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FANATICS IN OUR MIDST: THE PHENOMENON OF 'HOMEGROWN JIHADISTS'

Kai Hirschmann

HOMEGROWN TERRORISTS: A NEW TERM FOR AN UNEXPECTED PHENOMENON

"I had only been a Muslim for four months. But I knew my duty, I wanted to join the jihad. We followed the events in the jihad regions and watched films about how the mujaheddin fought against the crusaders. Hate grew in me", wrote German jihad fanatic and convert Eric Breininger in his diary in 2007.¹ These words sound strange coming from the mouth of a young man with a thoroughly western lifestyle. "I lived exactly the life that a young person in the western world wants to live. But I couldn't find any purpose to life". But Eric Breininger didn't have much time to search for the meaning of life. On April 28th, 2010, he was killed in a skirmish between the Taliban and the Pakistani army.²

Eric Breininger is an example of young Muslims who suddenly and unexpectedly turn to violence in their home country and are called 'homegrown terrorists' in public discussions. Cases such as this show that there are isolated environments in the west and in Germany where young Muslims can be set on the road to extremism or terrorism.³

- 1 | Cf. Yassin Musharbash, "Die Memoiren des deutschen Dschihadisten", *Spiegel Online*, May 5, 2010.
- 2 | Cf. Florian Flade, "Das kurze Leben des Islamisten Eric Breininger", *Welt Online*, May 5, 2010. Information varies on the precise date of death is. Other sources also mention April 30, 2010.
- 3 | Cf. Aladdin Sarhan, "Islamisten am Rande der Gesellschaft", *Terrorismus* 25 (2009): 5-8.

The term homegrown terrorists describes fanatics who are born in countries with western social orders or who have lived there since their childhood, and are therefore socialized there. Thus the term can include people with immigrant backgrounds as well as converts to Islam.⁴ The term surfaced for the first time in the English media in 1999, and since 2005 has been applied to native perpetrators with radical, Islamic backgrounds to describe a new variant of jihad terrorism. Previously, Islamic terrorist attacks in western countries were predominantly committed by non-native perpetrators who had spent long periods in their target country (e.g. as students). The 'Hamburg Group' which included Mohammed Atta, Marwan al-Shehhi and Ziad Jarrah, the pilots from September 11 2001, falls into this category. The trigger for a discussion with new terminology was the terrorist attacks on July 7th 2005 in London. The bombers, from immigrant Pakistani backgrounds, were born in Great Britain, came from secularized families and seemed to be integrated before they joined Islamic jihad organizations and committed political violence against their home country.

Fundamentalists see themselves as in the midst of a 'religious war'. Their own interpretation of the faith, viewed as the sole truth, must be defended.

The term 'homegrown terrorism' is also frequently used. This term is misleading and factually incorrect. Although they are homegrown terrorists, the political violence they commit follows an ideology over fifty years old, whose creators lived in the Arab world (in particular Egypt and Palestine) and which has now internationalized. The perpetrators are homegrown, but not the rationale or impetus for their actions.

THE JIHAD IDEOLOGY: USE OF FORCE TO CHANGE THE SOCIAL SYSTEM

In all the Abrahamic religions, religious fundamentalism is a mentality that seeks to return to the roots of 'pure faith',⁵ which is not possible without fighting and destroying the

4 | Christiane Nischler, "Home-grown' – Terrorismus und Radikalisierungspotentiale in Deutschland: Hintergründe und präventive Ansätze aus polizeilicher Sicht", *Die Kriminalpolizei* 2 (2009): 4.

5 | Cf. Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror im Namen Gottes* (Munich: Herder, 2004).

established order.⁶ Fundamentalists see themselves as in the midst of a 'religious war'.⁷ Their own interpretation of the faith, viewed as the sole truth, must be defended.⁸ Their own interpretations and convictions are considered as 'God's will',⁹ whereby their own 'good faith' must be isolated from those who are 'evil'.¹⁰

The new Islamic thinking began in the 1920s in Egypt and India. The basis for today's violent ideology can be found in particular in the writings of Egyptian primary school teacher Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966). His creed is the fight against the west, rejection of their values and the culturally modern. Qutb sees the reason for the 'downfall' of the Muslim civilization as being that the Muslim world has lost its way, and therefore also the opportunity to develop, due to the erosion of their religion by western influences and interventions. Therefore a (religious) 're-awakening' of Islamic countries in a jihad¹¹ must take place through a movement 'back to the roots'.¹² After his execution in Egypt in 1966, Sayyid Qutb's ideology was developed and

- 6 | Cf. Mohammed Djassemi, "Die Grundzüge der islamischen Ideologie", *Politische Studien*, Middle East Special Issue (Hanns Seidel Stiftung: Munich, 1980).
- 7 | Cf. George M. Marsden, "Fundamentalism as an American Phenomenon, A Comparison with English Evangelicalism", *Church History* 46, no. 2 (June 1977): 215-32.
- 8 | Cf. James Davison Hunter, "Fundamentalism in Its Global Contours", in: *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon*, ed. Norman J. Cohen (Grand Rapids: 1990), 57.
- 9 | Cf. Joel A. Carpenter, "From Fundamentalism to the New Evangelical Coalition", in: *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George M. Marsden (Grand Rapids: 1984), 10.
- 10 | Cf. Mortimer Ostow, "The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: A Psychological Perspective", in: *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon*, ed. Norman J. Cohen (Grand Rapids: 1990), 107.
- 11 | The term 'jihad' literally translates as a 'struggle or effort in the way of Allah' (not 'holy war') and is misused here as a legitimation for violence. However, this does not correspond to the content and teachings of the (peaceful) world religion of Islam.
- 12 | On the development of the jihad ideology cf. Kai Hirschmann, "Internationaler Terrorismus", *Sicherheitspolitik im 21. Jahrhundert – Informationen zur politischen Bildung* 291 (2006): 26; Kai Hirschmann, "Der Dschihadismus: Ideologie, Organisation und Bekämpfungsmöglichkeiten", in: *Terrorismus und Rechtsstaatlichkeit*, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, ed. Kurt Graulich and Dieter Simon (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2007); Kai Hirschmann, "Internationaler Terrorismus", in: *Handwörterbuch Internationale Politik*, 11th Edition, ed. Wichard Woyke (Opladen: UTV, 2008), 247-59.

refined by Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Azzam (1941-1989), Osama bin Laden's ideological teacher, and by the ideologists of jihadi-Salafism¹³.

This ideological approach forms the core of a universal model of jihad since the 1980s.¹⁴ Refinements are made by the religious ideologists of relevant local groups. The ideology of jihad can be summarized as a 3-2-1 model which underlies almost all terrorist attacks of this kind even today.¹⁵ It takes as its starting point three enemies, two types of attack, and the jihad as a defense measure:

- Enemies are 'crusaders' (western Christian states), 'Jews' (the state of Israel) and 'henchmen' (Muslim governments as dictatorial accessories), who are considered responsible for the inferiority and oppression of the Muslim world. In addition, they would also fight a counter movement by 'true Muslims', as this would run counter to their interests.
- Two types of attack are attributed to the enemies: on the one hand they occupy Muslim countries with their soldiers and oppress the populations (physical attack). On the other, they transfer their values and patterns of behavior to Muslim states and thereby suppress the indigenous culture (socio-cultural attack).
- To protect against the enemies and their attacks, a collective, violent defense effort (jihad) is required, for which voluntary fighters must be brought together from the whole Muslim world (*umma*) to form an elite (vanguard), in order to fulfill their religious duty as 'international mujaheddin'.

13 | Particularly of note as ideologists of jihadi-salafism are Abu Masab al-Suri, Abu Mohammad al Maqdisi and Abu Bakr Naji. For more details cf. Dirk Baehr, *Ideologie und Wandel in der Ideologie des Jihadi-Salafismus*, Forum Junge Politikwissenschaft vol. 22 (Bonn: Bouvier, 2010).

14 | Cf. Jason Burke, *Al-Qaida – Wurzeln, Geschichte, Organisation* (Düsseldorf/Zürich: Artemis & Winkler, 2005); Gilles Kepel, *Das Schwarzbuch des Dschihad – Aufstieg und Niedergang des Islamismus* (Munich: Piper, 2002); Peter L. Bergen, *Heiliger Krieg Inc. – Osama Bin Ladens Terrornetz* (Berlin: Siedler, 2001); Richard A. Clarke, *Against all Enemies* (Munich: Hoffmann & Campe, 2004).

15 | Cf. Wilhelm Dietl, Kai Hirschmann and Rolf Tophoven, *Das Terrorismus-Lexikon – Täter, Opfer, Hintergründe* (Frankfurt a.M.: Eichborn, 2006), Chapter 6.

The 'jihad war' is seen as a path, at the end of which a new fundamentalist political, economic and social order will exist. The models for an order of this kind in a religious sense are the order at the times of the Prophet Mohammed, and in the modern era, the regime of the Taliban ('Students of the Koran') in Afghanistan in the second half of the 1990s.¹⁶

The fight for a different political and social system is a two pronged one.¹⁷ On the one hand, jihad fighters (mujaheddin) recruited from Muslim communities worldwide come together in conflict regions as armed forces against the alleged occupiers. Terrorism through

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such 'local jihads' is currently taking place in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, Chechnya, Yemen, Somalia, Iraq, south east Asia and west Africa (particularly Nigeria). Also well-known in Europe is the participation of international jihad brigades in the civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992-1995). On the other hand, since 1993, terrorist attacks based on 'pinprick tactics at the heart of the enemy' have taken place with the aim of political influence;¹⁸ including, for instance, in New York and Washington (September 11 2001), in Djerba, Tunisia against German tourists (April 11 2002), on Bali, Indonesia against tourists (October 12 2002), in Istanbul (November 15 and 20 2003), Madrid (April 11 2004) and London (July 07 and 21 2005).

Recruitment for the radical violent ideology of jihad has successfully taken place among young Muslims in Germany and Europe for years. Although only a small minority are prepared to die for this abuse of Islam, skillful recruiters and seductive internet sources are constantly able to radicalize individuals.

16 | Cf. Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban – Afghanistans Gotteskrieger und der Dschihad* (Munich: Droemer, 2001).

17 | Cf. Kai Hirschmann (2006, 2007 and 2008).

18 | Cf. Christoph Reuter, *Mein Leben ist eine Waffe – Selbstmordattentäter: Psychogramm eines Phänomens* (Munich: Bertelsmann, 2002).

THE INDIVIDUAL PATH TO RADICALIZATION

The retreat into a radical, political-religious world of absoluteness and security holds a certain attractiveness,¹⁹ especially for those who are searching for something they have not previously been able to find in their society. The alternative approach apparently offers the opportunity to break through their own isolation and create a social footing for themselves.²⁰

The spectrum of backgrounds leading to the decision to become involved in politically and religiously motivated terrorism is very broad.²¹ More recent perpetrators are seeking recognition, fellowship, appreciation and stability that they do not believe they can find in society. These young people are searching for alternative concepts in life and spirituality. This makes them susceptible to completely different concepts of existence. Their search is used by supposed saviors in the name of a religion or doctrine whose political misuse they either cannot or will not see through. They are more easily manipulated and are ideologically brought onto the supposedly 'correct path' until they are prepared to kill and die for their convictions. With their new life plans and a readiness to commit violence, they place themselves outside of their respective previous societies; they marginalize themselves and accept being rejected and persecuted by the majority.²² For them, this is part of their pioneering role in the name of the faith they are convinced of. Radical and charismatic recruiters thereby function as disseminators and catalyzers.

Newcomers to jihad frequently seek out like-minded people (e.g. on the internet) with whom they can talk and associate. This is where the recruiter or charismatic leader comes in as a catalyst (indoctrination).

The New York Police Department found in a study²³ that the process to becoming an Islamic homegrown terrorist often takes place in four phases: firstly pre-radicalization (the

19 | Cf. Mortimer Ostrow (1990), 107.

20 | Cf. Mohammed Djassemi (1980).

21 | For a description of the radicalization process, cf. Christiane Nischler (2009), 7.

22 | Cf. Holger Nitsch, "Der Weg in den Terrorismus", *Terrorismus* 26 (2010): 1-4.

23 | Cf. New York Police Department, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*, NYPD Intelligence Division, 2007, http://msnbcmedia.msn.com/i/msnbc/Sections/NEWS/PDFs/nypd_radicalization_report.pdf (accessed May 25, 2010).

preliminary stage), secondly self-discovery, thirdly indoctrination and fourthly the focus on jihad (jihadization). According to the study, later homegrown terrorists rarely attract attention in the pre-radicalization phase. They come from secular and middle class backgrounds, in the traditional sense; they have normal jobs, go to school, study and do not appear to be particularly religious or prepared to use violence. It can be noted, however, that young men (and also women²⁴) between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five are more susceptible to the propaganda of terrorist groups than people of other ages.²⁵

It is possible that such young men grapple with their beliefs more strongly than before (self-discovery) due to emotional trauma in their lives, and thus take notice of the radical religious interpretations of jihad ideology.²⁶

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Newcomers to jihad frequently seek out like-minded people (e.g. on the internet) with whom they can talk and associate. This is where the recruiter or charismatic leader comes in as a catalyst (indoctrination). He exudes religious authority and teaches his young followers the fundamentals of jihad.

This continues until a few of the 'new radicals' are prepared to use violence and carry out terrorist attacks (jihadization phase). The transition from a group of indoctrinated young men to a covert terrorist cell is dependent on one of the members taking on a leading and organizing role.²⁷

Insufficient social integration and an identity crisis among second and third generation immigrants are also frequently listed as factors for radicalization. A feeling of a lack of belonging to the society of their homeland is likewise a crucial reason for such conflicts of identity, in particular if the culture of their parents contrasts with that of the host society. In such cases, a clear development of identity and belonging is difficult, which is a particular problem for

24 | Cf. Kai Hirschmann, "Jung, weiblich, explosiv – Terroristinnen im Dschihad", in: *Jahrbuch für Extremismus- und Terrorismusforschung 2009/2010*, ed. Armin Pfahl-Traughber (Brühl, 2010), 502-15.

25 | Cf. New York Police Department (2007), 22 et seq.

26 | Cf. *ibid.*, 30 et seq.

27 | Cf. *ibid.*, 43 et seq.

second and third generation immigrants.²⁸ Jihadism then becomes almost a replacement identity, although the path to radicalization only affects isolated extreme cases and is not necessarily immigration specific. In an identity crisis, even young people without an immigrant background can convert to this radical interpretation of Islam. Various studies in the USA and Great Britain also speak of a middle class phenomenon, where 70 percent of perpetrators find their way into jihad through friends, and 20 percent through relatives.²⁹ In Great Britain, for example, 70 percent of Muslims prepared to commit violence come from middle class and upper class families. "The dynamic of small groups is more decisive in willingness to commit violence than personal conviction, upbringing or income", analyzes the American researcher Scott Atran in this context.³⁰

In Germany, the path is similar: "So far it has been the case that people have become more radicalized from meeting to meeting. For non-Arabic speaking Muslims or potential converts, this initially begins with the search for 'true faith', and from this crisis of faith they fall into circles which contribute to a radicalization in matters of faith and lead to fundamentalism. From there it is only a small step to striving for final knowledge of the Koran. But for this, the candidate must learn the language, Arabic, because the Koran must be read in its original version. Then there are often language courses and Islam seminars, which are sometimes held abroad, e.g. in Egypt, Syria or other countries. And there a further selection takes place of people who would be prepared to obtain the theoretical and practical skills for attacks. These are people who will afterwards be smuggled to terrorist camps in Pakistan or Afghanistan, train there, and then be willing and able to commit attacks. There are always few left at the end of this development. We should imagine it like a pyramid; at the end perhaps there will be only one left, but there were once many who (re)discovered the faith and began the path to fundamentalism and then perhaps to extremism or terrorism".³¹

28 | Cf. Stefan Beig, "Dschihadismus als Ersatzidentität", *Wiener Zeitung*, April 28, 2010.

29 | Cf. Peter Riesbeck and Carsten Kaefert, "Attentäter aus Deutschland", *Berliner Zeitung*, September 8, 2007.

30 | Cf. *ibid.*

31 | Hartwig Möller, "Deutschland ist möglicher Anschlagraum", *Terrorismus* 23 (2009): 2.

HOMEGROWN JIHADISTS: RADICAL HOLY WARRIORS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

EUROPE AND GLOBAL JIHAD

The global jihad is not primarily focused on Europe. 90 percent of jihad terror attacks take place in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and other Arab and Muslim states.³² However, jihad also arrived in Europe several years ago with activists and terrorist attacks.

On March 11 2004, nine simultaneously and remotely triggered bombs on local trains shook the Spanish capital of Madrid. In a video message ("You love life, we love death") the perpetrators revealed their inspiration by jihad ideology. The majority of the group members had only been recruited for militant jihad after a long period in Spain. All had Spanish passports and worked in various professions as small traders, mobile phone dealers, mechanics, textile traders or in agriculture.³³ On July 7 2005, jihad terrorists committed four bomb attacks on public transportation in London, three of them on underground trains and one on a double-decker bus. Young Muslims sacrificed their lives and killed compatriots in the country where they themselves were born. Three of the four perpetrators on

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July 7 2005 were Brits with Pakistani roots; one of them was a convert with Jamaican roots. On November 2 2004, in the middle of Amsterdam, anti-Islamic filmmaker Theo van Gogh was murdered. The murderer, twenty-six year old Mohammad Bouyeri, was a Dutchman from a closed Moroccan Islamic environment. The murder of van Gogh was also the result of Islamic efforts to 'jihadize' Muslims in western Europe. In the center of the investigations was what the authorities called the 'Hofstad Group', which operated with Europe-wide connections. The Dutch-Moroccan's trail led, among others, to Spain and into the circle that was responsible for the jihad attacks of March 11 2004 in Madrid.³⁴

32 | Cf. Volker Perthes, "Globaler Jihad: Europa im Fokus", keynote presentation at the BND Symposium, October 23, 2008 (Pullach: BND, 2008), 2.

33 | Cf. Wilhelm Dietl / Kai Hirschmann / Rolf Tophoven (2006), 176 et seq.

34 | Cf. *ibid.*, 181 et seq.

According to their own reports, several attacks by fanatical jihad groups have so far been prevented by the French police. In the Netherlands, police and secret services have been observing homegrown jihadists in particular since the murder of Theo van Gogh. Italy was shocked when the Libyan Mohammed G. (35) detonated a bomb in a Milan barracks on October 13 2009. The man, married to an Italian and apparently integrated in the country, committed the first jihad attack in Italy.

These few examples make it clear that the homegrown phenomenon is a development that affects most countries in Europe.³⁵ A new generation of Islamic terrorism has grown up in Europe.³⁶ Here investigators are faced with a major problem: fanatics with domestic passports are difficult to track down. Even Germany finds itself in the crosshairs of jihad agitators. Spectacular cases of homegrown jihadists have attracted considerable public attention in recent years.

JIHAD RECRUITMENT IN GERMANY

Of the approximately 3.8 million Muslims living in Germany, fewer than 1 percent can be considered as extremists. Annual reports for the Protection of the Constitution number this circle of individuals at approximately 32,000, with various increments. The core of jihad fanatics is estimated at around 3,000 people, of which a further 10 percent are classed as 'dangerous individuals' who would commit an attack. In addition, of the approximately 2,900 mosques in Germany, 100 are considered as conspicuous.³⁷ Thus the phenomenon is absolutely in the minority.

However, it is clear that in recent years the cases of jihad fanatics from Germany have increased. On the one hand, these homegrown jihadists are young men from immigrant backgrounds who were born in Germany or lived there since their earliest childhoods. On the other hand, more and

35 | Cf. Christian Denso, "Vom Saarland in den Dschihad", *Zeit Online*, July 4, 2008.

36 | Cf. Souad Mekhennet, Claudia Sautter and Michael Hanfeld, *Die Kinder des Dschihad* (Munich: Piper, 2006).

37 | Cf. Annette Ramelsberger, *Der deutsche Dschihad – Islamistische Terroristen planen den Anschlag* (Düsseldorf: Econ, 2008).

more German converts are being recruited. The proportion of converts is around 15 to 20 percent of all Muslims prepared to use violence.³⁸ Most of them skip moderate, everyday Islam and convert directly to jihad ideology. They are indoctrinated at radical mosques and centers, inspired by German-speaking jihad websites and influenced by jihad ideologists who sell their teachings as that of the Koran.³⁹ "Why converts are so valuable from the terrorists' perspective is obvious. They are outwardly inconspicuous, and rarely have past lives documented by the secret services. Intelligence services even know of cases where converts were recommended to continue to wear jeans and eat pork as a disguise. There are no better sleepers who can be activated at any time. And terror recruits who have grown up here have one more advantage: they know the political weaknesses of the society in which they live".⁴⁰

The list of cases is now very long. It began with people like the Polish-German convert Christian Ganczarski from Mülheim/Ruhr, who joined the jihad with Al Qaeda in the 1990s in Afghanistan, and worked as a courier, computer specialist and mastermind for attacks.⁴¹ His background: raised in the Ruhr area, converted to Islam in 1986, travelled to Saudi Arabia in 1992 for religious studies and in 1999 to a jihad training camp in Pakistan.⁴² Ganczarski is in prison in France for his involvement in the attack on Djerba, Tunisia (April 11 2002). Also on this list is Cüneyt Ciftci, the first German suicide bomber. He is a twenty-eight year old Turkish-German from Ansbach in Bavaria, who blew himself up on March 3 2008 in Khost, Afghanistan. Representative of the path to homegrown jihadist are the recent Breininger and Gelowicz/Sauerland Group cases (converts) as well as those of Bekkay Harrach and the Chouka brothers (immigrant background), which will be analyzed below.

38 | Cf. Hartwig Möller (2009), 1.

39 | Cf. Yassin Musharbash, "Vereitelter Bombenplan – Gotteskrieger an der Heimatfront", *Spiegel Online*, September 05, 2007.

40 | Cf. Thorsten Jungholt, "Die deutschen Gotteskrieger der radikalen al-Qaida", *Welt Online*, February 05, 2009, www.welt.de/politik/sauerlandgruppe/article3154821/ (accessed May 5, 2010).

41 | Cf. Uli Rauss und Oliver Schröm, "Osamas deutscher General", *Stern* 32, August 04, 2005, 42-50.

42 | Cf. Thorsten Jungholt (2009).

On the German jihad scene, mujaheddin are not recruited openly. The names of disseminators who know the ropes of the jihad path can only be discovered conspiratively. A multi-stage selection process takes place: first the candidate must test his faith (or in this case its radical interpretation) and prove his steadfastness. Then his convictions are further deepened with Arabic language courses e.g. in Egypt or Yemen. A further selection takes place here. Only those who prove themselves to be convinced fanatics have even a chance of a place at an appropriate religious school or a training camp on the Pakistani-Afghan border. The German recruiter follows this path precisely.⁴³

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FROM HASH TO HATE: THE CASE OF ERIC BREININGER

Eric Breininger alias Abdul Gaffar el-Almani, born August 3 1987 in Neunkirchen, was an example of a German convert who gave an external impression of integration but inwardly was searching for alternatives and ultimately dedicated himself to jihad.

After his parents' separation, Eric Breininger lived with his mother. He was a passionate football player with Borussia Neunkirchen. His academic performance at school was mediocre, and he finally attended a commercial college to complete his secondary school leaving certificate. He came to the attention of the police for smoking hashish and tampering with coins for cigarette vending machines. As a child he refused to participate in Protestant religious education lessons or confirmation, and disrupted church services. His behavior was characterized by the need to stand out.⁴⁴

At the beginning of 2007, while working at a logistics company in Neunkirchen and under the influence of his Pakistani colleague Anis P., Eric Breininger decided to

43 | On the recruitment process and various stages of training, cf. Rolf Clement and Paul Elmar Jöris, *Die Terroristen von nebenan – Gotteskrieger aus Deutschland* (Munich: Piper, 2010).

44 | Cf. AG Islamismus security research group, "Profil: Eric Breininger (Abdul Ghafar al-Almani)", Working Paper, May 1, 2008.

convert to Islam. There then followed a very short radicalization process of around four months. Shortly afterwards, Breininger married his girlfriend Eva according to Islamic ritual in the Omar Mosque in Saarbrücken. In May 2007 he left his commercial college with the intention of soon emigrating to an Arab country, learning the language and studying the Koran. He justified his conversion with the claim that Islam had stabilized him. Breininger's wife Eva, who separated from him, sees things a little differently: "(Anis P.) put Eric under quite a lot of pressure. He noticed straight away that Eric was weak. (...) Eric always said that if you kill the infidels and die in the process, then you go to paradise, on the highest tier with Allah. He wanted to do that too, and die in this jihad"⁴⁵.

"It took just half a year for Eric Breininger, the unstable and sometimes pot smoking child of consumerism, to become the holy warrior Abdul Gaffar. He is an instant jihadist, as security authorities around the globe are noting more and more frequently in the last few years".

In separating from his wife, he lost his last connection to his previous life. Even shortly beforehand, he had sought closeness with a group of Muslims in Saarland to which Daniel Schneider, member of the 'Sauerland Cell', also belonged. He is believed to have finally lived with Schneider and an acquaintance by

the name of Hussein al-Mala on the grounds of the Omar Mosque in Saarbrücken. "It took just half a year for Eric Breininger, the unstable and sometimes pot smoking child of consumerism, to become the holy warrior Abdul Gaffar. He is an instant jihadist, as security authorities around the globe are noting more and more frequently in the last few years"⁴⁶.

Eric Breininger realized his emigration plans and travelled through Egypt to the Hindu Kush. Here he attended a training camp for the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) on the Pakistani-Afghan border, as had the members of the Sauerland Group Fritz Gelowicz, Daniel Schneider and Adem Yilmaz before him.

At the end of April 2008, the first two terror videos finally appeared on the internet. The short films show Hussein al-Mala and Eric Breininger. First Breininger paid tribute to

45 | Quoted from: "Auf tödlicher Mission – Behörden ließen deutschen Islamisten ins Terrorlager", *ARD Panorama* 697, broadcast May 15, 2008.

46 | Yassin Musharbash, Holger Stark and Simone Kaiser, "Der Instant-Dschihadist", *Spiegel Online*, May 3, 2010.

the suicide attack by Cüneyt Ciftci. Breininger's message: "If you love God and his messengers, then join the jihad, as that is the road to paradise". Those who could not join in the combat were requested to help with money or pray for the jihadists at the front.⁴⁷ Later, further videos were produced and disseminated which again included hints of attacks against Germany. He seemed to be in Afghanistan and remarked that the IJU was preparing new "martyr operations".⁴⁸ "Breininger seemed like someone who wanted to demonstrate resolve, but at the same time did not know how he had ended up where he was. That fits with the person remembered by all those who knew him before"⁴⁹.

Eric Breininger died at the end of April on the Pakistani-Afghan border. He and his companions were shot by Pakistani soldiers in a firefight at a military checkpoint in North Waziristan. Afterwards, his jihad group presented a sort of autobiography of Breininger on the internet with the title "My Road to Paradise", in which he describes his career over more than 100 pages.⁵⁰ He describes that he "followed the path of the accursed devil" in his youth, and also "spent time with women, went to parties and did many other bad things". Then he asked himself what the purpose of his life was; this brought him to his faith through a Pakistani colleague.

Macabre obituaries as in the case of Breininger are a specialty of jihadist groups. They exalted the death of twenty-two year old jihadist Javad Sediqi in a video message in November 2009. He had lived for a long time in Bonn and in spring 2009 travelled to Waziristan on the Pakistani-Afghan border, where he is said to have died on October 17 2009 in a skirmish with the Pakistani army.⁵¹

47 | Cf. Matthias Gebauer and Yassin Musharbash, "Deutscher Islamist meldet sich mit Dschihad-Aufruf – Behörden alarmiert", *Spiegel Online*, April 29, 2008.

48 | Cf. Yassin Musharbash, "Behörden fürchten baldigen Anschlag von Eric B.", *Spiegel Online*, June 14, 2008.

49 | Yassin Musharbash, Holger Stark and Simone Kaiser (2010).

50 | Cf. Florian Flade (2010).

51 | Cf. Florian Flade, "Islamist aus Bonn in Pakistan getötet", *Berliner Morgenpost*, November 25, 2009.

EXPLOSIVES IN SAUERLAND: FRITZ GELOWICZ, DANIEL SCHNEIDER AND ADEM YILMAZ

Mass murder with as many victims as possible: this was the aim of the three jihad fanatics Fritz Gelowicz, Daniel Schneider and Adem Yilmaz. Radicalized in Germany and trained in Pakistan, they wanted to commit a large-scale attack in Germany. But on September 4 2007, at around 2.30pm, the police seized and arrested the three.

At a chemical wholesaler in Hannover, they had purchased twelve blue barrels with 730 kilograms of 35 percent hydrogen peroxide based chemicals. 540 kilograms of TATP explosives could have been produced from this. In July 2007, investigators in Freudenberg, Baden-Württemberg secretly switched the chemical barrels for a solution with only 3 percent hydrogen peroxide, with which an bombing attack would no longer be possible. In August 2007, Fritz Gelowicz, Daniel Schneider and Adem Yilmaz rented a small holiday home in Oberschledorn-Medebach and bought further technology for detonators in Dortmund. The men had also taken their procured chemicals with them to the holiday home.

Fritz Gelowicz, born on September 1 1979 in Munich, was the head of the group. He is reported to have had contact with the now-closed *Multi-Kultur-Haus* in Ulm even as a fifteen year old. According to his father, Gelowicz was drawn to Islam through his Turkish school friend Tolga D., and finally converted to Islam at the age of eighteen. Radical Islamic preachers in the Ulm *Multi-Kultur-Haus* played a decisive role in his radicalization from around 1998. Gelowicz had been learning Arabic since 1997/98 and completed courses with relevant well-known jihad disseminators and key figures at the Neu-Ulm meeting place. Fritz Gelowicz most recently studied industrial engineering at a university of applied sciences in Neu-Ulm. His brother also converted to Islam.⁵²

At a chemical wholesaler in Hannover, they had purchased twelve blue barrels with 730 kilograms of 35 percent hydrogen peroxide based chemicals. 540 kilograms of TATP explosives could have been produced from this.

52 | For the life of Fritz Gelowicz cf. Marcel Rosenbach and Holger Stark, "Der Hass des Abdullah", *Der Spiegel* 36 (2008), 44-50.

Gelowicz had long been convinced by the ideology of jihad and the use of terrorist force. After several trips to Saudi Arabia and the middle east, Gelowicz travelled through Syria and Iran to Pakistan in March 2006 and there attended a terrorist training camp for the Uzbek Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), where he met Adem Yilmaz. Yilmaz was responsible for the procurement of twenty-six detonators. Daniel Schneider, like Gelowicz a convert to Islam, was believed by investigators to be the group's explosives expert. Daniel Schneider was drawn to jihad by similar motivations to Gelowicz: "His family also broke up – which was completely unexpected for him. First he lived with his mother, then with his father. In this period he became friends with a Muslim who converted him to Islam. Schneider left school against his father's wishes on his eighteenth birthday and went to Brazil where he wanted to "live in nature" as he put it. The adventure fell through. Daniel Schneider returned to Germany and completed his military service in the army. His wish to become a career soldier fell through for medical reasons. Immediately after his army service he again turned his back on normal life in Germany and joined the jihad. His search for a new purpose to life therefore ended when a preacher taught him a particularly conservative form of Islam."⁵³ Later, Schneider also moved to a terrorist training camp in Pakistan. Contact between Gelowicz and Schneider had developed in Neu-Ulm. Here, Schneider functioned as Eric Breininger's foster father. Together, Gelowicz, Schneider and Yilmaz underwent practical training in 2006 at an Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) jihad training camp in Pakistan.

The German converts Daniel Schneider and Fritz Gelowicz received jail sentences of twelve years each, Turkish citizen Adem Yilmaz eleven years. As an accomplice of the trio, Turkish-German Atilla Selek was sentenced to five years in prison.

On trial, the defendants eventually gave comprehensive confessions. The sixth criminal division of the Higher Regional Court in Düsseldorf imposed jail sentences of between five and twelve years against the four defendants from the Sauerland Group on March 4 2010. The German converts Daniel Schneider and Fritz Gelowicz received jail sentences of twelve years each, Turkish citizen Adem Yilmaz eleven years. As an accomplice of the trio, Turkish-

53 | Rolf Clement, "Der Sauerlandprozess vor der Urteilsverkündung", *Deutschlandradio background*, March 03, 2010, <http://www.dradio.de/dlf/sendungen/hintergrundpolitik/1137102/> (accessed May 5, 2010).

German Atilla Selek was sentenced to five years in prison. In the grounds for the judgment, presiding judge Ottmar Breidling said that the group had posed a “tremendous threat”. “There has never been an attack on such a scale in Germany, nor a conspiracy for one”. The converted members of the Sauerland Group, according to the court in its grounds for judgment, had been “filled with hate” and “blinded” in planning their thwarted attack on US establishments in Germany. They had been “driven” by armed jihad. There had been a readiness for “immeasurable and unrestrained killing”, pronounced Judge Breidling. A martyr’s death had been “the main goal in life” for these religious fanatics.⁵⁴

Thanks to the confessions and the conduct of negotiations, the court established various factors: a difficult home life for the defendants, problems at school, the influence of mentors in the environment of several mosques, and the significance of language schools abroad.⁵⁵ On February 20 2010, the wife of Fritz Gelowicz was also arrested. She was accused of having sent money to the IJU along with two men who were also arrested.⁵⁶

FROM TANNENBUSCH TO THE HINDU KUSH: THE CASE OF BEKKAY HARRACH

“Our atom bomb is a car bomb, any Muslim could be it”; and “The Taliban and Al Qaeda are like a prime number: only divisible by one and itself”. Insights of this kind were new even for hard-boiled jihad activists; and yet they were supposed to be a reminder of how determined the jihad scene is even in Germany. They come from the first threat video by Bekkay Harrach, alias ‘Abu Talha, the German’, at the end of January 2009 with the title “A Rescue Package For Germany”. Harrach speaks in German in the name of Al Qaeda and the international jihad scene. On the internet his lectures circulate along with his video messages. In

54 | Cf. Rolf Tophoven, “Lange Haftstrafen statt großem Lebensziel: Die Urteile gegen die Sauerland-Gruppe”, *Terrorismus* 27 (2010), 5 et seq.

55 | Cf. Martin Knobbe, “Urteil gegen Sauerlandgruppe: Welche Rolle spielten die Geheimdienste?”, *Stern Online*, April 4, 2010.

56 | Cf. Yassin Musharbash, Marcel Rosenbach and Holger Stark, “Ehefrau von Sauerland-Angeklagtem Gelowicz festgenommen”, *Spiegel Online*, February 22, 2010.

one lecture he speaks of how to outwit your soul when it is in danger of indulging in sin. He uses an ice cream as an argument: "dear soul, if you don't read the Koran right now, you won't get an Almond Magnum".⁵⁷

Harrach's threat videos are a part of a media campaign by militant jihad groups against Germany before the federal elections in 2009, in order to force it to withdraw its soldiers from Afghanistan.

The second video ("Islam and the Financial Crisis") was released online in February 2009.

A third followed in September 2009 with the title "Security – a Shared Fate". With his

face clean shaven, gelled chin-length hair, a black suit and neatly knotted light blue tie, Harrach stands before a red curtain (in an allusion to US President Obama's reconciliation speech to Muslims in Cairo) and threatens Germans with a "rude awakening" after the federal elections if they make the wrong decision.⁵⁸ Beside the USA, Germany is the only country to have such a video series dedicated to it. Although they are very unusual in their execution and arguments, the videos are to be taken very seriously: they bear the publisher's mark of the Al Qaeda media platform and would not be possible without the express will of the international jihad scene.

Bekkay Harrach is an example of young German Muslims with an immigrant background who are apparently well integrated but still on a spiritual search and able to be radicalized.

Bekkay Harrach, born on September 4 1977 in Berkane, Morocco, came to Germany in 1981 during a family reunion, and grew up in Bonn-Tannenbusch. He has had a German passport since 1997. He left his academic high school after the tenth grade and completed a technical high school diploma. In 2002, he enrolled at the Coblenz University of Applied Sciences to study laser technology and business mathematics, but was exmatriculated in 2004. His radicalization began early in his youth, as he explained in his first video: "I have wanted to blow myself up for Allah since 1993". Bekkay Harrach is married to German convert Elisabeth (29) and father to a son since June 2007. He had rented a ground floor apartment in Bonn-Tannenbusch where he regularly invited around thirty young men to

57 | Cf. Matthias Gebauer et al, "Sehnsucht nach dem Tod", *Spiegel Online*, January 26, 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-63806902.html> (accessed May 05, 2010).

58 | Cf. Hans Leyendecker, "Terror-Prediger mit Anzug und Krawatte", *Süddeutsche Zeitung Online*, September 21, 2009.

pray and read the Koran. As the owner of the call shop Casablanca, Harrach is believed to have had contact with many young people in the neighborhood; some of these were inspired by the meetings to convert to Islam.⁵⁹

His jihad career is equally long: in 2003 he travelled to the West Bank, where he was wounded by Israeli soldiers in a skirmish in Hebron. In 2004 he is believed to have moved first to Iraq and then to Syria. In 2007, Harrach travelled from Germany to a jihad training camp in Waziristan on the Pakistani-Afghan border, where he became the German mouthpiece of the jihad. Harrach quickly carved out a career in Waziristan, and now held a position in the middle level of hierarchy in the Hindu Kush jihad circle. He is also believed to have been trained by Abu Ubaida, Al Qaeda's head of planning who was killed early in 2008 by a US missile.⁶⁰ Bekkay Harrach is an example of young German Muslims with an immigrant background who are apparently well integrated but still on a spiritual search and able to be radicalized. A further example of this group are the Chouka brothers.

PROPAGANDA IN A TWIN PACK: THE CHOUKA BROTHERS

Once again, Bonn is the starting point for two jihad fanatics who threatened Germany with a religious war from the Hindu Kush mountains in April 2009. Islamic praises sound, then a young bearded man in a military jacket speaks: "We enjoy being in the crosshairs of the Americans, under NATO's hail of bullets and under Germany's Tornado planes", explains Abu Ibraheem in accentless German. Beside him is Abu Adam, who finds equally pithy words: "Ask Allah sincerely to smooth the path to jihad for you". Further content: laughing, a suicide bomber mounts an ATV filled with explosives and drives at high speed to an army base somewhere in Afghanistan. An explosion with a huge fireball illustrates the success of the attack.⁶¹ Even before this, Abu Adam was to be seen

These two Moroccan-Germans were seen as intelligent, sporty, integrated and popular, but slowly drifted into the jihad scene.

59 | "Der Terrorist aus Tannenbusch", *Stern Online*, October 7, 2009.

60 | Cf. Hans Leyendecker (2009).

61 | Cf. Josef Hufelschulte and Axel Spilcker, "Plötzlich wie ausgewechselt", *Focus Online*, April 20, 2009.

in the video "The Soldiers of Allah", where he called on the Islamic community in Germany to take part in the jihad in Afghanistan, in particular against the ISAF troops.

The two main players were the brothers Yassin Chouka (24; alias 'Abu Ibraheem') and Mounir Chouka (27; alias 'Abu Adam'). These two Moroccan-Germans were seen as intelligent, sporty, integrated and popular, but slowly drifted into the jihad scene. The Chouka brothers had a middle class upbringing in Bonn-Kessenich. They attended a Catholic kindergarten, a Catholic elementary school and an academic high school; they played football and basketball for Fortuna Bonn and Blau-Weiß Oedekoven.

Mounir Chouka trained as a specialist in office communications in the Bonn branch of the Federal Bureau of Statistics. "In his second year the young man increasingly changed. Mounir Chouka grew a beard, suddenly started wearing a crocheted cap and wore clothes to work that only strictly devout Muslims wear. He became more serious, more withdrawn, became a loner, studied the Koran, prayed five times a day. The change was apparently related to the pilgrimage to Mecca, which Chouka made in 2005. (...) In German Islam seminars, Mounir and Yassin internalized the words of Salafi preachers."⁶² Shortly afterwards, Mounir travelled to Yemen to fight against the government with a local jihad group, but returned to Germany where he split with his father. Mounir moved out, married, and in 2008 moved with his wife to the Pakistani-Afghan border.

Even long before their journey, both brothers had already held Islamic lectures, organized events and carried out undercover fundraising campaigns for the jihad and the mujaheddin in areas of conflict.

His brother Yassin Chouka dropped out of his electrical engineering course in Coblenz to follow his brother into jihad. Even long before their journey, both brothers had already held Islamic lectures, organized events and carried out undercover fundraising campaigns for the jihad and the mujaheddin in areas of conflict. On October 3 2009, a further video was made public in which more jihadists from Germany were to be seen beside Mounir and Yassin Chouka: Iranian-born Shahab D. from Hamburg (alias 'Abu Askar') and Khojah S., from Bonn and of Afghan origin (alias 'Abu Safiyya').

HOMEgrown JIHADISTS: PART OF THE MOSAIC OF CURRENT TERRORISM DEVELOPMENTS

The phenomenon of homegrown jihadists must be seen as related to further developments in the field of terrorism: the intensive use of the internet as a platform for information and recruiting, the use of regions of conflict for practical training and indoctrination, and variations in the tactical field.

Pakistan has been considered for many years to be a disintegrating country. Since the 1980s, the autonomous Hindu Kush border region in particular has become a deployment and training area for jihad squads. After their reign in Afghanistan was ended in 2001, the Taliban ('Students of the Koran') retreated to the Pakistani border. From there, they organize a jihad fight against those who think differently and organize training and consolidation sites for numerous jihad groups from various regions and countries. Many experts see Pakistan more than ever as "jihad's shunting yard"⁶³. However, Yemen is now emulating Pakistan.⁶⁴

The internet is also of essential importance for today's jihad extremism. It provides a medium for propaganda and information. The perpetrators' trails get lost in the expanse of the web.

The internet is also of essential importance for today's jihad extremism. It provides a medium for propaganda and information. The perpetrators' trails get lost in the expanse of the web. With 'cyber jihad', videos by suicide bombers as well as of attacks are disseminated. On internet sites, religious guidance is issued and even directions for building bombs are published.⁶⁵ In chat rooms, Islamists meet to exchange views. Former German interior minister Schäuble said that the internet is "a distance university, training camp, a news board and recruitment office in one for terrorists"⁶⁶.

63 | Matthias Gebauer and Yassin Musharbash, "Der Verschiebebahnhof des Dschihad", *Spiegel Online*, June 23, 2007.

64 | Cf. "Von Bayern in den Jemen: Nachschub für den heiligen Krieg", *ARD-Panorama 722*, broadcast February 18, 2010.

65 | Cf. Peter Carstens and Christoph Ehrhardt, "Dschihad aus den Weiten des Netzes", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 13, 2007, <http://www.faz.net/s/Rub594835B672714A1DB1A121534F010EE1/> (accessed June 2, 2010).

66 | Quoted *ibid.*

Just as the homegrown phenomenon is growing, the tactics are also being varied. A more recent development must be viewed with great concern: the recruitment of women ('homegrown females') for jihad.⁶⁷ "Until not too long ago, it was without exception German men who were a problem for the security authorities, if Islamic converts became risk candidates. Now there are several suggestions that women are also moving up to the front line of jihad. (...) The greatest concern in this country is now that more European converts with EU passports will set out for the conflict zones of the world in the future."⁶⁸

67 | Cf. Kai Hirschmann (2010).

68 | Matthias Gebauer and Yassin Musharbash, "Internet-Foren – Tummelplatz der Möchtegern-Märtyrerinnen", *Spiegel Online*, June 1, 2006.