followed literally instead of textually. A second factor that may lead to Islamist extremism is one's socio-economic status in society. People with a lower socio-economic status, especially those who lack bright future prospects, are often more inclined to radicalize than people with better perspectives on life.

A third factor leading to extremism explained by Burhani et al. (2005) is the role of the media. Orthodox Islamic media publications, such as magazines, television (TV) programs, and social media reports have the ability to influence an individual's understanding of Islam and, moreover, direct them to adopt radical ideas. Similarly, Stenersen (2008) also argues that especially the Internet plays a key role in today's recruitment of potential Islamist extremists in the West. Finally, Burhani et al. (2005) argue that Muslims' socio-cultural perspective plays an important role in their radicalization process. They argue that amongst some in the Muslim world there is a belief that the West aims to marginalize, or even paralyze, Islam. This reasoning often triggers hatred towards the West and awakens the feeling that Islam should be persevered by any means.

Other academic scholars, such as Veldhuis and Staun (2009), also narrow the numerous causes of Islamist extremism down to a limited number of factors: international relations; poor integration; globalization and modernization; social identity; social interaction and group processes; relative

deprivation; personal characteristics; and personal experiences. Veldhuis and Staun believe that these factors contribute to the process of radicalization. This does not mean, however, that each of one of these eight factors is a necessary condition for an individual to radicalize. They may differ over time and also per individual (Veldhuis & Staun, 2009).

In another review, McAllister and Schmid (2011) mention almost 40 causes of Islamic radicalization that may eventually lead to extremism and terrorism. Amongst many others, they acknowledge demographic imbalances, rapid modernization, class structure, and increasing individualism as contributing factors. What stands out in this list is that the causes of extremism are not only to be sought in an individual's personal or social characteristics, but also in greater phenomena on which individuals have little influence. For example, demographic imbalances are not caused by a single individual, yet McAllister and Schmid mention it as a cause of extremism. They argue that demographic imbalances weaken existing societal structures, which may result in anarchy, which may in turn act as a breeding ground for extremism.

Lia and Skjølberg (2004) provide another comprehensive overview. Their study discusses the most common theories and hypotheses about the causes of extremism. Amongst many other causes, Lia and Skjølberg identify the proliferation of collapsed and weak states, technological evolution, and states in transition to democracy as causes of extremism. Other contributing factors to Islamist extremism are mass migration, population growth, and lack of trust in governments (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010). Moreover, tensions caused by shortage of basic needs, such as food and water, are also considered to be contributing factors to extremism (Vermeulen & Bovenkerk, 2012). What these scholars have in common is that they acknowledge that the cause of Islamist extremism are diverse and not centered around one level of anlysis. Moreover, it is arguable that some causes are an accumulation of different events. For instance, population growth may cause mass migration and shortage of food and water, which are all considered to be enabling factors extremism. This makes the study of Islamist extremism even more complicated.

While the causes mentioned above represent only a brief selection of an extensive body of knowledge on Islamist extremism, they do provide a direction in which the causes of extremism can be sought. Moreover, they lead us to understand that the causes of Islamist extremism are not

concentrated around one level of analysis only. While personal characteristics may urge an individual or psychological approach to study the causes of Islamist extremism, poverty and the proliferation of weak states may call for a more sociological or international-relations-based approach. Therefore, when trying to understand why Dutch people of Turkish descent are less often involved in Islamist extremism, it becomes necessary to investigate the causes of Islamist extremism on different levels of analysis. This allows for a tailored and nuanced discussion based on different academic perspectives.

1.8 USING DIFFERENT LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

As discussed in the previous section, the causes of Islamist extremism are diverse and numerous. Moreover, the previous section also demonstrated that these causes vary from personal characteristics to complicated international developments on the world stage. To carefully study this wide range of causes of Islamist extremism, it could be helpful to categorize them into different levels of analysis. This section discusses how academic scholars use different levels of analysis to study the causes of Islamist extremism.

In their root cause model of radicalization, Veldhuis and Staun (2009) distinguish between two levels of analysis: the micro-level and the macro-level. The micro-level examines the psychological and social factors that may contribute to an individual's radicalization process. Examples of such factors are identity problems, feelings of discrimination and alienation, and relative deprivation. The macro-level, on the other hand, analyzes the wider social environment and the role of states regarding the process of radicalization. Examples of such factors are a state's foreign policies and the impact of globalization.

Veldhuis and Staun's distinction of two levels of analysis (micro and macro) helps to understand and study the causes of Islamist extremism that are directly related to an individual and his social surroundings on the one hand, and that are related to developments on the world stage on the other hand. This is a useful starting point, but a criticism of Veldhuis and Staun's root cause model is that their micro-level of analysis is too extensive. For instance, their micro-level includes causes varying from psychological and personal characteristics to the impact of social interactions and

group dynamics on Islamic radicalization (Veldhuis & Staun, 2009). It would be useful to be more precise when grouping different causes of radicalization together. For instance, the impact of social interactions and small-group dynamics on radicalization can be accommodated in a level between the micro-level and macro-level – a so-called meso-level of analysis.

Lia and Skjølberg (2004) do make a similar distinction with three levels of analysis. However, they label them as psychological, societal, and international explanations for terrorism. Nevertheless, a three-level analysis, irrespective of the levels' names, makes it easier and more structured to examine the different causes of extremism. Based on both Veldhuis and Staun's (2009) and Lia and Skjølberg's (2004) distinctions of different levels of analysis, the following division is made for the present study:

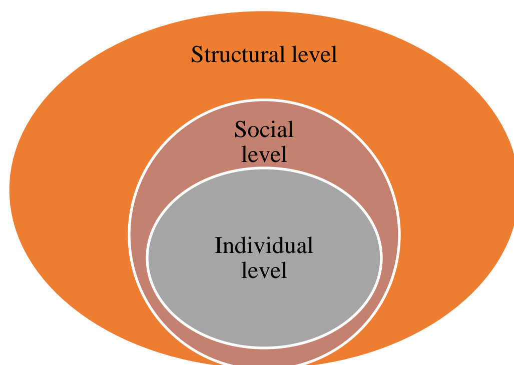

Figure 1: Different levels of analysis to study the causes of Islamist extremism based on Veldhuis and Staun (2009) and Lia and Skjølberg (2004).

The individual level focuses on the factors within an individual that may lead him to extremism, such as his state of mind, and his attitudes and perceptions. The social level focuses on the factors in his wider social milieu, such as his level of integration into society or group dynamics. The structural level focuses on the factors outside of his wider social milieu, such as geopolitics. A more extensive discussion of these three levels of analysis will be provided in the third chapter of this thesis.

1.9 DEVELOPING A MODEL OF FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ISLAMIST EXTREMISM

Having discussed the relevance of a three-level model of analysis of the causes of Islamist extremism, it becomes necessary to link the wide variety of such causes to each level. This will allow for a model of factors contributing to Islamist extremism useful to analyze why Dutch people of Turkish descent are less involved in Islamist extremism than Dutch people of Moroccan descent are. The term "contributing factor" is chosen because none of the causes in this model directly lead to Islamist extremism, but they can make it more likely to happen. Therefore, the term reflects a more cautious approach since causality is often difficult to prove.

Nonetheless, an important challenge in developing a model of factors contributing to Islamist extremism is to determine which factors should be selected and which should not. Ideally, such a model would include all known causes of Islamist extremism. However, the limited resources of time and pages available for this thesis do not allow for a truly comprehensive approach. Therefore, a selection needs to be made. It is not easy to foresee which causes of Islamist extremism are more relevant than others in an attempt to explain the differences in the number of Islamist extremists with a Turkish background and those with a Moroccan background in the Netherlands. However, some factors can clearly be dropped at the outset. For example, shortage of food and water is – at least to a large extent – not a known problem in the Netherlands. Furthermore, there is no extensive poverty in the Netherlands, nor is it a state in transition to democracy or beset by war. It would, therefore, be reasonable to exclude those causes in the analysis of why people of Turkish descent in the Netherlands are less prone to join Islamist extremist groups. On the other hand, considering the level of integration into Dutch society amongst people of Turkish and Moroccan descent may provide interesting insight which may explain the differences in the number of Islamist extremists amongst them. Thus, due to their applicability, some causes of Islamist extremism are more relevant than others for the Dutch case.

Based on the above line of reasoning, a model of contributing factors has been developed for this study. Again, this is not a full-scale model of known causes to Islamist extremism. It does, however, provide a framework to determine whether there are differences in the causes of Islamist

extremism between the Turkish and the Moroccan populations in the Netherlands. In the next chapter of this thesis, this model will be thoroughly explained, including the reason why out of the almost 40 causes of Islamist extremism, "only" eight contributing factors have been selected for this study.

Level of analysis	Contributing factors
Individual level	• Feelings of alienation • Feelings of discrimination • Political grievances
Social level	• Group dynamics • Poor integration • Criminality
Structural level	• Religious institutions and structures • Geopolitics

Table 1: Model of factors contributing to Islamist extremism

1.10 OUTLINE

The next chapter will discuss the methodological approach and the overall structure of the analysis. Chapter 3 then presents the theoretical framework and the operationalization of the contributing factors to Islamist extremism. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 cover the analysis, each specifically devoted to a different level of analysis. Finally, Chapter 7 provides an extensive discussion of the results and reflects on how they help to address the research question of this thesis.

2 METHODOLOGY

This chapter first explains the overall structure of the subsequent parts of this thesis, the theoretical framework and the analysis, and how they relate to each other. Subsequently, it describes the methodological approach and accounts for a number of methodological choices.

2.1 STRUCTURE

This thesis consists of three major sections, each of them gradually leading to addressing the research question. The first section, the theoretical framework, consists of a broad and general overview of the literature on radicalization and the causes of Islamist extremism. This leads to a better understanding of how certain causes may translate into Islamist extremism. Next, the thesis explores and analyzes the already existing data on the Turkish and Moroccan communities in the Netherlands that are relevant to understanding their involvement in Islamist extremism. The third section, also part of the analytical core of the thesis, is dedicated to linking the available data to theories about involvement in Islamist extremism. Stated differently, the third section is set apart to validate and/or propose new assumptions regarding why Dutch people of Turkish descent are less prone to joining Islamist extremist groups than those of Moroccan descent are.

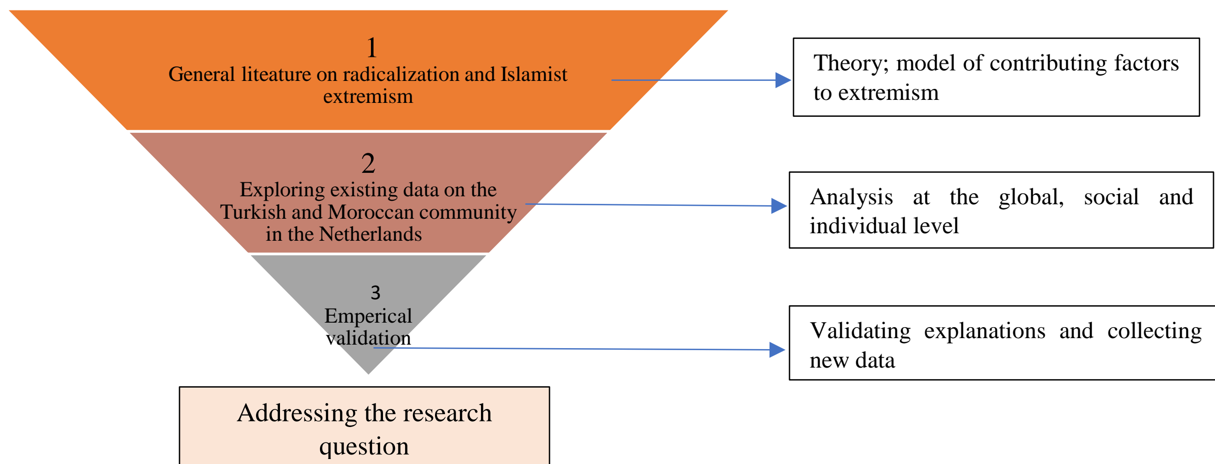

Figure 2: Delineation of consecutive steps to address the research question

2.2 UNITS OF ANALYSIS AND UNITS OF OBSERVATION

The units of analysis and the units of observation are both the Turkish population and the Moroccan population living in the Netherlands and identifying themselves as Muslim. This includes all Dutch Muslim individuals of both Turkish and Moroccan descent, irrespective of their age or sex. With regard to the terms "of Turkish descent" and "of Moroccan descent", the Statistics Netherlands' definition has been used: someone is considered to be of Turkish or of Moroccan descent when he was born or has at least one parent who was born in Turkey or Morocco, respectively (CBS, 2016).

2.3 RESEARCH METHODS: TRIANGULATION

This study is characterized by a so-called qualitative triangulation research approach, meaning that different methodological approaches were used to determine whether there are differences in the factors contributing to Islamist extremism which may help to explain why Dutch people of Turkish descent are underrepresented in the statistics on Dutch foreign fighters. An advantage of this triangulation research method is that it allows for verification of the research data. This will benefit the reliability of this research. Moreover, a triangulation research approach also enables the capturing of different dimensions of the same phenomenon. This may result in new insights that may have not been captured if only one research method had been used. The triangulation research method in this study includes desk research and field research.

2.3.1 Desk research

Desk research was used as a research method to collect and interpret already existing data on the Turkish and Moroccan populations in the Netherlands that are relevant for understanding the differences in the number of Islamist extremists amongst them. A great advantage of desk research is that it saves times. A large amount of the data used in the analysis of this thesis were collected by other researchers or institutions, especially (semi) governmental organizations. Another advantage of desk research is that it provides a solution to the challenge of making generalizing statements when conducting a small study. Making such statements would, ideally, be based on a large sample size. However, given the limited time and resources available for the completion of this thesis, conducting such a large-scale study was not an option. Using existing data made it less

problematic to make generalizing statements about the Turkish and Moroccan populations, since they usually include a large sample size.

Other main sources for the desk research were primarily in the form of reports by (semi) governmental institutions or agencies, such as Statistics Netherlands (CBS), the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP), and the General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD). The reports and publications from these institutions, freely accessible on the Internet, were especially helpful in collecting data on relevant characteristics regarding the unit of observation's socio-economic status, perceptions on feelings of discrimination, feelings of alienation, crime statistics, and so forth. These institutions' reports are usually published annually. Where possible the desk research always included the most recent publication available.

2.3.2 Field research: interviews

In addition to the desk research, nine interviews were conducted with respondents of Turkish and Moroccan descent in the Netherlands. The purpose of the interviews was to verify and validate earlier findings from the desk research. However, an important note needs to be made in this regard. A total number of nine respondents is not enough to make generalizing statements about neither the Turkish nor the Moroccan population in the Netherlands. This was also not the aim of the interviews. The interviews served as a way to complement the findings of the field research. Moreover, the interviews were also helpful in attaining a better understanding of how to interpret some of the findings of the desk research. Especially in cases of personal perceptions and attitudes, the interviews proved to be helpful in correctly interpreting and validating the data collected through desk research. Therefore, the results from the interviews should not be read as being statistically significant in representing the perceptions of the complete Turkish and Moroccan populations in the Netherlands. Instead, they should be seen as a complement to the findings of the desk research.

Interviews were held with four respondents of Turkish descent and five respondents of Moroccan descent. The original aim was to conduct 12 interviews: five with respondents of Turkish descent, five with respondents of Moroccan descent, and one interview with a community leader of each descent. However, one respondent of Turkish descent withdrew his willingness to participate in

this study, as did the two community leaders. The reasons for their withdrawal remain unclear. However, this has some implications for the analysis. The interviews for the study were designed along two pillars. The interviews with moderate young Muslim respondents of both Turkish and Moroccan descent would cover the following contributing factors: (i) feelings of alienation, (ii) feelings of discrimination, (iii) political grievances, and (iv) geopolitics. The interviews with the community leaders would then cover the remaining contributing factors: (v) criminality, (vi) group dynamics, (vii) poor integration, and (viii) poorly structured religious institutions. However, as a result of the withdrawal of the community leaders' support, not all contributing factors could be analyzed with data from the interviews. This was not problematic to a large extent since there was enough existing data available on which to base the analysis. However, it remains unfortunate that the analysis of some contributing factors could not be complemented by primary data abstracted from interviews. This does not take away the fact that the interviews that were still held provided new insights and were valuable.

All of the interviews were conducted in November of 2016. The respondents, living in different parts of the Netherlands, were selected with the help of religious and cultural organizations. While the selection would ideally have included a balanced distribution of respondents according to their sex, age, and level of education, it was difficult to attain the commitment of female respondents and respondents older than the age of 30 years. However, this is not problematic to a large extent, since a majority of Dutch foreign fighters are believed to be male and relatively young (AIVD, 2016).

The interviews all took place in each of the respondent's city of residence, usually in public spaces such as cafés or lunchrooms. One interview took place in the respondent's residence. None of the respondents were – prior to the interviews – known to the researcher, nor were there any previous connections between them. The interviews were semi-structured: a basic framework of questions was prepared beforehand, but the researcher could ask follow-up questions. This proved to be beneficial in cases in which the respondent's answer was unclear or ambiguous. The semi-structured interviews also created an atmosphere of dialogue instead of a simple "question and answer" session. All of the respondents identified themselves as Muslim. The respondents were

considered to be “moderate” individuals. This means that they did not express radical or extremist ideas, and they were not selected for having such ideas.

The following table provides an overview of the interviewed individuals and their main characteristics. All of the respondents were assured anonymity, and therefore assigned a code.

Code	Ethnicity	Sex	Age	Educational attainment	Date and place of the interview
T01	Turkish	Male	29	MBO**	04-11-2016 Zoetermeer
T02	Turkish	Female	21	MBO	05-11-2016 Rotterdam
T03	Turkish	Male	23	MBO	10-11-2016 Utrecht
T04	Turkish	Male	25	HBO	13-11-2016 Eindhoven
M01	Moroccan	Male	20	MBO**	15-11-2016 Gouda
M02	Moroccan	Male	23	WO	20-11-2016 Amersfoort
M03	Moroccan	Female	24	HBO	03-11-2016 Almere
M04	Moroccan	Male	24	MBO**	17-11-2016 Zwolle
M05	Moroccan	Male	28	HAVO	21-11-2016 Lelystad

Table 2: Overview of the interviewed respondents

MBO= Intermediate Vocational Education | HAVO= Senior General Secondary Education | HBO= Higher Vocational Education | WO = Undergraduate and Graduate University Education

** Education level not (yet) completed

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents the theoretical framework and consists of three parts. First, the model of contributing factors to Islamist extremism will be justified, specifically by discussing why "only" eight out of almost 40 causes have been selected to fit in this model. Secondly, this chapter further explains the relevance of a multilevel approach on the causes of Islamist extremism. Finally, each contributing factor will be briefly discussed by explaining how it either enables or motivates Islamist extremism.

3.1.1 JUSTIFYING THE MODEL OF CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

In the first chapter of this thesis, a model of factors contributing to Islamist extremism was developed using the three different levels of analysis as a conceptual framework. Subsequently, each level of analysis was assigned two or more contributing factors. The following table is a re-representation of this model:

Level of analysis	Contributing factors
Individual level	• Feelings of alienation • Feelings of discrimination • Political grievances
Social level	• Group dynamics • Poor integration • Criminality
Structural level	• Poorly structured religious institutions • Geopolitics

Table 3: Model of contributing factors to Islamist extremism

As discussed in the previous chapter, the contributing factors have been selected for their applicability to the Dutch case. This accounts for why, for example, large-scale poverty and a state's transition to democracy have not been included. However, it is still important to address why, of almost 40 causes of Islamist extremisms, "only" eight have been selected. The main reason

for this is that this study is limited to a certain size. This means that a choice had to be made: either briefly discuss and analyze a greater number of contributing factors, or extensively discuss and analyze a smaller number of contributing factors. The choice was made to select and analyze a relatively small number of causes of Islamist extremism, knowing that this may not fully explain why Dutch people of Turkish descent are less often represented in the statistics on Dutch Islamist foreign fighters than Dutch people of Moroccan descent are. However, selecting a limited number of causes makes it possible to analyze them extensively and in depth. While such a selection may not cover all known causes of Islamist extremism, an extensive analysis may still provide new and useful insights that may not have been found if a briefer analysis had been conducted due to the limited size of this study. Stated differently, the selection of only eight of almost 40 causes of Islamist extremism was based on valuing quality over quantity. Moreover, as the body of knowledge on Islamist extremism is a growing one, future research can be devoted to analyzing (some of) the remaining causes that have not been selected for this study.

3.2 UNDERSTANDING THREE LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

For a considerable period of time, policymakers and academic scholars focused merely on the micro – or individual – level when studying the causes of Islamist extremism (Schmid, 2013). The common line of reasoning was that radicalization occurred primarily amongst "vulnerable" youths who were somehow open to radical and extremist ideas. While it is undoubtedly true that vulnerable youngsters are at a higher risk of radicalization (Neumann, 2010), this reasoning holds the danger of eliminating a wider spectrum of causes. For example, a solely micro-level approach ignores the role of group dynamics and geopolitics in the process of radicalization.

It was especially after the 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States that other levels of analysis became largely included in terrorism studies (Schmid, 2013). The main advantage of including different levels of analysis is that research moves from a solely individual approach to a social and even global approach, allowing for the study of a wider range of potential causes of radicalism, extremism, and terrorism. Moreover, including different levels of analysis also means including different academic disciplines – from psychological to sociological theories, and even international relations. This leads to a plurality of insights.

The present study follows this multilevel approach, for it is believed that the causes of Islamist extremism are not only to be sought on the micro-level. Moreover, it is further believed that greater societal and global structures may also explain involvement in Islamist extremism. This line of reasoning results in distinguishing three levels of analysis: individual, social, and structural. Combined, these levels provide a conceptual framework to analyze the factors contributing to Islamist extremism.

3.2.1 The individual level

According to Lia and Skjølberg (2004), the individual level of analysis focuses mainly on a person's psychological state of mind. For example, moral outrage, experiencing humiliation, feelings of alienation, and marginalization – whether true or perceived – may contribute to someone choosing the path to Islamist extremism. In general, the individual level of analysis takes into account an individual's background, his personal and psychological characteristics, and his perceptions of the world around him. While these are crucial factors in trying to explain extremist behavior, they are also difficult to analyze in a non-psychological study. It would require an in-depth clinical or psychological analysis, based on an individual approach, to examine how these factors contribute to involvement in Islamist extremism. This study, however, has limited resources to conduct such in-depth individual case studies. This is also the reason why the individual level of analysis in this study is limited to those factors that are relatively easy to analyze without using psychological methods and techniques. The three factors that have been chosen (feelings of alienation, feelings of discrimination, and political grievances) have also been selected due to their relevance in explaining possible differences between the Turkish and the Moroccan populations in the Netherlands. For instance, Dutch people of Turkish descent may feel less often discriminated against, or may less often suffer from political grievances than those of Moroccan descent do. Such a possible outcome may help to understand the distinct involvement in the statistics on Dutch foreign fighters for both populations.

3.2.2 The social level

The social level of analysis focuses on an individual's wider social milieu (della Porta & LaFree, 2012). This implies going beyond the individual and psychological characteristics and considering social surroundings. This includes, but is not limited to, the level of integration into society and

the impact of small-group dynamics on an individual. According to Schmid (2013:4), the social level is the "missing link between extremism and the extremist's broader constituency." Compared to the individual level, this level is easier to analyze in a social science study. A wide variety of sociological theories are helpful in analyzing how broader social phenomena may contribute to Islamist extremism (Decker & Pyrooz, 2011). However, given the limited time and resources available for this study, the selection of contributing factors at the social level was based on their relevance for the Dutch case in general, and on their applicability to both focus groups (the Turkish and Moroccan populations in the Netherlands) in particular. This accounts for why the level of integration, criminality, and group dynamics have been selected as factors contributing to Islamist extremism. For instance, an often-heard remark is that Dutch people of Turkish descent are better integrated into the Dutch society than those of Moroccan descent are. This may imply that their different levels of integration could explain their distinct involvement in the statistics on Dutch Islamist foreign fighters. Even so, it is generally assumed that the Moroccan community in the Netherlands is more often represented in criminal activities than the Turkish community is. Such an assumption may also explain their distinct representation in the number of foreign fighters. However, instead of making assumptions, this study aims to provide empirical evidence to either support or deny such claims.

3.2.3 The structural level

Finally, the structural level of analysis focuses on the role of geopolitics and religious structures in the involvement in Islamist extremism. Factors at the structural level of analysis may seem distanced, but they do influence an individual's perceptions and attitudes (Schmid, 2013). The main difference between the social and the structural level is that, unlike at the social level, the factors at the structural level are unlikely to be changed by one individual alone. For example, one can choose to distance oneself from others with radical ideas or choose not to engage in criminal activities, but it is difficult to change a state's foreign policies on one's own. Thus, the structural level of analysis includes factors that are largely beyond an individual's ability to immediately change them, but which at the same time may influence or enable his perceptions to justify involvement in Islamist extremism. In the model of contributing factors to Islamist extremism, two causes have been selected: (i) geopolitics and (ii) poorly structured religious institutions. Geopolitics have been selected due to their relevance in exploring any differences between the

way in which the Turkish and Moroccan populations in the Netherlands perceive certain international developments and actions with regard to the Middle East. If, for instance, Dutch people of Turkish descent interpret the Syrian conflict differently than Dutch people of Moroccan descent do, this may explain their distinct involvement as Dutch Islamist foreign fighters. Second, the structures of religious institutions have been selected due to their relevance in understanding how the possibly different ways in which religious institutions are structured may be linked to distinct involvement in the statistics on Dutch Islamist foreign fighters.

3.3 CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO ISLAMIST EXTREMISM AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

3.3.1 Feelings of alienation

Even though many of today's Western Muslims are born and raised in Western states, they are often second or third generation immigrants (Helbling & Traunmüller, 2016). To a large extent, they have adopted Western values and ways of living; these are not always in line with their traditional Muslim identity, however, or with the way in which they have been raised at home. According to Roy (2004), there seems to be a discrepancy between the way in which Western-born Muslims (ought to) behave in public places and the way in which they (ought to) behave according to their traditional identity. This creates feelings uncertainty regarding where they belong. Such perceptions may lead to feelings of alienation – feeling distant or disconnected from the society to which they belong.

How do feelings of alienation translate into Islamist extremism? According to Grattan (2008), Muslims who feel alienated may turn to Islamist extremism as a means of proving that they are trustworthy Muslims who are willing to fight for "the good cause." They do so in an attempt to eliminate their feelings of alienation and to create a sense of belonging to a certain identity or reference group. Moreover, Grattan (2008) argues that prior to their radicalization, for many Islamist extremists their Muslim identity becomes increasingly important. In many cases, they are actively in search of the "true" meaning of their religion. This quest may bring them into contact with people with radical and/or extremist interpretations of the teachings of Islam (Grattan, 2008). This may then eventually result in involvement in Islamist extremism. However, it is important to

keep in mind that feelings of alienation as such are not a direct cause of Islamist extremism. Instead, they make it more likely to happen as a result of an identity search.

3.3.2 Feelings of discrimination

Several studies suggest that feelings of being systematically discriminated against create a sense of meaninglessness and frustration amongst those who experience them (Billiet & Dewitte, 2008; Cabrera & Nora, 1994). Moreover, in a recent study, Lyons-Padilla, Gelfand, Mirahmadi, Farooq, and van Egmond (2015) argue that Western Muslims who experience discrimination based on their religion are at greater risk of displaying extremist behavior than those who do not. Discrimination may occur at different levels, and may include labor discrimination, social exclusion, or even name-calling. While these can be objective or subjective, feelings of being systematically discriminated against often create a loss of life's significance – a feeling that one's life does not matter (Barlett & Miller, 2012).

How are feelings of discrimination related to involvement in Islamist extremism? Often, Islamist extremist movements such as Islamic State are skilled in handing their potential members those specific things for which they long: recognition, status, and even promises of eternal awards in the afterlife (Lyons-Padilla et al., 2015). It is through these promises that many Islamist extremist movements present their recruits a life worth telling. By doing so, they glamorize the life of an Islamist extremist, carefully explaining that fighting for the good cause gives purpose to life, both now and hereafter. Feelings of discrimination, whether true or perceived, may lead to perceptions of inferiority and meaninglessness. Often Islamist extremist movements respond to these vulnerabilities by offering their recruits things to live, fight, and even die for. If receptive to such promises, then, feelings of discrimination may thus result in involvement in Islamist extremism.

3.3.3 Political grievances

Political grievance is defined as reacting to (perceived) injustice or wrongdoing which affords reason for resistance or formal expression (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008). A study by Fenstermacher, Kuznar, and Speckhard (2010:83) suggests that, "an individual may get involved in Islamist extremism as a result of a strong identification with a (political) group." Similarly, Al Raffie (2013) argues that political grievance may cause Western Muslims not only to identify with

victims of perceived injustice, but also to express sympathy for (political) movements that oppose those responsible for the perceived injustice. Political grievance is often triggered by mass [social] media coverage of suffering Muslims in conflict areas around the world (Fenstermacher et al., 2010). Not only may this lead to feelings of personal grievance for those victims, but it may also lead to sympathy or support for political (or ideological) groups that resist those who are perceived to be responsible for the victims' suffering.

How does political grievance lead to involvement in Islamist extremism? Al Raffie (2013) argues that it is a combination of identifying with the victims of perceived injustice and having support and sympathy for political and ideological movements that oppose those responsible for the perceived injustice. The latter is perhaps equally important as the former. Fenstermacher et al. (2010) argue that identification with victims of perceived injustice alone is not sufficient to explain involvement in Islamist extremism. Many individuals with feelings of personal grievance cannot target those responsible for the perceived victimization of Muslims on their own. This is not to say that individuals cannot express political grievance on their own; there are cases in which lone-wolf terrorists act on their own. However, Fenstermacher et al. (2010) argue that having sympathy or support for a political or ideological movement is a necessary condition to explain involvement in group-based Islamist extremism.

3.4 CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO ISLAMIST EXTREMISM AT THE SOCIAL LEVEL

3.4.1 Group dynamics

Being part of a social network that is already displaying unruly and deviant behavior increases the risk of being exposed or introduced to radical and extremist ideologies (Sageman, 2004). Often, members of such networks, such as problematic youth groups, seek support and friendship with one another. According to Sageman (2004), members of these troublesome networks often face the same challenges in life: they often deal with feelings of deprivation and alienation. However, the internal dynamics of such networks are more likely to reinforce those feelings instead of eliminating them.

Moreover, the dynamics within such networks make it relatively easy for radical and extremist ideas to spread across the group members (Sageman, 2004).

How does the belonging to a social network that already displays deviant behavior translate into Islamist extremism? The answer is perhaps to be sought in what O'Brien, Daffern, Meng Chu, and Thomas (2013) describe as the enhancement model of problematic youth groups. On the one hand, such groups select members with a higher aptness for deviant behavior, while on the other hand the internal group dynamics accelerate unruly and potentially violent behavior. O'Brien et al.'s (2013) argument implies that members of problematic youth groups are prone to deviant behavior – even before joining the group – and that this behavior is often enforced once they are part of the group as a result of group dynamics. Such group dynamics are, amongst others, supportive beliefs of (religiously inspired) violence amongst group members, negative and delinquent peer influences, alienation and peer pressure, and association with radical peers (O'Brien et al., 2013). Moreover, Winfree, Backstorm, and Mays (1994) argue that such group dynamics often contribute to the endorsement of radical ideas. It is by means of influencing one another that radical and potentially extremist ideas can spread across the group members. Stated differently, these group dynamics contribute to the development and spreading of radical and extremist ideologies.

3.4.2 Poor integration

Over the past decades, many Western societies, especially European states, have witnessed demographic changes due to the immigration of substantial numbers of Muslims. This has caused the immigrants as well as their new governments and their citizens to face difficult challenges when it comes to integration into society (Vasta, 2007). The failure, or at least the perceived failure, to adequately integrate Muslims immigrant (whether first or second generation) in Western societies is generally accepted as a cause of Islamist extremism (Veldhuis & Staun, 2009). In many Western states, new policies have had to be developed to ensure that immigrants actively take part in their new societies, and that they experience the same social and economic opportunities as their fellow citizens do.

Whether these polices have been effective is open to debate. What is more important is the potential link between poor integration and Islamist extremism. Being poorly integrated into a

society leads to a lack of association and affiliation to that specific society and its characteristics (Rezaei, 2011). A study by Rezaei (2011) suggests that Muslims who are poorly integrated are more inclined to join extremist movements than Muslims who are better integrated into their society are. A lack of association and affiliation with the societies in which they live also includes lacking the same values and norms. This affects their perceptions of and attitudes towards the society in which they live. If these tend to be negative, this makes ill-integrated Muslims more vulnerable to extremist ideas (Goli, 2011). Moreover, being ill integrated into a society may also lead to feelings of relative deprivation. According to Gurr (1970), relative deprivation may trigger (collective) violent actions as a sign of resistance. It is therefore assumed that poor integration may result in negative perceptions and feelings of relative deprivation, which may trigger involvement in Islamist extremism.

3.4.3 Criminality

The links between Islamist extremism and criminality are complex, but different scholars argue that they are correlated to some extent (Decker & Pyrooz, 2011; Makarenko, 2004). In a study, Dechesne and van der Veer (2010) find several connections between Islamist extremism and criminal behavior. For instance, one of their findings is that, often, prisons serve as breeding grounds for convicts to radicalize. They also find that criminals, whether convicted or not, are more likely to join extremist movements due to push and pull factors. For example, extremist groups may actively recruit criminals due to their experiences when it comes to violent action. On the other hand, criminals may also actively seek connection to extremist movements in order to create a sense of belonging or significance. However, criminal behavior is not an automatic stepping stone to Islamist extremism. Dechesne and van der Veer (2010) argue that the first and most important condition is that the individual must be receptive to Islamist extremist ideologies. Thus, criminality is much less of a driver of Islamist extremism, and instead more of a catalyst. This is not to say that criminality always translates into extremism, however; in the end, most criminals are not extremists, but many extremists and terrorists, especially in recent years, do have a criminal background (Smith, 2012).

3.5 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ISLAMIST EXTREMISM AT THE STRUCTURAL LEVEL

3.5.1 Poorly structured religious institutions

Religiously inspired violence is more likely to occur amongst religious institutions that lack an overarching authority than amongst those that do (Almond, Appleby & Sivan, 2003; Buijs, 2002). The term "religious institution" refers not only to houses of worship, but also to other organizations that are active in religious education. "Poorly structured" implies that there is no overarching authority to watch over the ideological and theological teachings of the religious institutions. Stated differently, a poorly structured religious institution is characterized by a lack of formal ideological and theological authority that has the power to intervene in cases in which the religious institution deviates from the imposed teachings (Almond et al., 2003).

How does a poorly structured religious institution contribute to Islamist extremism? According to Almond et al. (2003), individual members of a religious institution that is not affiliated to an umbrella organization can relatively easily develop and adhere to radical and extremist ideas. The absence of an overarching authority allows individuals or groups in such an institution to follow their own interpretation of the teachings and, moreover, to influence others to do the same. Moreover, a poorly structured religious institution can relatively easy invite individuals with radical and extreme ideas to tutor their community. However, a formal religious authority would ideally intervene and impose sanctions to such a religious institution. For instance, the formal authority could replace the leaders to ensure that the theological teachings are in accordance with their belief, or could withdraw financial and other forms of support (Almond et al., 2003). This would be done to ensure that the theological and ideological teachings are conform to the overarching authority. Stated differently, individuals or groups of individuals who are part of a moderate religious institution are more likely to have the space to develop and adhere, or to be exposed to radical and extremist ideologies due to the lack of a formal authority to watch over the ideological and theological teachings.

3.5.2 Geopolitics

International developments on the world stage may influence individual perceptions about the role of certain states or international organizations with regard to the Muslim world (Li, 2007). Moreover, according to Borum (2011) there is a belief amongst some in the Muslim world that the West aims to paralyze and marginalize Islam. Borum (2011) argues that such perceptions may lead to feelings of hatred towards the West, and may awaken the feeling that Islam should be preserved and defended by any means possible.

How do geopolitics contribute to Islamist extremism? According to Li (2007), Islamist extremism is more likely to occur if Muslims perceive that certain international policies and actions are aimed at marginalizing Islam. These policies and actions may include formal and non-formal governmental statements about Muslims and Islamic countries, interventions in countries with a large Muslim population, wars and conflicts, or even policies that generally perceived to be unsupportive of Muslim people around the world (Li, 2007). Such policies and actions may influence and shape an individual's perception about the motives of, especially, Western states. If an individual perceives that the West aims to marginalize Islam, he may develop feelings of hatred and revenge towards the West (Li, 2007). As a result, he may turn to Islamist extremism as a means of preserving Islam and of combating the West.

3.6 OPERATIONALIZATION

This section covers the operationalization of the factors contributing to Islamist extremism outlined in the previous sections. This allows for a strict definition of these explanations and, moreover, for a standardized benchmark to compare Dutch people of Turkish and Moroccan descents. Doing so increases the overall quality and reliability of the results.

Table 4 provides an overview of the operationalization of the contributing factors at the individual level of analysis.

Contributing factor	Indicators
Feelings of alienation **Definition:** Feelings of non-acceptance and/or non-belonging to the Dutch society	• Identification with the Netherlands • Feeling at home in the Netherlands • Perceiving the Netherlands as homeland • Perceiving the country of origin as homeland • Perceptions of the Dutch society (Based on the SCP study *Werelden van Verschil*, 2015)
Feelings of discrimination **Definition:** Feelings of being discriminated against based on one's ethnicity and/or religion	• Unequal treatment • (Verbal) threats • Violence • Prejudiced attitudes and behavior (Based on the SCP study *Ervaren discriminatie*, 2014)
Political grievances **Definition:** Feelings of identification with victims of perceived injustice in the Middle East region, and feelings of support and sympathy for Islamist extremist movements	• Perception of the Syrian conflict • Perception of victims of the Syrian conflict • Perception of Islamic State (IS) • Perception of Dutch foreign fighters

Table 4: Operationalization at the individual level

Table 5 provides an overview of the operationalization of the contributing factors at the social level.

Contributing factor	Indicators
Group dynamics **Definition:** Supportive beliefs of (religiously inspired) violence and negative peer influences	• Belonging to a problematic youth group that is not per se displaying criminal behavior • Being introduced to radical and extreme ideas by one or more group member(s)
Poor integration **Definition:** A poor performance, compared to other groups in society, on certain socio-economic indicators	• Educational achievements • Mastery of the Dutch language • Position on the labor market and income • Housing and living conditions • Societal participation • Interethnic contact
Criminality **Definition:** The (previous) engagement in unlawful and punishable acts	• Crime rates • Number of detainees in Dutch prisons on the basis of ethnicity

Table 5: Operationalization at the social level

Finally, table 6 provides an overview of the factors contributing to extremism at the structural level.

Contributing factor	Indicators
Poorly structured religious institutions **Definition:** Religious institutions that are not overseen by a formal authority or that are not part of a religious federation	• The absence of a formal ideological and theological authority • The absence of membership to a religious federation
Geopolitics **Definition:** International developments on the world stage that might influence individual perceptions and attitudes	• Perception of the Western world • Perception of the Dutch role in the Middle East • Perception of the role of the West in the Syrian conflict

Table 6: Operationalization at the structural level

4 ANALYSIS AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

This chapter is the first of three chapters that analyze the extent to which there are differences in the factors contributing to Islamist extremism between the Turkish and the Moroccan population in the Netherlands. This is helpful in addressing the research question, which aims to explore why Dutch people of Turkish descent are less often represented in the statistics on foreign fighters than those of Moroccan descent are. This chapter focuses on the individual level of the model of contributing factors, as discussed in the previous chapters. The chapter is structured as followed: it will first discuss the general data, before applying them to the Turkish and then to the Moroccan population in the Netherlands. The analysis of each contributing factor will then finish with a brief discussion.

4.1 FEELINGS OF ALIENATION

In the theoretical chapter of this thesis, "feelings of alienation" were defined as feelings of non-belonging to and/or non-acceptance by the Dutch society. Individuals who feel alienated are often in search of a reference group with which to identify themselves. If this search yields nothing, feelings of alienation may lead to the path towards extremism because such individuals may feel the need to do whatever it takes to be recognized as part of a certain identity. By joining an Islamist extremist group, the individual creates a sense of belonging and acceptance. This does not mean that joining Islamist extremist movements is the only solution to deal with feelings of alienation. Not every individual who experiences such feelings makes the decision to join extremist movements. However, feelings of alienation make it more likely for someone to be involved in Islamist extremism.

To examine the extent to which people of Turkish and of Moroccan descent in the Netherlands experience feelings of alienation, both primary and secondary data have been used. The main source of the secondary data was a 2015 publication by the SCP titled "*Werelden van verschil.*" In this extensive study, the SCP interviewed 105 respondents of Turkish descent and 80 respondents of Moroccan descent in the Netherlands. In addition, the SCP surveyed around 900

respondents from both populations. The aim was to map the perceptions of both populations with regard to their identification and affiliation with the Dutch society (SCP, 2015).

4.1.1 Feelings of alienation amongst individuals of Turkish descent in the Netherlands

In its 2015 study, the SCP interviewed and surveyed hundreds of respondents of Turkish descent living in the Netherlands. Sections of the interviews were devoted to the question of whether the respondents felt accepted by and included in the Dutch society (SCP, 2015). Over 53% of the respondents indicated that they perceived that they were not fully accepted as full citizens by the rest of society. Moreover, they argued that they did not have the feeling of truly belonging to the Dutch society. This indicates the presence of feelings of alienation amongst a majority of Dutch people of Turkish descent.

In the SCP study, attention was also paid to the question of with whom or what Dutch people of Turkish descent identify themselves in case they feel alienated from the Dutch society (SCP, 2015). The SCP report concludes that a vast majority of people of Turkish descent in the Netherlands, even those who indicated that they did not feel alienated from the Dutch society, identify themselves strongly with their Turkish roots and with Turkey as their homeland. Moreover, the SCP argues that such a strong focus has not yet been observed amongst other ethnic minorities in the Netherlands (SCP, 2015). This does not mean that other ethnic minorities do not hold onto their original roots, but instead that such a strong focus is particularly observed amongst people of Turkish descent. Several other studies confirm this finding, arguing that the Turkish community in the Netherlands has a strong internal focus and maintains close ties with Turkey (see Huijnk & Dagevos, 2012; Verkuyten, 2006).

Interviews

The data from the present study’s interviews with Dutch people of Turkish descent are consistent with the data from the SCP report. All individuals indicated that they sometimes experienced feelings of non-acceptance or non-belonging to Dutch society. When asked what in particular caused them to feel alienated, the most common response was that Dutch autochthonous people often view them as second-class citizens. The respondents argued that they had the perception that

Dutch autochthonous people were biased against them. This gave them the feeling of being set apart from the rest of society.

During the interviews, attention was also paid to how the respondents dealt with these feelings of alienation. The answers were consistent and in line with earlier research on the identification of people of Turkish descent in the Netherlands. The respondents stated that they identified themselves more with the Turkish society than with the Dutch society. The explained that they felt more included and at home when they were in Turkey than when they were in the Netherlands. Moreover, the respondents stated that they did not experience forms of bias when in Turkey. The respondents were also asked to choose between identifying themselves as Dutch, Turkish, or Muslim, and to answer this in order of importance. Their answers were somewhat surprising. All four respondents chose Turkish as their first answer. Subsequently, all but one chose Dutch in second place, followed by Muslim, while the remaining respondent chose Muslim second and Dutch third. Even though this is a small number, and one should be cautious when making generalizing statements, it is at least remarkable that the respondents had the tendency to value their Turkish identity over their religious identity. As will be discussed in the next sections, this may be a key finding in explaining the relatively low involvement of Dutch people of Turkish descent in Islamist extremism.

4.1.2 Feelings of alienation amongst individuals of Moroccan descent in the Netherlands

The 2015 SCP report indicates that a majority of participants from the Moroccan population in the Netherlands, 60%, indicated experiencing feelings of non-acceptance and non-belonging to the Dutch society (SCP, 2015). An earlier study by Ketner (2010) on the identification of Dutch Moroccans confirms this finding. The SCP study also concludes that a majority of the Moroccan population in the Netherlands is distrustful of the police, Dutch politics, and the media (SCP, 2015).

The SCP study also focuses on the identification of those respondents who felt alienated from the Dutch society. According to the SCP, a majority of the Moroccan population does not necessarily identify itself as either Dutch or Moroccan, but instead as Muslim (SCP, 2015). Moreover, the SCP concludes that many people of Moroccan descent use their Muslim identity as an alternative

to their feelings of alienation. Instead of identifying with their Moroccan roots and culture, they turn to their religion as a form of reference and/or identification when feeling alienated from the Dutch society. This is outwardly in contrast with the Turkish population in the Netherlands, whose members have the tendency to self-identity as Turkish rather than as Muslim.

Interviews

The data from this study's interviews with the respondents of Moroccan descent are consistent with the SCP findings. All of the respondents indicated feeling alienated from the Dutch society at times. They stated that they perceived that the rest of society saw them as a group instead of as individuals. The most common response was that Dutch autochthonous people fail to recognize that most people of Moroccan descent are good citizens. The respondents argued that this is the main reason why the rest of society has negative perceptions of people of Moroccan descent in the Netherlands. These perceptions contributed to the respondents' feelings of non-acceptance and non-belonging.

The interviews also covered how these respondents dealt with their feelings of alienation. They were asked whether they felt more at home in the Netherlands or in Morocco. Their responses were almost similar to each other yet remarkable. None of the respondents indicated feeling more at home in the Netherlands. One of the five indicated feeling more at home in Morocco, while the four others indicated that they were indecisive. When asked what caused them to be indecisive, they explained that they felt somewhat connected, and at the same time alienated, from both societies. The following quote from one of the respondents illustrates the group's overall sentiment: "You know what the problem is? When I'm walking in the streets here in the Netherlands they see me as that Moroccan guy, and when I'm in Morocco they see me as that guy with a red passport."[1] (M4, personal communication, November 17, 2016)

The respondents all indicated feeling alienated by both the Dutch and the Moroccan society at times. They were also asked to indicate whether they identified as Dutch, Moroccan, or Muslim by ranking the three in order of importance. The results were once again remarkable, yet in line with the SCP data. All but one of the respondents identified themselves as Muslim in the first

[1] In this context the respondent used the term red passport to refer to his Dutch nationality.

place, while one (respondent M1) identified himself as Moroccan in the first place. Subsequently, four of the respondents identified themselves as Moroccan second, whereas one identified himself as Muslim second. It thus seems that the respondents tended to value their Muslim identification over their ethnic identification.

4.1.3 A brief discussion

A majority of both the Turkish and the Moroccan population in the Netherlands faces feelings of alienation from the Dutch society. People of Moroccan descent experience alienation more often; according to the SCP, 53% of the Turkish population versus 60% of the Moroccan population experiences such feelings (SCP, 2015). However, what is even more interesting is how both populations deal with such feelings, and what alternatives they have at hand. For the Turkish population, the Turkish identity seems to be an alternative when facing feelings of alienation from the Dutch society. Dutch people of Turkish descent feel at home in Turkey and cherish their roots. Those of Moroccan descent, on the other hand, have a weaker identification with their Moroccan roots and with Morocco as their homeland. Unlike the Turkish population, they not only feel alienated from the Dutch society, but at times also from the Moroccan society. This seems to result in cherishing their Muslim identity over their ethnic identity. After all, they may have the perception that their religion cannot alienate them.

However, it remains unclear how this helps to explain why people of Turkish descent are less involved in Islamist extremism. Perhaps the answer should be sought in the different ways in which both populations deal with their religion and identity. Since people of Moroccan descent tend to use their religion as an alternative to feeling alienated from the Dutch society, they may be more inclined to search for acceptance and forms of brotherhood amongst other Muslims. This creates a reference group with which they can identify. However, in their search they may come across and be influenced by others with religiously radical and extremist ideas. This may cause them to become involved in non-mainstream, and perhaps even violent, Islamists movements. The Dutch of Turkish descent, on the other hand, value their Turkish identity over their Muslim identity, causing them to be less often in search of a religion-based reference group. Consequently, they are at a lower risk of coming across people with radical and extremist ideologies. It thus seems that

the fact that those of Turkish descent value their ethnicity over their religion keeps them from coming into contact with Islamic radicals and extremists.

4.2 FEELINGS OF DISCRIMINATION

In the theoretical chapter, it was explained that feelings of being systematically discriminated against create a sense of frustration, insignificance, and a loss of life's meaning. Islamist extremist movements are often highly skilled in promising their potential recruits lives that are worth telling. For instance, they guarantee eternal rewards, both in the present and hereafter, if their potential recruits choose to join their movement. If individuals experience feelings of discrimination, and if they are receptive to such promises, this may cause them to join Islamist extremist movements in an attempt to create a sense of life's significance.

To examine how and the extent to which individuals of Turkish and Moroccan descent in the Netherlands experience feelings of discrimination, both primary and secondary sources have been used. The 2014 SCP report titled "*Ervaren discriminatie in Nederland"* served as the main secondary source. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain a better understanding of how feelings of discrimination impact the respondents' daily lives and the choices that they make.

4.2.1 Feelings of discrimination amongst individuals of Turkish descent in the Netherlands

The analysis is based on the 2014 SCP study in which the researchers conducted a large-scale survey amongst 946 respondents of Turkish descent in the Netherlands (SCP, 2014). The report reveals that 54% of the respondents indicated having experienced discrimination based on their ethnicity (SCP, 2014). This percentage does not differ widely between genders, different age groups, and levels of education. The survey also asked the respondents whether they experienced discrimination based on their Islamic religion. The results show that 39% of the respondents with a Turkish background answered this question affirmatively (SCP, 2014).

Interviews

The results from this study's interviews are in line with the SCP findings that a majority of the Turkish population in the Netherlands experiences discrimination. All but one of the respondents of the semi-structured interviews indicated having experienced discrimination based on their ethnicity. Respondent T2 stated that she had never experienced discrimination based on her ethnicity. The other respondents were asked for examples of their experiences with discrimination. The most common response was that they believed that they had been denied job opportunities in the past due to their ethnicity. As a follow-up, they were asked how they handled such situations. The following quote from one of the respondents sums up their overall responses: "It makes me feel bad for a moment. But on the other hand, it makes me want to work even harder and prove them wrong." (T2, Personal Communication, November 5, 2016) There were no signs that any of the respondents suffered from systematic discrimination; instead, they had experienced incidental discrimination.

Even more interesting were the responses to whether the respondents believed that they had ever been discriminated against because of their religious background. None of the three respondents who previously indicated having ever experienced discrimination believed that it had been due to their religion.

4.2.2 Feelings of discrimination amongst individuals of Moroccan descent in the Netherlands

The SCP study surveyed 902 respondents of Moroccan descent in the Netherlands regarding their experiences with discrimination (SCP, 2014). The study shows that 54% of the respondents indicated having experienced discrimination based on their ethnicity (SCP, 2014). This percentage was higher when the respondents were asked whether they had experienced discrimination based on their Islamic religion: according to the SCP data, 59% indicated that this was the case (SCP, 2014).

Interviews

The data from the interviews with the respondents of Moroccan descent are in line with the SCP findings. All respondents indicated having experienced discrimination. When asked to give examples of this discrimination, the most common responses were that it occurred when applying

for a job, during their nightlife activities, and when shopping. As a follow-up, they were asked how this made them feel. They explained that it made them feel unappreciated and subordinate to Dutch autochthonous people. One respondent (M5) indicated that he believed that many young Moroccan men exhibit unruly behavior as a form of opposition against being treated differently. When asked whether he believed that unruly behavior was a cause or an effect of being discriminated against, he responded as follows: “I believe that it is an effect. Otherwise, explain to me why youngsters in Morocco do not display the same behavior.” (M5, personal communication, November 21, 2016)

The interviews also asked the respondents whether believed that their experiences with discrimination were due to their ethnicity or due to their religious background. Surprisingly, all respondents stated that their experiences with discrimination were also due to their being Muslim. However, they also argued that their ethnicity cannot be seen apart from their religion. It seems that the respondents found it difficult to separate their ethnic identity from their religious identity. One of the respondents made the following comment: “Since 9/11 people increasingly think bad things about Muslims. So, whenever I go somewhere, people see and me think ‘oh there is a Muslim, we should be careful.’ It’s in their head, they link Islam to bad things and that’s why they treat us different.” (M2, personal communication, November 20, 2016)

4.2.3 A brief discussion

With regard to feeling discriminated against based on ethnicity, 54% of the SCP respondents of Turkish descent indicated having experienced this feeling. Similarly, 54% of the respondents of Moroccan descent also indicated this. Thus, there seems to be no difference between these two populations when it comes to experiencing ethnicity-based discrimination. However, the numbers are different with regard to experiencing discrimination based on the Islamic religion. Based on the SCP data, 39% of the Turkish population versus 59% of the Moroccan population indicates having experienced discrimination based on religion (SCP, 2014). Thus, people of Moroccan descent more often feel discriminated against based on their religion than people of Turkish descent do.

This is an interesting and remarkable finding. The analysis suggest that it is perhaps not ethnic discrimination that contributes to Islamist extremism, but that it is instead religious discrimination that does so. Indeed, one may argue that there is a fine line between feeling discriminated against due to one's ethnic background and due to one's religion, especially since both groups overwhelmingly adhere to the same religion. However, the fact that the Turkish population experiences up to 20% less religious discrimination is remarkable. This by itself does not explain why individuals of Turkish descent are less involved in Islamist extremism, but it may indicate that they are perhaps less receptive to ideological appeals to their threatened religious identity. Moreover, it also supports the earlier assumption that people of Turkish descent value their Turkish identity over their religious identity, in contrast to people of Moroccan descent. Feelings of being discriminated against can also be a matter of perception. Perhaps people of Turkish descent feel discriminated against based on their religion less often because they do not identify with it in the first place. This may eventually translate into less involvement in Islamist extremism as a result of being less receptive to promises of creating life's significance when joining such movements.

4.3 POLITICAL GRIEVANCES

In the theoretical chapter, political grievances were described as reacting to perceived injustice or wrongdoing by means of using violence as a form of expression. Political grievance can contribute to involvement in Islamist extremism if individuals identify themselves with people suffering in conflict areas and, moreover, if they have sympathy or support for ideological and political movements that oppose those who are perceived to be responsible for the suffering. This may trigger such individuals to express political grievance by means of joining Islamist extremist movements.

To determine the extent to which the Turkish and the Moroccan population in the Netherlands experience political grievance, data from the 2015 SCP study "*Werelden van verschil*" have been used. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to better understand where political grievances come from. However, it is important to stress that both the SCP study as well as this study may not have included individuals who had strong political grievances. Thus, the results reflect the attitudes and perceptions of moderate individuals instead of those individuals willing to

express political grievances. Nonetheless, the results do provide enough key features to conduct an analysis.

4.3.1 Political grievances amongst people of Turkish descent

The analysis is based on the SCP report in which 105 respondents of Turkish descent were questioned about their attitudes towards the violent conflict in Syria and the jihad (SCP, 2015). The study reveals that the vast majority of the respondents condemned the use of violence by Islamic State (IS) in the Syrian conflict (SCP, 2015). Moreover, they also condemned IS's ideology, and argued that it is not a true reflection of the teachings in the Quran. However, according to the SCP study, there also seemed to be sympathy for foreign fighters affiliated with IS amongst some of the Turkish respondents (SCP, 2015). The sympathy seemed to be felt amongst the respondents who were strongly nationalistically oriented and who had a strong aversion to the PKK, a Kurdish militant organization in Turkey (SCP, 2015). Those specific respondents argued that they sympathized because IS fights the PKK. Their argument was along the lines of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." The respondents' sympathy for IS was motivated by their nationalistically motivated aversion to the PKK movement in Turkey, instead of by a religiously inspired affinity for IS. They argued that the Turkish government, just as IS, opposes the PKK, therefore arguing that IS could – to some extent – count on their sympathy (SCP, 2015). However, it is important to note that the SCP report argues that those respondents' arguments do not reflect the overall perception of IS and the Syrian conflict amongst Dutch people of Turkish descent.

Interviews

All of the respondents in the present study condemned the violent actions in the Syrian conflict, and especially the actions of IS. They stated that IS' ideology is a false misinterpretation and representation of Islam. Furthermore, all of the respondents indicated that they had no sympathy or support for IS or its actions in the Syrian conflict. However, as discussed earlier, the respondents were considered to be "moderate" individuals and the sensitivity of expressing signs of sympathy or support for IS may have prevented them from doing so.

4.3.2 Political grievances amongst individuals of Moroccan descent

The analysis is based on the 2015 SCP study in which 40 respondents of Moroccan descent were interviewed on their attitudes towards the Syrian conflict and the jihad. This is a much smaller number than the number of respondents of Turkish descent who were interviewed. Therefore, one should be cautious when making generalizing statements based on this study only. However, the overall conclusion of the SCP study is that many of the Dutch respondents of Moroccan descent were unsure about how to address the Syrian conflict and the role of IS (SCP, 2015). Many of the respondents found it difficult to firmly condemn IS's actions.

According to the SCP, this is because IS's actions are not in line with the general perceptions about the relationship between the Western world and Muslims that many people of Moroccan descent have (SCP, 2015). In their perception, Islam is considered to be "good," whereas the West is "bad." As a result, many of them believe that the bad things happening to Muslims around the world are the result of the West trying to marginalize their religion (SCP, 2015). However, IS is known to mostly victimize Muslims. Hence, its actions are, especially since it operates in the name of Islam, not in line with the traditional perception of many people of Moroccan descent regarding who the enemy and the victims are (SCP, 2015). The respondents had difficulty incorporating this new reality of wrongdoing in the name of Islam. This is not to say that the respondents per se showed signs of support or sympathy for IS. However, they found it difficult to acknowledge the "new reality" of fellow Muslims harming one another.

Interviews

The results of the interviews were consistent with the SCP conclusion that their respondents were having difficulty firmly condemning the role of IS and foreign fighters in the Syrian conflict. However, all respondents condemned IS and argued that its ideology is not a true reflection of what their religion stands for. Moreover, the respondents continuously argued that the Syrian conflict should not be seen as separate from past Western actions and interventions in the Arabic region. They found it difficult to condemn the role of foreign fighters without placing it into a wider perspective. The following quote illustrates this well: "There is so much attention on our people who go to Syria, but really… how many victims do they have? Compare that to the victims of the West in Syria. Why is no attention paid to that?" (M4, personal communication, November

17, 2016) This quote demonstrates the overall response when discussing the role of IS in the Syrian conflict. The respondents seemingly failed to acknowledge the wrongdoings of IS itself.

4.3.3 A brief discussion

Both Dutch people of Turkish descent as well as those of Moroccan descent condemn IS's actions in the Syrian conflict. However, small differences were observed between the two in the ease with which they did so. The respondents of Turkish descent found it less difficult to clearly condemn IS's violent actions in the Syrian conflict. They argued that IS misinterprets the teachings of Islam. By doing so, these respondents distanced themselves from such religiously inspired violence. There was mainly sympathy for the role of foreign fighters in the Syrian conflict amongst respondents with nationalistic motivations. Their argument was along the lines of "IS combats the PKK and the PKK is Turkey's enemy, so I have sympathy for those who combat the PKK." However, such sympathy is nationalistically driven instead of religious.

Different dynamics were observed amongst the respondents of Moroccan descent. They had more difficulty in condemning IS. This has to do with their traditional perception of the West being responsible for the wrongdoings to Muslims around the world. They were confused by the reality of new actors who carry out violent actions in the name of their religion. Even though there is a lack of hard evidence to support this assumption, the observation that the respondents of Moroccan descent had more difficulty condemning IS may indicate that they could be more likely to be sympathetic to or support it some day. This in turn may explain why people of Turkish descent are less inclined to join Islamist extremist movements as a foreign fighter. They find it less problematic to condemn IS' violent actions for instance, and moreover, they argue that such actions are not in line with Islamic teachings. And if there is any sympathy for IS, it is mainly driven by nationalistic motivations instead of religious ones. These observations seems to be crucial to explain the relatively low number of Dutch foreign fighters with a Turkish background. They indicate that people of Turkish descent are less receptive for extreme Islamist ideologies because they can -to a large extent- distance themselves from such religious inspired violence, and moreover, also condemn with without necessarily having confused feelings about it. This contrary to the observations witnessed when discussing political grievances amongst the Moroccan population.

5 ANALYSIS AT THE SOCIAL LEVEL

This chapter analyzes the differences in the factors contributing to Islamist extremism at the social level. Whereas the previous chapter focused on the individual level, the analysis in this chapter is centered around the individual's wider milieu and the extent to which it contributes to involvement in Islamist extremism as a foreign fighter. As stated in the methodological chapter, the interviews did not cover the contributing factors at this level. As a result, this analysis is solely based on secondary sources. This chapter will therefore follow a different structure than the previous one did. Instead of discussing the two populations separately, they will be examined together per contributing factor, followed by a brief discussion.

5.1 GROUP DYNAMICS

The theoretical chapter explained how belonging to a group of likeminded people and displaying deviant and unruly behavior increases the risk of being exposed to extremist ideologies. The focus in this analysis is on problematic youth groups who display unruly and troublesome behavior, but whose actions are not per se unlawful or criminal. The data were obtained from a 2013 report on youth gangs in the Netherlands commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice, titled "*Jeugdgroepen en Geweld*" (Beke et al, 2013). The report focuses on both criminal and noncriminal youth groups in the Netherlands. The analysis in the present section, however, focuses only on the noncriminal youth gangs. This is because the discussion of criminal youth gangs would better fit the topic of criminality, a contributing factor to be discussed in the next section of this chapter. By distinguishing criminal from noncriminal youth groups, it may become clear how certain group dynamics – which are not per se unlawful – may contribute to Islamist extremism. In addition to the existing data on noncriminal youth groups in the Netherlands, a study by Weggemans, Bakker and Grol (2014) will also be used to link the empirical findings to involvement in Islamist extremism.

5.1.1 Problematic youth groups in the Netherlands

According to Beke et al. (2013), problematic youth groups in the Netherlands have an average of 30 members, maximum, and are active in all parts of the country, although most have been

observed in urban areas around the largest cities. The average age of members varies between 16 and 20. With regard to ethnicity, people of Moroccan descent are overrepresented in problematic youth groups. People of Turkish descent are less often members of such networks than other ethnic minorities are (Beke et al., 2013). This does not mean that people of Turkish descent are not involved in problematic youth groups, however. Recent turmoil in the Dutch municipality of Zaandam, where members of the community were being intimidated and severely bothered, was mainly caused by youth groups largely composed of people of Turkish descent (NOS, 2016). However, regarding nationwide involvement in youth gangs, people of Moroccan descent outnumber all other ethnicities (Beke et al., 2013).

Many of the members of problematic youth groups have challenging perspectives in life (Beke et al., 2013). For instance, many are either school dropouts or show an overall decline in their school results. This hinders their ability to complete their education, and may thus affect the course of their lives in the future. In addition, many members of youth gangs are unemployed (Beke et al., 2013). The combination of being a school dropout and unemployed not only allows them to have enough time available to engage in unruly behavior, but it also withdraws them from the support system that comes along with being enrolled in an education or with employment. Such a support system is important because many of the youngsters involved in such youth groups come from so-called troubled families, which are often single-parent families with a lack of pedagogical control (Beke et al., 2013).

A final characteristic of problematic youth groups and their members in the Netherlands is that they often serve as a social function (Beke et al., 2013). Likeminded youngsters gather together because they often feel that they face the same challenges in life and that they may find support in one another. According to Beke et al. (2013), many problematic youth groups started this way, without necessarily having the intention of being nuisances in their neighborhoods. It is the dynamics within the group, such as peer pressure and encouraging each other to be unruly, that leads them to gradually cause more trouble.

5.1.2 From problematic youth group membership to Islamist extremism

How does involvement in such troublesome networks translate to Islamist extremism? Moreover, is there an empirical connection between being a member of a problematic youth group and becoming involved in Islamist extremism? And if there is, how does it help to understand why people of Turkish descent are less often involved in Islamist extremism?

In a recent study, Weggemans et al. (2014) examine how European Muslim men and women become involved in Islamist extremism abroad. They present five case studies of Dutch foreign fighters (previously) engaged in the Syrian civil war. The results indicate that the process of radicalization, eventually leading to involvement in Islamist extremism, is often a collective process (Weggemans et al., 2014). Many of the individuals they followed did not start to adopt radical ideas on their own. Instead, they shared radical ideas and were confronted with them by others in their social network, often youngsters in their neighborhood with whom they usually spent time. Moreover, Weggemans et al. (2014) note that in most of the cases that they examined, the foreign fighters were encouraged to travel to Syria preceded by others doing so in their social network.

Weggemans et al.'s (2014) study also indicates that before radicalizing, the foreign fighters' lives were similar to those of members of problematic youth groups analyzed by Beke et al. (2013). For instance, in many cases the Dutch foreign fighters were either school dropouts, unemployed or were lacking a support system, or had experienced traumatic events. In some cases, their research subjects deliberately withdrew themselves from their social surrounding, while in other cases they were expelled from their (religious) community (Weggemans et al., 2014). However, most interesting is the observation that many of the individuals they studied were introduced to radical ideologies via social networks, often friends from the same neighborhood (Weggemans et al., 2014). Although such social networks were not necessarily labeled as problematic youth groups, they do have the same internal dynamics. For instance, supportive beliefs of religiously inspired violence, peer pressure and negative peer influences contributed to the radicalization process of the five research subjects in the study by Weggemans et al. (2014).

Although Weggemans et al.'s (2014) study includes only five Islamist extremists, there seems to be empirical support for the assumption that, in the Dutch case, group dynamics contribute to involvement in Islamist extremism. However, it remains unclear how this helps in understanding why Dutch people of Turkish descent are less involved in Islamist extremism as a foreign fighter than those of Moroccan descent are. One may argue that it is simply because individuals of Turkish descent are less involved in problematic youth groups than individuals of Moroccan descent are. But why are individuals of Turkish descent less often involved in such groups than individuals of Moroccan descent are? Although this question falls outside of the scope of this study, discussing it briefly might provide new insights and be relevant to an understanding of the relatively low number of Dutch foreign fighters with a Turkish background.

5.1.3 Towards a new supposition

The social function of problematic youth groups might be crucial to explaining why people of Turkish descent are less represented in statistics on such networks. According to Beke et al. (2013), one of the main reasons for joining is to seek support amongst likeminded people. Youngsters who feel alienated from society or who experience feelings of non-belonging or loss of their life's significance might reach to others who face the same challenges. This may result in a group of friends, which eventually evolves into a troublesome network. Such a network may provide support and feelings of inclusion, or meet initial needs of belonging and acceptance.

However, the consequences of being part of a problematic group are unlikely to solve the aforementioned individual problems in the long run. Once one becomes a part of such a network, the chances of a normal development and transition to adulthood diminish, as do the chances of feeling accepted by the rest of society. Thus, belonging to a problematic youth group in fact reinforces the members' initial reasons for joining, instead of eliminating them. In another attempt to deal with feelings of insignificance or meaninglessness, youngsters may then be more receptive to Islamist extremist recruiters and ideas, promising them status and meaning in life. Such promises may seem attractive to these youngsters. They may make them feel that they are a part of a greater identity: Muslims who are fighting for the good cause. This eliminates their feelings of non-belonging while at the same time adding significance to their lives.

The supposition that is made here is that the reasons why individuals choose to be part of a problematic group may be the same reasons why they join Islamist extremist movements. They do so because they feel alienated from society and are in search of a certain identity. The previous chapter showed that people of Turkish descent tend to fall back on their Turkish identity when they face such feelings. This indicates that they have a social support system on which to fall back: their Turkish identity and, with that, a certain support system. As a result, they may be less often inclined to seek support and inclusion in problematic groups compared to people of Moroccan descent, who more often have difficulty with their identity. In turn, because people of Turkish descent are less often involved in troublesome networks, they are at lower risk of becoming influenced by group dynamics to join Islamist extremist movements. The argument is that people of Turkish descent have their Turkish identity to fall back on; it serves as a social support system that prevents them from needing to seek support and inclusion in problematic groups.

5.2 POOR INTEGRATION

The theoretical framework discussed how being poorly integrated into a society causes a lack of affiliation and association between an individual and his society. It also may lead to a lack of the same values and norms and to negative perceptions about the society in which he lives. If such perceptions continue to be negative, this makes ill-integrated Muslims vulnerable and receptive to extremist ideologies. Determining the extent to which a group is well integrated into society is always a matter of comparing it to other groups in society. In this study, the level of integration for the Turkish and Moroccan populations in the Netherlands is defined along the lines of educational achievements, mastery of the Dutch language, position on the labor market and income, housing and living conditions, social participation, and interethnic contact. The data are taken from the 2016 SCP publication on integration, titled "*Integratie in zicht?"*. This section follows the same structure as the sections in the fourth chapter; first separately discussing the level of integration for the Turkish and the Moroccan population, followed by a brief discussion to compare the findings.

5.2.1 The Turkish population and its level of integration into the Dutch society

With a population of almost 400,000, people of Turkish descent are the largest non-Western minority group in the Netherlands. The SCP argues that a successful societal integration of minority groups partially depends on their overall educational achievements (SCP, 2016). Such achievements influence other aspects in life such as income, health, and labor. The general perception is that the higher the educational achievements are, the likelier someone is to obtain a stable income and therefore to be self-sufficient. Traditionally, the Turkish population in the Netherlands was known for having a generally lower level of education compared to autochthonous Dutch people (SCP, 2016). However, since 2004 a development has been observed, by which there has been a decline in the number of lowly skilled people of Turkish descent. People of Turkish descent are more often enrolled in higher education than they were 15 years ago (SCP, 2016). Nonetheless, a third of the Turkish population in the Netherlands still has only a primary school education at most, versus 2% of the Dutch autochthonous people with such a level of education.

Being able to master the Dutch language is perhaps one of the most crucial indicators of whether someone is integrated into the society (SCP, 2016). To a large extent, it determines one's chances on the labor market and in other social domains. Moreover, being able to express oneself in Dutch increases the likelihood of one's societal participation and interethnic social relations. According to the SCP (2016), of all minority groups in the Netherlands, people of Turkish descent have the most difficulty when it comes to mastering the Dutch language. An extensive survey conducted by the SCP amongst respondents of Turkish descent reveals that 31% never spoke Dutch with their intimate partner, and that 16% never spoke Dutch with their children (SCP, 2016). In addition, the SCP report also concludes that 17% of people of Turkish descent experience severe challenges when speaking Dutch, 17% when reading, and 22% when writing.

Unemployment amongst minority groups and not being able to be self-sufficient as a result are often perceived as signs of poor integration (SCP, 2016). This is why members of these groups' position on the labor market counts as a crucial indicator of their level of societal integration. This is not to say that employment by itself is sufficient when it comes to being well integrated, however; integration also includes the flow to higher professional functions amongst people with

an immigration background (SCP, 2016). Regarding net participation (meaning people with paid work), 54% of people of Turkish descent in the Netherlands are employed, whereas this is 67% for Dutch autochthonous people. Moreover, 13% of people of Turkish descent have a higher professional function, whereas 31% of Dutch autochthonous people do.

Housing and living conditions are related to societal integration in the sense that an owner-occupied house is a sign of long-term commitment to and investment in a specific area (SCP, 2016). Amongst large proportions of minority groups, there is a prevalence of buying a house in one's original country of residence instead of in the Netherlands (SCP, 2016). Therefore, the SCP argues that having an owner-occupied house is a sign of long-term commitment to the Dutch society. Moreover, according to the SCP (2016), of all minority groups in the Netherlands, people of Turkish descent are in the top two when it comes to owner-occupied houses: almost 46% of them own their house. Nevertheless, this is still in contrast with the 70% of Dutch autochthonous people who have their own house (SCP, 2016). When it comes to living conditions, the SCP argues that people of Turkish descent tend to live in neighborhoods with a high Turkish density.

Societal participation is often perceived as being a key indicator of the level of integration into a society (SCP, 2016). Societal participation does not only increase the likelihood of social inclusion, but it also stimulates integration in other domains. For instance, voluntary work may eventually translate into a paid position, which in turn increases the likelihood of being independent and self-sufficient. The SCP report reveals that 38% of Dutch autochthonous people are somehow involved in voluntary work, whereas this is 18% for people of Turkish descent (SCP, 2016). When it comes to membership of a social or sports club, 61% of Dutch autochthonous people are members, versus 33% of the Turkish population in the Netherlands. The SCP also conducted a survey asking respondents whether they had the intention of casting their electoral vote during the next parliamentary elections. The results show that 73% of the respondents of Turkish descent responded in the affirmative, versus 89% of Dutch autochthonous people (SCP, 2016).

Interethnic contact – that is, contact with people outside of one's own ethnic reference group during leisure activities – is also perceived to be an indicator of societal integration. Interethnic contact

increases the likelihood of having moderate and common perceptions, even increasing the likelihood of having a tolerant attitude towards the rest of society. The SCP study specifically focuses on the social contacts between minority groups and Dutch autochthonous people. The results show that 26% of the respondents of Turkish descent never spent (parts of) their leisure activities with Dutch autochthonous people (SCP, 2016). The SCP report concludes that, although this has slightly improved over time, people of Turkish descent have the tendency to limit their social interactions to people within their own ethnic reference group. This is not limited to social interactions with Dutch autochthonous people, but also includes other minority groups in the Netherlands, such as people of Moroccan, Surinamese, and Antillean descent (SCP, 2016).

5.2.2 The Moroccan population and its level of integration into the Dutch society

With a population of approximately 389,000, people of Moroccan descent are the second largest non-Western minority group in the Netherlands (SCP, 2016). Like many other minority groups, students with a Moroccan background traditionally have lower school results overall. However, the SCP argues that especially since 2007, students with a Moroccan background have been showing an increase in this regard. Moreover, when it comes to primary school education, students of Moroccan descent have overall better results than other students with an immigration background do (SCP, 2016). This better performance also translates to a decline in the percentage of lowly skilled people with a Moroccan descent. In this vein, the SCP report states that the Moroccan population has the second lowest number – next to the Surinamese population – of lowly skilled people.

With regard to mastering the Dutch language, people of Moroccan descent – just as people of Turkish descent – seem to experience more difficulty than other minority groups do (SCP, 2016). The SCP study also shows that 27% of those of Moroccan descent in the Netherlands never speak Dutch with their intimate partner, while 9% never speak Dutch with their children. In general, 12% have severe difficulty in speaking the Dutch language, whereas 11% and 14% have difficulty when it comes to Dutch reading and writing skills, respectively.

Regarding net participation, 49% of the Moroccan population has a paid profession (SCP, 2016). According to the SCP, this is the lowest percentage amongst all ethnic minorities in the

Netherlands. Moreover, 13% of those of Moroccan descent hold a higher professional position (SCP, 2016).

As stated earlier, the SCP argues that having an owner-occupied house is an indicator of integration because it is a translation of commitment to and investment in the Netherlands. The SCP report concludes that 19% of individuals of Moroccan descent are the owners of their own house, which is the lowest percentage across all minority groups in the Netherlands. Moreover, the report also concludes that of all minorities, this group experiences the most cramped living conditions – that is, the smallest square meters of living room, and the smallest number of rooms per person (SCP, 2016). Finally, people of Moroccan descent have the tendency to settle down in neighborhoods with a great density of non-autochthonous Dutch people (SCP, 2016). According to the SCP, this does not per se have to be people of Moroccan descent, but also includes other minority groups.

As previously stated, social participation stimulates integration into society. Especially voluntary work is known to drive other indicators of integration – such as employment – as well. The SCP report concludes that 22% of Dutch people of Moroccan descent have ever participated in voluntary work. Moreover, 38% are members of a social or sports club (SCP, 2016). Finally, 74% of the respondents of Moroccan descent indicated that they had the intention of casting their vote in the next parliamentary election (SCP, 2016).

Interethnic contact increases the likelihood of having a tolerant attitude towards others in society. The SCP report concludes that 25% of the people of Moroccan descent never participate in (parts of) leisure activities with Dutch autochthonous people (SCP, 2016). However, they do include other minorities as social contacts in these leisure activities. According to the SCP, this in particular sets them apart from people of Turkish descent, who have the tendency to limit their social interactions to their own reference group.

5.2.3 A brief discussion

There is a general and widespread perception that the level of societal integration is a key element to explaining exposure and feelings of attraction to Islamist extremism. Moreover, there is also the perception that people of Moroccan descent are generally less well integrated into the Dutch

society than people of Turkish descent are. However, the analysis based on the SCP report does not clearly indicate that this is true. Indeed, although people of Turkish descent perform better on some indicators of integration, those of Moroccan descent outperform them on other indicators. For instance, regarding primary education, people of Moroccan descent show a better performance than all other minority groups in the Netherlands do, including students of Turkish descent. Moreover, people of Moroccan descent seem to experience fewer difficulties than people of Turkish descent do in mastering the Dutch language. On the other hand, people of Turkish descent outperform the Moroccan population when it comes to housing and living conditions, as well as net participation. Those of Turkish descent have an owner-occupied house as much as twice more often, and they are more often employed, including in higher positions. However, when it comes to social participation and interethnic contact, people of Moroccan descent again perform (slightly) better than people of Turkish descent do. For instance, people of Moroccan descent are more often involved in voluntary work, and usually more often include other ethnic groups – including Dutch autochthonous people – in their leisure activities.

What does this means for determining which group is better integrated into the Dutch society? It is difficult to do so given the fact that there is no specific weight to the indicators of integration. Stated differently, the fact that interethnic contact and educational achievements, for instance, are valued the same in determining the level of integration makes it increasingly difficult to determine which group is better or worse integrated into the Dutch society. It can be argued that there is no great difference when it comes to the two groups' overall level of integration. In the end, both groups still underperform on all integration indicators compared to Dutch autochthonous people. However, arguing that there is no clear pathway to determine which group is better integrated also means that it is difficult to determine whether their level of integration may explain their distinct involvement in Islamist extremism as a foreign fighter. On the other hand, this does not mean that it may not be relevant to explore the involvement of some individual indicators.

In the previous chapter and sections, it became clear that the Turkish population in the Netherlands has a strong self-identification. The data presented in this section support this observation and might still be relevant for understanding why this group is less often represented in the number of Dutch Islamist foreign fighters. For instance, as previously shown, people of Turkish descent

experience difficulties in mastering the Dutch language more often than other minorities do. They also have the least interethnic social interactions and are less often involved in voluntary activities. These are the indicators of integration on which the Turkish population underperforms compared to the Moroccan population. Based on these indicators, one may argue that it is remarkable that people of Turkish descent are less often involved in Islamist extremism, since the indicators could suggest that the Turkish population is somewhat isolated and inward-looking. As a result, one may argue that it is expected that they are more likely to suffer from feelings of alienation and discrimination. It may then come as a surprise that people of Turkish descent are still seemingly less inclined to join foreign Islamist extremist movements. However – and this is crucial – it should also be argued that the fact that the Turkish population has less interethnic social interactions and is less involved in societal participation validates earlier findings that this group has a strong internal focus and identification. As discussed in the previous chapter, and as will become clearer in the following chapters, this seems to prevent them from seeking refuge in extreme religious ideologies. The cautious argument that is made here is that there seems to be a paradox when it comes to the relation between the level of integration of people of Turkish descent in the Netherlands and their involvement in Islamist extremism. Moreover, there seems to be an adverse relation between the two. The literature suggests that poor integration may lead to involvement in Islamist extremism. However, in the Dutch case, poor performance on certain indicators of societal integration seems to be related to the same reasons why people of Turkish descent are less often involved in Islamist extremism as foreign fighters. Stated differently, and with the necessary reservation, the fact that the Turkish population underperforms on certain indicators of societal integration seems to be linked to the population’s strong self-identification. This may lead to a so-called integration paradox, or adverse relation between the level of integration and involvement in Islamist extremism. However, this is not to say that poor performance on certain integration indicators counts as an explanation for this group’s underrepresentation in the statistics on Dutch foreign fighters; such an underperformance by itself is not a reason for those of Turkish descent’s underrepresentation, but instead a lengthening or result of their strong self-identification, which in turn does seem to explain their underrepresentation in Islamist extremism. Nonetheless, such a paradox is a remarkable observation and does call for further research for the purpose of clarification.

5.3 CRIMINALITY

As discussed in the theoretical chapter, being engaged or having been engaged in criminal activities can lead to extremism by means of being exposed to radical and extremist ideologies while in prison, by being recruited based on past violent experiences by extremist recruiters, or by actively seeking connection to extremist movements. The analysis on crime rates amongst the Turkish and Moroccan populations in the Netherlands is based on the 2016 CBS report on crime in the Netherlands.

5.3.1 Crime rates amongst people of Turkish and Moroccan descent in the Netherlands

The 2015 CBS statistics show an overall decline in crime rates amongst all ethnicities in the Netherlands (CBS, 2016). However, the different ethnicities are not all equally represented in the crime rates; large differences remain. For instance, people of Moroccan descent are up to six times more often convicted for crimes than Dutch autochthonous people are (CBS, 2016). For people of Turkish descent, the rate is twice as high as for autochthonous Dutch people. This alone already indicates that people of Moroccan descent outnumber people of Turkish descent when it comes to involvement in criminality in the Netherlands. The following table provides an overview of the percentages of detainees of Turkish and Moroccan descent:

	2012	2013	2014
Detainees of Turkish descent	5.1 %	4.9 %	4.8 %
Detainees of Moroccan descent	10.8 %	10.6 %	10.7%

Table 7: Percentage of detainees in Dutch prisons by ethnicity (CBS, 2016).

Table 7 shows that people of Moroccan descent are sentenced to prison twice as often as people of Turkish descent. This ratio is stable for the three consecutive years as represented in the table. Although not included in this table, CBS statistics also show that in the age group of 18-25, 1 in every 10 individuals of Moroccan descent has been suspected of a crime, whereas for individuals of Turkish descent in the same age group this ratio is 1 in 20 (CBS, 2016).

5.3.2 From criminal to Islamist extremist?

The literature on the relationship between criminality and Islamist extremism suggests that prisoners are at a higher risk of being exposed to radical and extreme ideologies. This may partially explain why people of Turkish descent are less involved in Islamist extremism than people of Moroccan descent are, since the latter are more often involved in crime. Another explanation might be that being sentenced to prison could indicate that a serious, potentially violent crime has been committed. The fact that the number of detainees in Dutch prison with a Moroccan background is twice the number of detainees with a Turkish background could indicate that the detainees of Moroccan descent have committed more serious (and potentially violent) crimes. This could be in line with the argument that violent convicts may actively seek connection to extremist movements, or that Islamist extremist recruiters would actively reach out to them. However, is there empirical evidence in the Dutch case to support such claims?

Studies have been conducted on Dutch foreign fighters in Syria and on a homegrown jihadist network in the Netherlands (Weggemans et al., 2014; Schuurman et al., 2014). These studies do not indicate that a large proportion of the Islamist extremists they examined were sentenced to prison prior to their process of radicalization. In cases in which there was imprisonment, it was mainly as a result of their religiously inspired violent actions or motives, often after their process of radicalization. Stated differently, there is no clear empirical evidence that Dutch foreign fighters or homegrown jihadist radicalized in prison, or that they were recruited because of their criminal past. This does not mean that the link between criminality and involvement in Islamist extremism should be ruled out. Further research into this matter is highly recommended. However, for now it remains crucial to be careful when addressing a potential link between criminality and becoming involved in Islamist extremism for the Dutch case. So far, there seems to be a lack of strong empirical evidence to claim that Dutch Islamist foreign fighters radicalized into extremism as a result of imprisonment or their criminal past, let alone to claim that it might explain the distinct involvement in the statistics on Dutch foreign fighters.

6 ANALYSIS AT THE STRUCTURAL LEVEL

This chapter is the last one to analyze the potential differences in the factors contributing to Islamist extremism between the Turkish and the Moroccan population in the Netherlands. The previous chapters focused on the factors at the individual and social levels. The present chapter will focus on the structural level: factors that are known to contribute to Islamist extremism but on which an individual has little or no influence. Stated differently, factors at the structural level are often greater developments that are persistent and difficult to change, yet they influence one's perceptions and attitudes. This chapter follows the same structure as the first chapter of analysis: it first separately discusses the Turkish and Moroccan cases, followed by a brief comparison and discussion.

6.1 POORLY STRUCTURED RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

In the theoretical chapter, it was explained that religiously inspired extremism is more likely to occur if religious institutions are ill structured and if they lack a formal overseer. Members of such religious institutions can develop radical and extremist ideologies relatively more easily than members of a well-structured religious institution with a formal overseer can. The absence of such an overseer or authority who watches over the theological teachings may cause radical and extreme ideologies to emerge and spread.

Although a vast majority of people of Turkish and Moroccan descent in the Netherlands are Muslim, these two groups usually have their own religious institutions. To determine whether and how these institutions differ from each other, the next sections will examine their overall structure. The analysis is based on Poortinga's (2008) discussion on religious institutions. The data are derived from several academic publications on Turkish and Moroccan religious institutions in the Netherlands. However, some of these publications are more than 20 years old. One could argue that this could affect the reliability of the presented findings, since certain structures or characteristics may have changed over the past few years. As much as possible, this is resolved by validating those dated data with more recent empirical findings. Moreover, there is no reason or indication to believe that the presented findings are outdated or questionable.

6.1.1 Turkish religious institutions and their structures

According to the latest available estimate, there are around 350 Turkish Islamic organizations and around 242 Turkish mosques in the Netherlands (van Oudenhoven, Blank, Leemhuis, Pomp & Sluis, 2008). A vast majority of these institutions are affiliated to one of the following three Turkish ideological movements: the conservative Süleymancilar movement, the Turkish nationalistic Diyanet movement, and the Islamic Milli Görüs movement. According to Sunnier (1996), these three ideological movements are pan-European religious-political movements that watch over the ideological teachings of the organizations that are affiliated with them.

The Süleymancilar movement

The Süleymancilar movement is a conservative movement active throughout Western Europe (Canatan, 2001). It mainly focuses on religious education and stimulates conservative teachings. This movement first obtained a foothold in the Netherlands in 1972 by means of establishing the *Stichting Islamitisch Centrum Nederland* [2] (hereafter SICN) in Utrecht (Canatan, 2001). The SICN watches over the theological teachings of the approximately 50 religious institutions that are affiliated with it in the Netherlands. According to Landman (1992), the Süleymancilar movement has a strong hierarchical structure with vertical power relations. The leadership of this movement is closely involved in appointing imams and other religious figures to its affiliated organizations. By doing so, the SICN can ensure that its conservative ideologies are being taught accordingly.

The Diyanet movement

The Diyanet is the largest Turkish Islamic movement in the Netherlands, covering approximately 70% of all Turkish Islamic organizations in the country (Van Oudehoven, 2008). It is controlled by the Turkish Ministry of Religious Affairs (Canatan, 2001). The Diyanet's main mission is to meet the religious needs of the Turkish diaspora in Europe. Moreover, the Diyanet movement also aims to ensure that religious extremism does not flourish amongst its followers (Canatan, 2001). This refers not only to Islamist extremism, but also to the theological currents that oppose the separation of state and religion. Accordingly, the Diyanet movement is known to advocate a moderate Sunni Islam (Sunnier, 1996). The Diyanet movement has two umbrella organizations in

[2] The SICN translates into Foundation of Islamic Centre the Netherlands

the Netherlands: the *Stichting Turks-Islamitische Culturele Federatie*[3] and the *Islamitische Stichting Nederland*[4]. Both organizations are subordinate to the pan-European Diyanet movement, while at the same time watching over the theological teachings of their affiliated organizations in the Netherlands. According to Landman (1992), the leadership of these two organizations is responsible for appointing imams and other religious leaders to affiliated religious institutions.

The Milli Görüs movement

The Milli Görüs movement is the smallest of the three main Turkish religious movements in the Netherlands (Van Oudehoven et al, 2008). Unlike the two other pan-European Turkish movements, Milli Görüs specifically focuses on young Turkish Muslims. Religious institutions affiliated with this movement do not only focus on ideological and theological teachings, but are also engaged in social work (Sunnier, 1996). They stimulate education and employment amongst their members. The Milli Görüs movement has one main subordinate organization in the Netherlands: the *Nederlandse Islamitische Federatie* [5](NIF). The NIF coordinates the activities of Milli Görüs in the Netherlands and watches over the theological teachings (Landman, 1992). It is also closely involved in appointing religious leaders.

6.1.2 Moroccan religious institutions and their structures

According to Oudehoven et al. (2008), there are 171 Moroccan Islamic organizations and 179 Moroccan mosques in the Netherlands. Unlike in the Turkish case, there are no pan-European Moroccan associations that coordinate and watch over the ideological and theological teachings of the Moroccan diaspora. However, some Moroccan mosques in the Netherlands are united in the *Unie van Morokkaanse Moslim Organisaties in Nederland* [6](hereafter UMMON). The UMMON, however, can be labeled as a horizontal partnership instead of as a vertical hierarchy (Ter Wal, 2005). Many of the religious institutions that are united in the UMMON follow different ideologies and teachings. Some of them adhere to a more conservative current within Islam, while others follow a more tolerant stream (Ter Wal, 2005). Moreover, not only does there seem to be a lack of common ideological teachings within the UMMON, but there is also a lack of consensus on

[3] Turkish- Dutch Islamic Cultural Federation
[4] Islamic Foundation in the Netherlands
[5] Dutch Islamic Federation
[6] Union of Moroccan Muslim Organizations in the Netherlands

practical matters. For instance, some of the religious institutions united in the UMMON use the traditional Arabic calendar to celebrate Islamic holidays, while others use the Moroccan calendar (Ter Wal, 2005). This illustrates the overall lack of consensus on both ideological and practical matters in the UMON.

Besides lacking a universal ideology, the UMMON also fails to create a hierarchal organization structure. According to Waardenburg (2001), the board of the UMON has no or little involvement when it comes to appointing imams and other religious leaders. Unlike in the Turkish case, Moroccan religious leaders are usually appointed by the community instead of by an overarching authority (Waardenburg, 2001). This leaves the board of the UMMON to have little influence on the ideological and theological teachings of its affiliated institutions.

6.1.3 Comparing Turkish and Moroccan religious institutions

There seems to be a significant difference in the way in which Turkish religious institutions in the Netherlands are structured compared to Moroccan religious institutions. First, three large Turkish Islamic organizations are active in the Netherlands. These are pan-European overarching organizations that closely watch over the ideological and theological teachings of their affiliated institutions. In contrast, the Moroccan religious community in the Netherlands has only one Islamic association to which certain organizations and mosques are affiliated. However, this is more of an equal partnership than a vertical hierarchy.

Second, imams and other religious leaders in Turkish religious institutions are usually appointed by or in consultation with the overarching organizations to which they belong, whereas such leaders of Moroccan institutions are usually appointed by their community. The result of this difference is that the Turkish overarching organizations can closely follow and determine the ideological and theological teachings of their followers. In cases in which religious leaders deviate from what is desirable, the board of such overarching organizations can replace them and appoint new religious leaders. This principle is absent within the Moroccan religious community in the Netherlands. The UMMON is, as a result of its non-hierarchal structure, unlikely to replace imams and other religious leaders, since it is not closely involved in appointing them. Unlike in Turkish religious institutions, the Moroccan community has a strong share in appointing its religious

leaders. This, however, may enable the emergence of radical and extreme interpretations of Islam since there is no overarching authority to recall these ideas or to impose sanctions.

How does the observation that Turkish religious institutions in the Netherlands are well structured with a vertical hierarchy help to explain why people of Turkish descent are less involved in Islamist extremism? According to the AIVD, Islamist extremism is closely linked to Salafism (AIVD, 2002). Salafism is a fundamental current within Islam that stands for a strict and literal compliance to the Quran and is known for its orthodox attitudes and perceptions (AIVD, 2002). Although the AIVD concludes that Salafism is relatively limited in its reach in the Netherlands, it also observes that this current mainly resonates amongst Moroccan Muslims and to a much lesser extent amongst Turkish Muslims in the Netherlands. This seems to be crucial to understand why people of Turkish descent are less involved in Islamist extremism.

According to the AIVD, many Dutch foreign fighters and homegrown jihadist have been inspired and motivated by Salafism. Most of them came into contact with Salafism during religious meetings, or were introduced to it by others (AIVD, 2002). The AIVD also observes that religious leaders teaching Salafism are often individuals who are distanced from Western society and, moreover, who live in their own orthodox reality. This indicates that these religious leaders – who are, according to the AIVD, often of Moroccan descent – are not part of the mainstream Islamic teachings in the Netherlands. However, they are able to continue because there is no formal authority watching over their ideological and theological teachings. This may explain why Salafism resonates to a much lesser extent in the Turkish community in the Netherlands.

Turkish religious institutions are subordinate to larger pan-European associations that watch over their ideological and theological teachings. The previous section showed that these associations are conservative, moderate, or Turkish nationalistic, but do not lean towards Salafism. Thus, they are unlikely to tolerate such orthodox teachings by the religious leaders whom they appoint. As a result, Turkish Muslims in the Netherlands, who usually visit Turkish mosques, are unlikely to be exposed to Salafism. Moreover, since many Islamist extremists in the Netherlands have been inspired or motivated by Salafism, people of Turkish descent are less involved in Islamist extremism because they are less likely to be introduced or exposed to Salafism.

6.2 GEOPOLITICS

The theoretical chapter discussed how geopolitics may influence the perceptions that Muslims have about the relationship between the West and the Muslim world. If Muslims have the perception that the West aims to marginalize or defeat Islam with its policies, this may lead to feelings of hatred and revenge towards the West. This could translate into Islamist extremism, both home and abroad, as a sign of resistance and reprisal.

To determine the perceptions of people of Turkish and Moroccan descent in the Netherlands on the relationship between Western policies and Muslims, data were taken from the 2015 SCP report "*Werelden van verschil.*" These data primarily focus on the perceptions of people of Turkish and Moroccan descent on the role that Western states played in the Syrian conflict in 2015. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with respondents of Turkish and Moroccan descent in the Netherlands to understand their perceptions on the role that the West, and especially the Netherlands, played in the Syrian conflict in 2016.

6.2.1 People of Turkish descent's perceptions on the role of the West in the Syrian conflict

According to the SCP report (2015), many respondents of Turkish descent believed in what the SCP calls "conspiracy theories" when it comes to the role of the West in the Syrian conflict. The SCP report argues that such conspiracy theories are a way to understand and interpret the complicated dimensions of the Syrian conflict. The common perception amongst people of Turkish descent is that the West deliberately tries to disparage Islam (SCP, 2015). The perception is that the West does so to legitimate its interventions in the Middle East. Moreover, they believe that Western interventions in the Middle East aim to safeguard the West's economic and geopolitical interest (SCP, 2015).

Interviews

The results from the interviews with respondents of Turkish descent were in line with the findings of the SCP reports. The overall response was that the Syrian conflict is the result of Western interventions in the Middle Eastern region. When asked why, the respondents they thought that the West was intervening, all respondents answered that it was because the Middle Eastern region

is known for its oilfields. This argument is in line with the SCP conclusion that people of Turkish descent believe that Western interventions in the Middle East are driven by economic interests.

The interviews also focused on the perceptions that the respondents of Turkish descent had on the role of the Netherlands in particular when it comes to the Syrian and other past conflicts in the Middle East. They were asked how they interpreted the Dutch foreign policies in relation to Muslims around the world. The overall responses were different than when the respondents were asked to interpret the role of the West in general. When discussing the role of the Netherlands in particular, the respondents labeled the Dutch foreign policies as "hypocritical." They argued that the Netherlands supported the Western coalition against IS in Syria and Iraq on the one hand, while on the other hand simultaneously strengthening its diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia, a country that is, according to some of the respondents, also to be held responsible for the emergence of IS.

Follow-up questions were asked regarding whether and how such hypocrisy affected the Middle East. The overall argument was that the Netherlands supports the fight against IS because Syria and Iraq have nothing to offer to them. The following quote from one the respondents sums up their overall perception: "I bet you, if Iraq and Syria were as rich as Saudi Arabia, the Netherlands would never be engaged in a war against them. But now they are, and you know what? The poor people in Syria and Iraq are being victimized instead of being helped by the Netherlands." (T2, personal communication, November 5, 2016)

6.2.2 People of Moroccan descent's perceptions on the role of the West in the Syrian conflict

People of Moroccan descent in the Netherlands generally also have the perception that the Western world is to be held accountable for the Syrian conflict (SCP, 2015). They believe that Western interventions in the Middle East are aimed at marginalizing Islam. The SCP argues that there is also a widespread belief in "conspiracy theories" in the Moroccan population in the Netherlands (SCP, 2015). However, these conspiracy theories are not centered around the West intervening in the Middle East for economic and geopolitical interest, but instead for reasons of denigrating Islam. For instance, there is a belief that IS is an American "invention" aimed to denigrate Islam.

Other theories include Israeli soldiers concealed in the well-known orange IS suits to commit beheadings in order to disparage Islam (SCP, 2015).

Interviews

The results from the interviews with respondents of Moroccan descent were consistent with the SCP research. All of the respondents believed that the Western world was responsible for the Syrian conflict. When asked why, the overall argument was that the West, and especially the US, "created" IS. Follow-up questions were asked to determine where that belief came from. One respondent argued: "If IS really wanted the caliphate, then why would they kill so many Muslim brothers? That makes no sense to me. Perhaps there is more going on than we know. Maybe Israel and the US have something to do with it? Have you looked at that? Perhaps that is interesting for your thesis." (M5, personal communication, November 21, 2016)

This quote sums up the overall line of reasoning that was presented during the interviews. On several occasions, the respondents hinted that IS could be a Western intervention. They indicated that the West would do so in order to denigrate and eventually defeat Islam. When asked why the West would want to defeat Islam, the overall argument was that the West perceives Islam as a danger or a threat.

The interviews also covered the role of the Netherlands in particular with regard to its relation with the Middle East. The opinions were somewhat divided, but all respondents expressed their displeasure when discussing the Dutch involvement in several conflicts in the Middle East. One respondent argued that the Netherlands had "no balls" and that it followed the orders of other countries regarding whether or not to become militarily involved in the Middle East (M4, personal communication, November 17, 2016). Another respondent raised the question of why the Netherlands spent tax money on supporting the war against IS while there were domestic problems in retirement and nursing homes (M3, personal communication, November 3, 2016). However, none of the respondents were quick to limit the discussion to the role of the Netherlands in the Middle East; instead, they continuously tried to link that discussion to the "dubious" role of the West in general.

6.2.3 Same approach, different explanations

Both the SCP data as well as the interviews reveal that people of Turkish and Moroccan descent believe that the West should be held accountable for the Syrian conflict and the emergence of IS. However, they seem to have different explanations for the responsibility of the Western world in this conflict. The respondents of Turkish descent tended to acknowledge that IS is led by Muslims who operate in the name of Islam. However, they believed that IS is the result of past Western interventions in the Middle East, which were, according to the respondents, motivated by Western states' economic and geopolitical interests. Thus, in their perception the conflict in Syria is the result of economic and geopolitical Western interests in the region. This line of reasoning was also followed when discussing the Dutch role in the Middle East. The respondents argued that the Dutch involvement in the Middle East was determined by the Netherlands' interests. They pointed out that the Netherlands was only militarily involved in Middle Eastern states that had less to offer, while at the same time it strengthened its diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia, which, according to the respondents, was also responsible for the emergence of IS. In conclusion, it seems that people of Turkish descent interpret the Western involvement in the Middle East as driven by economic and geopolitical interests.

Other dynamics were observed amongst the respondents of Moroccan descent. Although they also argued that the Western world should be held accountable for the Syrian conflict and the emergence of IS, their explanation was less of an economic and geopolitical nature, and instead one that focused on the West trying to denigrate Islam. They openly questioned IS's origins and discussed conspiracy theories regarding Western involvement in the onset of IS. They argued that the West aimed to defeat their religion as a result of a Western fear of Islam. The respondents believed that the emergence of IS, and as a result the Syrian conflict, was a Western strategy to denigrate Islam.

Even though the analysis is based on a relatively small sample size, there seems to be a distinct line of reasoning amongst both populations. People of Turkish descent seem to mainly interpret the role of the West in the Middle East as economically and geopolitically driven, and they explain the emergence of IS as related to those interests. People of Moroccan descent, in contrast, seem to interpret the role of the West in the Middle East as driven by fear and aiming to denigrate Islam.

Therefore, they question the Islamic background of IS. This is not to say that such a line of reasoning does not resonate amongst people of Turkish descent and vice versa. However, the overall interpretation of the role of the West in the Middle East is distinct between both populations.

How do these distinct interpretations of the Western role in the Middle East help to understand why Dutch people of Turkish descent are less involved in Islamist extremism? Further research is required to provide a conclusive answer. However, one assumption is that people of Turkish descent, unlike their Moroccan counterparts, separate the role of the West in the Middle East from Islam. Stated differently, people of Turkish descent are less often inclined to interpret the perceived Western wrongdoing in the Middle East as an attempt to denigrate or defeat Islam. As a result, they also may feel less inclined to join Islamist extremist movements as a token of resistance and revenge against perceived Western wrongdoings to Islam. People of Moroccan descent are perhaps more often inclined to do so because they have the tendency to interpret the perceived Western wrongdoings in the Middle East as an attempt to defeat Islam.

7 CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter consists of three parts. First, it provides an overview of the main findings of this study. By doing so, this chapter aims to address the research question, “Why are Dutch Muslims of Turkish descent underrepresented in the 2016 statistics on Dutch Islamist foreign fighters compared to Dutch Muslims of Moroccan descent?”. Second, the chapter provides a theoretical discussion on how to interpret the findings of this research. Finally, the study concludes with several recommendations for future research on Islamist extremism in general.

7.1 ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

This study was based on the finding that Dutch Muslims of Turkish descent are less represented in the statistics on Dutch Islamist foreign fighters than Dutch Muslims of Moroccan descent are. In order to understand and address this disparity, this study took on a multilevel approach to understanding the causes of Islamist extremism. Based on individual, social, and structural levels of analysis, this study examined the following factors contributing to Islamist extremism: (i) feelings of alienation, (ii) feelings of discrimination, (iii) political grievances, (iv) group dynamics, (v) poor integration, (vi) criminality, (vii) poorly structured religious institutions, and (viii) geopolitics.

First, the results show that a majority of the Dutch people of Turkish and Moroccan descent feel alienated from the Dutch society. Feelings of non-belonging and non-acceptance are often triggered as a result of their perception of being second-class citizens. The analysis also revealed that both populations have the tendency to deal with such feelings of alienation differently. People of Turkish descent are more likely to fall back on their Turkish identity when they feel alienated from the Dutch society, whereas people of Moroccan descent are more likely to fall back on their Muslim identity in response to these feelings. Stated differently, people of Moroccan descent have the tendency to turn to their Muslim identity as an alternative to their feelings of non-belonging and non-acceptance. As a result, their self-identification as Muslims may lead to them on a religious quest, during which they can be introduced and exposed to Islamic extremist ideologies. Conversely, due to their strong Turkish self-identification, which leads to a weaker Muslim

identification, people of Turkish descent are less inclined to undertake such a religious quest. This makes them less likely to be introduced and exposed to Islamist extremist ideologies. Thus, it seems that the nationalistic self-identification of people of Turkish descent makes it less likely that they will undertake a religious quest in which they may be exposed and introduced to Islamist extremism.

Second, when it comes to discrimination based on their immigrant background, Dutch people of Turkish descent feel discriminated against as often as those of Moroccan descent do. However, with regard to religious (Muslim) discrimination, people of Moroccan descent feel discriminated against 20% more often than people of Turkish descent do. This leads to two assumptions. First, it supports the earlier theorem that people of Moroccan descent have the tendency to adopt a religion-based self-identification. Second, it indicates that the religious identity of people of Turkish descent is less often compromised compared to that of people of Moroccan descent. As a result, it can be assumed that people of Turkish descent are less often inclined to defend their religion, which in turn makes them less vulnerable to extremist ideologies based on the notion that Islam is being threatened and should therefore be preserved.

A third explanation can be found in the way in which people of Turkish and Moroccan descent are intrinsically motivated to express political grievances. While in this study both groups more or less condemned the use of violence in the Syrian conflict, there were distinct signs of political grievances and sympathy for the Syrian conflict, in particular for IS, amongst both populations. Support amongst Dutch people of Turkish descent for IS mainly centered around a few nationalistic individuals who supported IS in its fight against the PKK. Such support was nationalistically instead of religiously driven. As a result, they may feel less inclined to commit religiously inspired violent actions. However, support amongst Dutch people of Moroccan descent for IS was precisely the opposite: religiously driven instead of nationalistic. They had the tendency to perceive their religion as being threatened by others, and therefore may be receptive to arguments that Islam should be protected and preserved. Stated differently, the finding that support for IS amongst people of Turkish descent is related to their Turkish identity instead of to their religious identity once again supports the claim that their strong nationalistic identification

seemingly prevents them from being receptive for arguments to commit religiously inspired violence.

A fourth explanation can be found in the observation that Dutch people of Turkish descent are less often represented in problematic youth groups than those of Moroccan descent are. Empirical evidence revealed that many Dutch Islamist foreign fighters have radicalized into Islamist extremism partially as a result of being influenced by others in their social network, especially troublesome youth groups. The observation that people of Turkish descent are less often members of such networks seems to indicate that they are less often exposed to the group dynamics within such networks. Stated differently, people of Turkish descent are – as a result of the unlikelihood of their being part of problematic groups – less often exposed to peer pressure, supportive beliefs of religiously inspired violence, and negative and delinquent peer influences, which are known for possibly exposing individuals to extremist ideas.

A fifth explanation is found at the structural level of analysis, where it became clear that Turkish religious institutions are differently structured than Moroccan religious institutions are. The Turkish religious institutions in the Netherlands are generally part of a pan-European religious federation that watches over the ideological and theological teachings of its affiliated organizations. The Moroccan religious institutions, however, are generally independent, without such a formal authority. As a result, radical and extremist views are more likely to occur amongst Moroccan religious institutions. This may explain why Islamic radical currents, such as Salafism, more often resonate amongst Muslims of Moroccan descent in the Netherlands. Stated differently, the organizational structure of Turkish religious institutions in the Netherlands, characterized by an overarching authority that watches over ideological and theological teachings, provides resistance against Islamist extremist beliefs. Therefore, Dutch Muslims of Turkish descent are less likely to be exposed to the ideologies of Islamist extremists.

A final explanation is that Dutch people of Turkish descent interpret the role of the Western world in the Middle East differently than Dutch people of Moroccan descent do. Although both groups have the perception that the West has a “double agenda” regarding its involvement in the Middle East, there seems to be a remarkable difference between their explanations. People of Moroccan

descent tend to have the perception that the West aims to denigrate Islam by means of destabilizing the Middle East. This belief may trigger feelings of hatred towards the West, and may be an incentive to protect Islam by means of opposing the West through the use of violence. This may explain involvement in Islamic extremism. However, people of Turkish descent tend to have the perception that Western involvement in the Middle East is driven by economic and geopolitical motivations. They believe that the West aims to denigrate Islam to a lesser extent. As a result, people of Turkish descent seem to be less inclined to oppose the West for reasons of hatred due to the perception that its aim is to denigrate Islam. It thus seems that people of Turkish descent are less involved in Islamist extremism due to the lack of a widespread perception that Islam should be protected against the Western world.

Next to providing theoretical and empirical evidence to support the aforementioned conclusions, this study also questioned the relevance of poor integration as a cause of Islamist extremism in the Dutch case. This study did not find clear empirical evidence to conclude that the Turkish population in the Netherlands is better or worse integrated into the Dutch society than the Moroccan population is. The analysis indicated that on certain indicators of societal integration, the Turkish population underperforms compared to the Moroccan population. Especially when it comes to mastering the Dutch language, interethnic social interactions, and societal participation, the Turkish population seems to have an overall poor performance. This observation underlines earlier findings that the Turkish population in the Netherlands has a strong tendency to be inward-looking. Moreover, this observation seems to point to an integration paradox: on some indicators of integration the Turkish population performs poorly, while it is at the same time underrepresented in involvement in Islamist extremism as foreign fighters. The supposition is made that an underperformance on some integration indicators is related to – or caused by – the strong self-identification of the Turkish population. As a result, it seems that, in the Dutch case, poor integration on certain indicators does not necessarily translate into involvement in Islamist extremism.

Finally, this study argued that more research is needed to determine the exact relationship between criminality and involvement in Islamist extremism in the Dutch case. Although there is evidence to conclude that people of Turkish descent are less often involved in criminal behavior than people

of Moroccan descent are, there is a lack of empirical evidence to support the claim that, in the Dutch case, criminality functions as a stepping stone to Islamist extremism. No records were found of Dutch Islamist foreign fighters who had been radicalized as a result of either imprisonment or being involved in criminal behavior. This is not say that such a link does not exist, but more research is needed to make evidence-based claims on this matter.

7.2 DISCUSSION: THE RELEVANCE OF SELF-IDENTIFICATION

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this study's research design is its multilevel approach to studying the causes of Islamist extremism. This approach allowed for an analysis based on different perspectives, and therefore for different explanations regarding why Dutch Muslims of Turkish descent are less involved in Islamist extremism. However, even though the previous section in this concluding chapter provided several explanations for this conspicuity, the multilevel approach of this study also revealed the existence of one recurring theme: the relevance of nationalistic self-identification.

As was previously explained, Dutch people of Turkish descent are generally more attached to their Turkish identity than any other ethnic minority in the Netherlands is. This is especially the case when comparing people of Turkish descent with people of Moroccan descent. As a result of their nationalistic self-identification, Dutch people of Turkish descent are less inclined to identify themselves as Muslim – or, stated differently, they are less inclined to value their Muslim identity over their Turkish identity. The exact opposite is true for Dutch people of Moroccan descent. This is, however, not say that Dutch people of Turkish descent do not value or cherish their Muslim being. They do so and, moreover, their religion plays an important role in their lives. However, their Muslim identity seems to be subordinate to their Turkish identity. This is a crucial finding that appears to explain why Dutch people of Turkish descent are distinct from Dutch people of Moroccan descent at other levels as well.

The common thread is that the Turkish population has a strong nationalistic self-identification and is inward-looking. This leads to the overall conclusion that the strong nationalistic self-identification of the Turkish population guards them from being receptive and exposed to extreme

Islamist ideologies. The absence of such a strong nationalistic self-identification is absent in the Moroccan population in the Netherlands. So, is the answer then perhaps to encourage Dutch people of Moroccan descent to value their ethnicity more in order to become less receptive and exposed to extreme Islamist ideologies? One may fairly argue that such a solution is not per se desirable. As noted earlier, the facts that the Turkish population has difficulties mastering the Dutch language, less often participates in societal activities, and has less interethnic social interactions are possibly the result of this group's strong nationalistic self-identification. People of Moroccan descent do perform better on these indicators of integration, yet they are significantly more often represented in the statistics on Dutch Islamist foreign fighters. Moreover, it is not being said that the Turkish population in the Netherlands has no internal challenges to deal with. Recent developments in Turkey -such as the failed coup in the summer of 2016- have their effect on the Turkish diaspore in the Netherlands. Ethnic and ideological differences are being magnified. This may endanger their nationalistic self-identification on the long run. With that in mind it is arguable that a possible solution to combat the phenomenon of foreign fighters should perhaps not be sought in nationalistic self-identification per se, but in a positive self-identification in general.

If we want a decline in the number of Dutch foreign fighters – especially those with a Moroccan background – we should perhaps focus on policies that are devoted to creating a positive self-identification for those vulnerable to being exposed to extreme ideologies. Such policies do not necessarily have to be devised at the national level, but could instead originate at the local level. Small grassroots initiatives – such as local employment, guidance, and daytime activities – can be highly successful in contributing to a positive self-identification. They add significance to an individual's life and can eliminate feelings of alienation and discrimination

Another way to create a positive self-identification is by means of religion. Religion is not a bad thing, nor is it the root of all evil in this world. Moreover, religion has the ability to bring peace to an individual's state of mind, and to help one be able to accept challenges in life and find resignation in the things that one cannot understand. However, people can also find reasons in their religion to commit unlawful and potentially violent actions. Moreover, they can influence others to do the same. That is why we should ensure that extreme interpretations of religions are limited as much as possible. This is, however, not the main responsibility of the state, but rather the

responsibility of a religious community itself. Fortunately, there is an evidence-based solution to this problem: religious institutions should join forces in order to limit the chances of extreme ideologies being shared in their houses. One way of doing so is to ensure hierarchal structures to oversee the ideological and theological teachings and to impose sanctions when extreme interpretations are preached. This would limit the likelihood of religiously inspired violence spreading throughout the religious community.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The aim of this study was to explore why Dutch people of Turkish descent are underrepresented in the statistics on Dutch foreign fighters than Dutch people of Moroccan descent are. The analysis provided some indications to address this question. However, no scientific study is without flaws, and this one is no exception. Perhaps the most substantial one is that this study "only" examined eight causes of Islamist extremism out of a total of almost 40 causes. As stated earlier, this was done because of the limited extent of this study; the choice was made to extensively analyze a small number of causes instead of briefly analyzing a larger number of them. However, it remains unfortunate that this study did not manage to include more causes of Islamist extremism in its analysis. To some extent, this makes the findings of this study limited in scope. It is therefore recommended that future research on the different involvement in Islamist extremism of Dutch people of Turkish and Moroccan descent include other causes that were not selected for this study. By doing so, we will be able to obtain an even better understanding of this subject.

Another recommendation for future research is to explore and deepen our understanding of the relationship between poor integration and involvement in Islamist extremism in the Netherlands. The present study found that there is a so-called integration paradox when it comes to the involvement of people of Turkish descent in Islamist extremism as foreign fighters. Future research could specifically focus on the existence of this paradox. This would broaden our knowledge on poor integration as a cause of Islamist extremism, and could provide new insights.

Future research may also provide conclusive evidence of the relationship between criminality and involvement in Islamist extremism. This study failed to provide hard empirical evidence to support

the claim that convicted criminals are more likely to become involved in Islamist extremism. This study was limited in time and resources and therefore could not extensively study the alleged relationship between criminality and Islamist extremism. However, this is interesting enough to recommend future research. For instance, a multiple-case study could be conducted to examine how many Dutch Islamist extremists – both foreign fighters and homegrown jihadist – had a history of imprisonment prior to their radicalization process.

A final recommendation is to continue research on the role that nationalistic self-identification has in the involvement in Islamist extremism. This research was at times limited by a small sample size and could not make statistically justified claims. An extensive study including a larger sample size could provide more insights into the role of nationalistic self-identification as protection against involvement in Islamist extremism. This would contribute to the academic body of knowledge on Islamist extremism in general, but also to our understanding of the interactions between a positive self-image and deviant behavior.

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