

The risks of the (overly?) broad-based approach in Dutch counter-terrorism policy

Bob de Graaff

The difficulties of counter-terrorism in the narrower sense

There is of course every reason to prevent the establishment of terrorist organisations, given the suffering and social disruption they can cause.¹ A second reason for prevention is that terrorist groups are difficult to eliminate. Even relatively small and hierarchically-organised groups like the IRA and ETA succeeded in maintaining their existence for decades, despite numerous arrests. This is all the more the case for such organisations as al-Qa'ida, who adopt the form of a so-called scale-free network, in other words a relatively informal social network with a limited hierarchy and a high degree of decentralisation. The members of any such network know a limited number of other members, but can reach every other member via just a small number of intermediaries. In certain cases, specifically to ensure the continued existence of the organisation, double relationships are established. In addition, the members improvise their activities and take on changing responsibilities and tasks. On the one hand, therefore, the interconnectivity in such a network is high, whilst on the other hand knowledge about the network as such is very limited, amongst the members. This makes such groups very difficult to combat. Computer simulations indicate that such networks will even survive removal of eighty percent of their members.² The regenerative capacity of al-Qa'ida and of groups affiliated to or inspired by that organisation has emerged as being considerable. It is therefore questionable whether in response to thousands of killed and arrested jihadists, their numbers are in fact increasing more rapidly on a worldwide basis, such that it is effectively a case of banging our heads against a brick wall.³ In addition, it is difficult, in Western societies to observe and follow a group of more than several hundred terrorists who are able to attack at any moment, seven days a week, 24 hours a day. If this were the ambition, even a relatively small increase in the number of terrorists would rapidly lead to the establishment of a police or snoop state.

The idea is therefore very attractive, rather than deploying several dozen people for each terrorist, to attempt to prevent the individual in question radicalising to the status of terrorist, through far less effort.⁴ An additional advantage is that the background from which terrorists emerge is more accessible to data collection by the government⁵ than are the terrorists themselves.

These considerations lead to a twin-track policy: on the one hand, terrorists must be closely monitored and possibly eliminated; on the other hand, the radicalisation of others to the status

¹ Cf. M. Jacobson, *The West at War. U.S. and European Counterterrorism Efforts, Post-September 11*, Washington DC 2006, 28.

² A.-L. Barabasi, *Linked. How Everything is Connected to Everything Else and What It Means for Business, Science and Everyday Life*, Cambridge, MA, 2003, 113; Cf. A.-L. Barabasi, M. Newman & D. Watts, *Structure and Dynamics of Networks*, Princeton, NJ, 2006.

³ K. Cragin & S. Gerwehr, *Dissuading Terror. Strategic Influence and the Struggle Against Terrorism*, Santa Monica, CA, 2005, iii en 67; B. Hoffman, *Does Our Counter-Terrorism Strategy Match the Threat?*, Santa Monica, CA, 2005, 2; M. Ranstorp & G.P. Herd, 'Approaches to countering terrorism and CIST', in: A. Aldis & G.P. Herd (eds.), *The ideological war on terror. Worldwide strategies for counter-terrorism*, London/New York 2007, 3.

⁴ The term radicalisation here is used in the meaning of 'a process of personal development whereby an individual adopts ever more extreme political or politico-religious ideas and goals, becoming convinced that the attainment of these goals justifies extreme methods', Statement of Lidewijde Ongerig before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 27 June 2007.

⁵ P. Waldmann, 'Zur Erklärung und Prognose von terrorismus', U.E. Kemmesies (ed.), *Terrorismus und Extremismus – der Zukunft auf der Spur*, Munich 2006, 260.

of terrorist must be countered. This is in line with the notion generally accepted in academic literature that counter-terrorism policy must consist of a mixture of repression and concession; the stick and the carrot.⁶

Historical reminiscences

In the Netherlands, a so-called Dutch approach has therefore been developed: the comprehensive approach, whereby the Dutch authorities, in cooperation, ‘tackle the dangers of radicalisation and terrorism as a coherent whole’: ‘It includes repressive measures against terrorists, but puts an equal emphasis on prevention,’ thus the deputy national coordinator terrorist prevention Lidewijde Ongering during a session of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs⁷ ‘This requires the authorities to be proactive in detecting signals that individuals may be isolating themselves or even turning against society.’⁸ In the words of the former director for democratic rule of law of the General Information and Security Service (AIVD), E.S.M. Akerboom, in tackling radicalism and terrorism, use must also be made of ‘a varied selection of instruments, including political, financial, penal and disruptive measures that must be deployed either individually or in combination with one another’.⁹ This then refers to such issues as the integration and countering of social exclusion and discrimination with the assistance of education, and the provision of traineeships and employment, district improvement, requirements in respect of qualifications for imams and support for youth workers and social workers, but also monitoring and disruption.

This approach would seem to owe its existence to the radicalism and terrorism of the nineteen seventies, when the Netherlands was confronted with hostage taking by young Moluccans, who were attempting to realise the ideas of their parents in respect of an independent South Moluccan Republic, and left-wing ideological radicalisation, primarily focussed on supporting the German Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF). Then, too, there was a ‘Dutch approach’. However, this was more a tactical than a strategic approach: effectively it came down to dragging out negotiations with hostage takers.¹⁰ The Dutch policy of the time was also characterised by a mild penal approach. The organisational and legal framework was barely adapted in order to be able to tackle terrorism.¹¹ It would go too far to say that at that time, counter-terrorism and prevention ‘increasingly became nothing more than standard detective work’.¹² The then Domestic Security Service, predecessor to today’s AIVD, did clearly have an effective role to play in counter-terrorism. Some cells of the Rode Jeugd, the organisation supporting the RAF, in fact even consisted for the most part of BVD agents, such that the government had little

⁶ Cf. R.J. Art & L. Richardson, ‘Conclusion’, idem (eds.), *Democracy and Counterterrorism. Lessons from the Past*, Washington D.C. 2007, 564-565, 596; Eikelenboom, *Bang*, 262-263; J. Sinai, ‘New Directions in Terrorism and Countering-Terrorism Studies’, www.fhs.se/upload/Forskning/centrumbidningar/cats/sinai-stockholm-new-directions-studies-may06.pdf, 8.

⁷ Statement Ongering. See also Van de Linde et al., *Scan*, 83 and 87. As well as the Netherlands, the United Kingdom stood out through its early intervention to prevent radicalisation, R. Neve et al., *Eerste inventarisatie van het contraterrorismebeleid*, The Hague 2006, 89.

⁸ Statement Ongering.

⁹ E.S.M. Akerboom, ‘Counter-terrorism in Nederland’, www.minbzk.nl/onderwerpen/veiligheid/algemeen/publicaties/?/ActImIdt-1419.

¹⁰ P. Bootsma, *De Molukse acties. Treinkapingen en gijzelingen 1970-1978*, Amsterdam 2000, 380; U.

Rosenthal, E. Muller & A. Ruitenbergh, *Het terroristische kwaad. Diagnose en bestrijding*, The Hague 2006, 134.

¹¹ S. Eikelenboom, *Niet bang om te sterven. Dertig jaar terrorisme in Nederland*, Amsterdam 2007, 207-215; E. van de Linde et al., *Quick scan of post 9/11 national counter-terrorism policymaking and implementation in selected European countries*, Leiden 2002, 78.

¹² Cf. P. Klerks, *Terreurbestrijding in Nederland 1970-1988*, Amsterdam 1989, 202.

need to fear uncontrolled violent action from that side.¹³ Generally speaking, counter terrorism enjoyed a discrete character and was left to a restricted group of subject experts.¹⁴ The disruption of actions was an essential part of that policy.¹⁵ The most important element of counter-terrorism, however, was probably the contribution made by government to moderate discussions, clearly taking account of the adage that 'violence is always dialectically determined'.¹⁶ This also meant that actions in which no physical violence was employed were characterised in the nineteen eighties as 'violent political activism', based on the realisation that hallmarking these acts as terrorism would have made it practically impossible to achieve a return to within the frameworks of democratic rule of law.¹⁷ All in all, more than anything else, Dutch counter-terrorism policy appeared to be a form of repressive tolerance, underlined by a colonial sense of guilt in respect of the Moluccans.¹⁸ However, this approach could be sold all too easily as being 'soft'.¹⁹ Nonetheless, in extreme situations, the government did not hesitate to kill hostage takers, and certain arms searches in Moluccan population centres were intimidating in character. Nonetheless, the Dutch counter-terrorism policy of the 1970s and 1980s did not broadly speaking damage the character of the democratic legal order.²⁰

Overly broad-based approach?

The terrorism that emerged at the start of the 21st century, above all in the form of jihadist attacks, was of an entirely different order. Although there remains considerable uncertainty about the wide-ranging objectives of the jihadists, alongside politics, religion and ethnicity also play a major role. The numbers of terrorists are also far greater. This form of terrorism seems to have become almost entirely globalised, partly thanks to the use of the Internet, that enables terrorists to employ their psychological warfare more effectively than in the nineteen seventies and eighties, when they were basically dependent for their psychological effectiveness on representatives of the media.

The pressure on the leadership of al-Qa'ida as a consequence of the wars started by the Americans in Afghanistan and Iraq has made it practically impossible for those leaders to achieve truly important strategic objectives. It has become impossible for the leadership to exercise effective control over the agenda setting and prioritisation of individual groups who feel ties with al-Qa'ida. This is one weakness of the terrorist leadership, but the multiplicity of (sub) objectives that emerges as a result at local and regional level at the same time means that counter-terrorism is difficult.

So what does the broad-based approach mean, set against this background? Before answering this question, it should be noted that in literature about counter-terrorism, the counter-terrorist struggle is above all viewed as a fight against an external enemy. This is because this literature often originates in the United States, where to date, experience with jihadist home-grown terrorism has been minimal. As far as domestic security is discussed in the form of homeland security, it above all relates to physical protection, in particular of the critical

¹³ F. Hoekstra, *In dienst van de BVD. Spionage en contraspionage in Nederland*, Amsterdam 2004, 174-175

¹⁴ Klerks, *Terreurbestrijding*, 106.

¹⁵ *Idem*, 99.

¹⁶ S.W. Twemlow & F.C. Sacco, 'Reflections on the making of a terrorist', C. Covington et al. (eds.), *Terrorism and War. Unconscious Dynamics of Political Violence*, London/New York 2002, 121 (97-123)

¹⁷ Eikelenboom, *Niet bang*, 217-220; S. van Hulst, 'Willem van Oranje lecture: Observations on counter-terrorism and the AIVD', <http://www.aivd>.

¹⁸ Cf. Van de Linde et al., *Scan*, 77.

¹⁹ Cf. Eikelenboom, *Niet bang*, 118.

²⁰ Cf. Rosenthal., Muller & Ruitenbergh, *Kwaad*, 171.

infrastructure. There is also much focus on cash flows possibly supporting terrorism.²¹ Much literature therefore discusses the direct military struggle against foreign terrorists or, more subtly, counterinsurgency. Based on this latter approach, which calls for fine-tuning between actors and measures, however, lessons can also be learned for the domestic approach to radicalisation and terrorism.

As is the case with counterinsurgency, the broad-based approach is aimed at establishing a differentiation between the true terrorists and their immediate environment, whereby the latter can be tempted away from the violent core by removing grievances and by making concessions, a policy that is generally viewed as effective in the literature about historical experiences with both counterinsurgency and counter-terrorism.²² Also, as is the case with counterinsurgency, a communication strategy is required for the prevention of domestic radicalisation. This partly refers to the *hearts and minds* of people who could be susceptible to radicalisation. This policy wish may however be at odds with the all-encompassing information gathering strategy, which is also necessary for the preventive component of the broad-based approach. Because although prevention could easily be viewed as the soft component of the policy, if set against pure repression,²³ specifically the preventive approach often intervenes more broadly and more deeply in society, than the repressive approach which is aimed at relatively small groups.

One risk of an approach that heavily emphasises prevention is that the environment from which terrorists emerge is viewed as being too broad. In other words, there is a risk of (excessively) broad contextualisation. This is because, as yet, it is insufficiently clear, given the times we are currently living in, exactly what causes radicalisation. Is it religiously inspired, is it a political phenomenon, is it a form of expression of a youth culture and a lifestyle, is it a problem of migration and identity, or does it emerge from social exclusion and polarisation? Is terrorism actually even aimed at achieving any particular objectives? Is it a communication strategy? Or is it a form of self-expression? And how can we avoid the government unintentionally contributing to the feelings of alienation and polarisation in society, when the nets of attention for the environment for radicalisation are cast wide?²⁴ Due to the vague contours of the groups of possible radicals, large numbers of people come within the security aim of government. For example, in the United States, the ever broader attention by the FBI following the 9/11 attacks has led to more thorough checks on immigrants, leading to massive delays in dealing with their applications. This leads to frustration amongst the good-intentioned, criticism from people on the sidelines, and at the same time increased security risks, because whilst waiting for a decision, malicious applicants are not deported.²⁵

Dilemmas

The fact that much contemporary terrorism is at least partially religiously inspired is forcing the government of a nation that was highly secularised to also consider more closely the

²¹ For an example of this limited form of counter-terrorism, see R.A. Clarke, *Defeating the Jihadists. A Blueprint for Action*, New York 2004.

²² B.E. O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism. From Revolution to Apocalypse*, Washington D.C. 2005, 172 en 179.

²³ In the British situation, prevention is therefore justifiably described as 'the so-called "softer" end of the strategy', R. Briggs, C. Freschi & H. Lownsbrough, *Bringing It Home. Community-based approaches to counter-terrorism*, London 2006, 25.

²⁴ Cf. Y. Birt, 'Islamic Citizenship in Britain after 7/7: Tackling Extremism and Preserving Freedoms', A.A. Malik (ed.), *The State We Are In. Identity, Terror and the Law of Jihad*, Bristol 2006, 9; Briggs, Freschi & Lownsbrough, *Home*, 28-30, 41.

²⁵ S.S. Hsu & N.C. Aizenman, 'FBI Name Check Cited in Naturalization Delays', *Washington Post*, 17 June 2007.

beliefs of its citizens and as a consequence, however cautiously, to become involved in those beliefs. According to the National Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism (NCTb), the moderate variant of salafism was the step up for many recent terrorists in the Netherlands to jihadist violence. With that in mind, the NCTb has expressed the intention ‘to counteract these radical Islamic voices’ and to support ‘institutions that voice moderate views and pass on factual information about the religion’.²⁶ The question however is where the boundary lies between moderates and radicals, and at whom counter-radicalisation is aimed: at the radicalising individuals or the moderating forces in their environment? Does the boundary between moderate and extremist Muslims, for example, cross right through the salafists, and should the government maintain contacts with moderate salafists with a view to isolating jihadist salafists?²⁷ In a community in which there are fluid transitions between ideological and religious orientations, it is difficult to identify who the moderates really are. Does not the influence of the so-called moderates already move some people too far along the radical path to be able to positively appreciate this form of ‘moderation’? And to what extent are the moderates truly moderate? Or do they show to the general public and government an apparent different face than in the backrooms where they perhaps feed their pupils with far more radical ideas?²⁸ And if it is the case that potential terrorists are apparently the best integrated in society (an issue that will be discussed further below), if it is part of their tactic to hide themselves in the society of their opponent as a chameleon, and if they are in fact people who are closely involved in that society,²⁹ then it is difficult to determine the turning point in loyalty. This then is a major dilemma. If the government approves every opinion and idea, as long as it does not actually result in violence, then this makes the risk of reacting too late very considerable. If however the government intervenes at an earlier stage, it will be exposing itself to the accusation of having established a sort of thought police.³⁰ And how can the government prevent the moderates with whom it establishes contacts from being hallmarked as collaborators?³¹ Against this background, a thorough knowledge is required of the communities from which terrorists emerge if the government wishes to avoid causing more damage than it prevents. Another dilemma emerges at group level: the government fears that social isolation of groups can result in radicalisation,³² for example because a dialogue about standards and values is no longer possible, or because this self-elected isolation leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy of reduced opportunities, but then what routes are left open to government: intervention with the risk of accusation that they are becoming too involved in the free choices of citizens, or doing nothing with the risk of accusation that they have fallen short in establishing social cohesion? Any form of positive intervention for a specific group can also lead to the government being accused by other groups in society that they feel hard done by, because in their judgement, the government is ‘mollycoddling’ groups that threaten violence, and violence therefore

²⁶ Statement Ongerling.

²⁷ As recommended in F. Buijs & F. Demant, ‘Die Reaktion der Niederlande auf dem Mord an Theo van Gogh’, Th. Benner & S. Flechtner (eds.), *Demokratien und Terrorismus – Erfahrungen mit der Bewältigung und Bekämpfung von Terroranschlägen*, Bonn z.j., 20; F.J. Buijs, F. Demant & A. Hamdi, *Strijders van eigen bodem. Radicale en democratische moslims in Nederland*, Amsterdam 2006; Briggs, Freschi & Lownsbrough, *Home*, 63. About the necessity of establishing ties with moderate Muslims, see also A. Rabasa et al., *Building Moderate Muslim Networks*, Santa Monica, CA, 2007.

²⁸ Cf. Eikelenboom, *Bang*, 240.

²⁹ Twemlow & Sacco, ‘Reflections’, 97-123.

³⁰ Cf. the spectre in the film *Minority Report* by Steven Spielberg, in which people are arrested for a murder not yet committed, but predicted.

³¹ G.P. Herd & A. Aldis, ‘Synthesizing worldwide experiences in countering ideological support for terrorism (CIST)’, Aldis & Herd (eds.), *War*, 247.

³² Statement Ongerling. This conclusion enjoys academic support, Eikelenboom, *Bang*, 255.

apparently pays.³³ The de-radicalisation of one group (for example certain Muslim groups) must of course not lead to the radicalisation of another (for example right-wing extremists). The policy of the NCTb and the AIVD is after all also aimed at preventing polarisation between Muslims and non-Muslims. In the elaboration of those ideas, however, a paradox emerges. On the one hand, the NCTb wishes to strengthen the integration of Muslims, but on the other hand a component of counter-terrorism policy is specially aimed at Muslims. The NCTb wishes after all to increase resistance against radicalisation and terrorism 'especially within the Muslim community' and 'activities are being organised nationally and locally that specifically target young Muslims'.³⁴ The question is whether the NCTb and other Dutch authorities are not thereby unintentionally once again allocating to Muslims an exclusive place in society. Who can guarantee that an approach of this kind, probably intended only for a transition period, will not simply continue?

It is also questionable whether integration itself is not specifically one of the causes of radicalisation and terrorism. As Ongerling recently suggested, the leading Dutch terrorists to date were 'to all appearances fully integrated into Dutch society'.³⁵ The murderers live close by their opponents. The Israeli police, for example announced with concern that the personality characteristics of suicide terrorists deployed after 2000 against the state of Israel showed considerable similarities with the characteristics of political informants.³⁶ In the Netherlands, Mohammed B., the murderer of film producer and columnist Theo van Gogh, was initially a highly-involved neighbourhood activist. In that sense, he matched the profile of other terrorists who, having started as social activists, decide to turn to violence based on a strong sense of urgency and/or following a personal crisis.³⁷ The integration of population groups may overall be a desirable solution for a social problem, but account must also be taken of the fact that that same process of integration, at least amongst a proportion of those participating in the process, can bring about feelings of mental and cultural schizophrenia and an identity crisis, which could lead to violent activities.

Too intrusive?

Just how far these observations of the 'Vorfeld' of terrorism can go is demonstrated by the Big Brother scenarios that emerge if we consider attempts at bringing back into life the profiling and monitoring of possible violent offenders, that failed a quarter of a century ago, by using the latest technology. In mid-2004, the Dutch Minister for Domestic Affairs and Kingdom Relations reported to the Dutch Lower Chamber that the government was planning to introduce 'new forms of automated data analysis, such as searching according to profiles and the tracing of specific patterns with the assistance of data mining'.³⁸ With that in mind, the AIVD would be given access to government databases and data that could be made available in automated form, by third parties. The Professor of Law at Harvard University Philip B. Heymann has already sketched a doom scenario for the United States of an 'intelligence state' in which the activities of numerous citizens are monitored closely, because other citizens are encouraged to report on suspicious activities by their neighbours, and by the government placing informers in numerous organisations not only suspected of terrorism but also organisations that criticise the counter-terrorism policy of the government, in the form of

³³ I. Pitchford, 'How terrorism end', 21 July 2003, <http://www.interdisciplines.org/terrorism/papers/1/24/printable/discussions/view/823>.

³⁴ Statement Ongerling.

³⁵ Statement Ongerling.

³⁶ Confidential notice, 6 June 2007.

³⁷ Twemlow & Sacco, 'Reflections', 97-123.

³⁸ Quoted in Buro Jansen en Janssen, *Onder druk. Terrorismebestrijding in Nederland*, Breda 2006, 116.

electronic surveillance and by secret physical searches. He expressed fear of such a development, since any broad definition of the term 'danger' would create 'a culture of prevention' that places almost no further limits whatsoever on the scope of intelligence gathering.³⁹ As a consequence, 'caution about dissent becomes an accepted social custom'.⁴⁰ As a result, non-conformism and diversity, in the words of the vice-president of the Council of State of the Netherlands, Herman Tjeenk Willink, 'a characteristic of democracy and the secret of its resilience' come under threat.⁴¹ Anyone ordering a halal meal on board a transatlantic flight automatically draws the attention of monitors and profilers, and the same applies for numerous other actions. Specific search or chat behaviour on the Internet or the borrowing of certain books or videos can also make an individual suspects. An extension of this intelligence gathering becomes the proactive intervention by the justice authorities, such as preventive searches and the so-called disruption of individuals and breeding grounds of radicalisation, such as certain mosques. This latter proceeding was recently criticised by the Dutch Committee for Supervision of the Intelligence and Security Services, because there is no legal basis for such actions, and it is unclear when an individual may be disrupted.⁴²

Effects

Finally, it is questionable whether prevention actually works. Prevention calls for clear mutual harmonisation between the various policy makers and policy bodies. In a democracy, such harmonisation is often absent. If the will for such harmonisation is briefly present, following the (temporary) reduction in the level of crisis shortly after (the threat of) an attack, that willingness soon collapses.⁴³ One major problem is that the various bodies involved each have a different view on estimating the terrorist risk.⁴⁴ If even in the struggle against terrorism, government is unable to live up to the adage 'it takes a network to beat a network',⁴⁵ in the diffused field of counter-radicalisation, cooperation between the relevant government bodies is no better.⁴⁶ In addition, the effectiveness of a preventive approach is difficult to measure.⁴⁷ Few measuring instruments have been provided by science. Until recently, there were few studies into the role of persuasion in the struggle against terrorism.⁴⁸

A further problem in measuring the effect is that national policy against radicalisation and terrorism does not take place in isolation. There is also an influence from abroad on processes of radicalisation in your own country. For the United Kingdom under Prime Minister Blair, for example, it was concluded that foreign policy may be considered as 'one of the key drivers

³⁹ Ph.B. Heymann, *Terrorism, Freedom and Security. Winning without War*, Cambridge, Mass./London 2003, 135-139.

⁴⁰ *Idem*, 139.

⁴¹ Speech delivered by Tjeenk Willink at the International Symposium on Accountability of Intelligence and Security Agencies and Human Rights, The Hague, 7 June 2007.

⁴² Eikelenboom, *Bang*, 238-240.

⁴³ M. Crenshaw, 'terrorism, Strategies, and Grand Strategies', A.K. Cronin & J.M. Ludes (eds.), *Attacking Terrorism. Elements of a Grand Strategy*, Washington D.C. 2004, 80. Cf. R. Matthew & G. Shambaugh, 'The Pendulum Effect: Explaining Shifts in Democratic Response to Terrorism', *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, vol.; 5 no. 1 (2005), 223-233.

⁴⁴ Cf. L. Clutterbuck, 'Law Enforcement', Cronin & Ludes (eds.), *Terrorism*, 145; A.K. Cronin, 'Toward an effective Grand Strategy', *ibidem*, 285; Eikelenboom, *Bang*, 240..

⁴⁵ Th.A. Stewart, 'America's Secret Weapon – It takes a network to beat a network', *Business 2.0*, December 2001, p. 58. Cf. B.M. Jenkins, 'Countering Al Qaeda', R.D. Howard & R.L. Sawyer, *Defeating Terrorism. Shaping the New Security Environment*, Guilford, CT, 2002, 139..

⁴⁶ Cf. Briggs, Freschi & Lownsbrough, *Home*, 17.

⁴⁷ Art & Richardson, 'Conclusion', 574, 577.

⁴⁸ Cf. Cragin & Gerwehr, *Terror*, 70.

for frustration among the Muslim community (...) often cited as a catalyst or justification for violent extremism (...).⁴⁹ A danger of the broad-based approach is that despite recognising the global character of terrorism, the approach is primarily applied domestically. In as much as foreign policy is involved, it is generally a question of public diplomacy, the promotion of the creation of new approaches in the countries of accreditation of diplomats, which at the same time often have a far more facilitating effect for contacts between groups from their own country and the country of posting. However, no counter-terrorism policy will be effective 'if the United States conducts a unilateral and arrogant foreign policy that is impervious to the interests and concerns of countries throughout the world'.⁵⁰ Counter-terrorism policy therefore calls for international consultation about the approach to be followed.

It is also essential to prevent each country presenting its approach as the most effective. After all, terrorism manifests itself in different ways in different places and at different times, and the same applies to radicalisation. Even a single group like al-Qa'ida manifests itself in different ways and even the bystanders, who are asked to choose either the side of the terrorists or the side of the government, are different in their composition and in their behaviour according to place and time. Counter-terrorism policy therefore calls for fine-tuning and flexibility.⁵¹ This principle is at odds with the generally applicable approach and this too is the position of the NCTb.⁵²

Nonetheless, it is possible that for us to learn from one another's international experiences, and we must avoid terrorists learning better and faster from experiences elsewhere on the planet, than those attempting to counter terrorism.

Bob de Graaff (1955) is professor in terrorism and counter-terrorism at the The Hague campus of the University of Leiden. His professorship is sponsored by the National Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism (NCTb). He is also Socrates professor for political and cultural reconstruction at the University of Utrecht.

⁴⁹ Briggs, Freschi & Lownsborough, *Home*, 74.

⁵⁰ Art & Richardson, 'Conclusion', 595.

⁵¹ Art & Richardson, 'Conclusion', 580; Briggs, Freschi & Lownsborough, *Home*, 16; Cragin & Gerwehr, *Terror*, 61-62; B. Ganor, *The Counter-Terrorism Puzzle. A Guide for Decision Makers*, New Brunswick/London 2005, 46; Hoffman, *Strategy*, 10-11; B. Møller, *Terror Prevention and Development Aid. What we know and don't know*, Copenhagen 2007, 18; O'Neill, *Insurgency*, 163 en 188-189; L. Richardson, *What Terrorists Want. Understanding the Terrorist Threat*, Manchester 2006, 12; D.J. Whittaker, *Terrorism. Understanding the Global Threat*, London etc. 2002, 169.

⁵² 'I do not claim that our experiences can be transplanted to other European countries or the United States', Statement Ongerling.