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“Pop-Jihad”

History and Structure of Salafism and Jihadism in
Germany

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About

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Abstract

This Working Paper - focussing on Salafism, Jihadi groups, individuals and ideology in Germany – is a complementary study to Working Paper 01/13 (Dantschke, 2013). The Paper discusses several internal frictions and developments within the German Jihadi-Salafi movement and introduces the most relevant groups for current Jihadi radicalization in Germany. Based on over a decade of practical counselling and deradicalization work, the author establishes a three generational evolution model of German Salafism and describes the development of a genuine Jihad based youth culture, referred to as ‘Pop-Jihad’ in this Working Paper.

About EXIT-Germany

EXIT-Germany is the leading German Deradicalization and Disengagement Program (DDP) and one of the most experienced and successful organizations in this field worldwide. Founded in 2000 by the former criminal police officer and criminologist Bernd Wagner and the former neo-Nazi leader Ingo Hasselbach, EXIT-Germany is part of a larger NGO network, the Centre for Democratic Culture (ZDK Zentrum Demokratische Kultur gGmbH). Specialized in helping mid- and high-level neo-Nazis escape the movement, dismantle the ideology and reintegrate into a pluralist society, EXIT works side by side with sister NGOs active in the field of Islamism and left-wing extremism. The success of EXIT-Germany has been acknowledged by several institutions, most recently the German government¹ and the European Commission/European Social Fund².

About the Institute for the Study of Radical Movements (ISRM)

The Institute for the Study of Radical Movements (ISRM) was founded in 2012 as the research division of the Centre of Democratic Culture (ZDK) Berlin. It combines the knowledge and experience of EXIT-Germany with the ASTIU (Arbeitsstelle Islamismus und Ultrationalismus), the leading institution on Islamism in Germany. The ISRM commits to the core principles of the ZDK – the advancement of a democratic culture and human rights. The ISRM aims to support these principles by applying the highest scientific standards to its work.

The ISRM Working Paper Series includes short introductions to various topics related to radical movements, with high practical relevance.

¹ BTS-DRS 17/9119 <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/17/091/1709119.pdf>

² <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=466&langId=en&featuresId=388&furtherFeatures=yes>

I. Introduction

After the 'Sauerland Group' – probably the most dangerous Jihadi terror cell so far in Germany – was discovered and arrested in September 2007³ and subsequent charges on membership in a foreign terrorist organization (Islamic Jihad Union) as well as preparing bomb attacks were brought forward against all members of the cell, a heated debate in Germany about "Homegrown Terrorism" and a new public focus on 'Salafism' was the natural consequence. In court the four main suspects – two German converts and two Turkish immigrants – described their devotion to this dogmatic interpretation of Islam and their radicalization within the structures of the 2005 banned association "Multikulturhaus (Multicultural House)" in Neu-Ulm: "No devout Muslim can accept democracy," said one of the four in August 2009 in court, "because in a democracy, fornication, interest and alcohol are allowed." He explained to have reached this strict interpretation of Islamic rules only after the admonition by an acquaintance who had warned him about "the fire of hell". He had "gradually increased" his involvement, started to pray regularly, grew a beard and built up a new circle of friends in the mosque. Another defendant described himself as "devout". He agreed to the physical separation of men and women and rejected listening to pop music⁴.

Since then not only the security authorities have started to view 'Salafism' as a potential threat of terrorism, which may be justified in some instances but is too simplified in the end. The conversion to the Salafi interpretation of the Quran and Sunnah may promote radicalization to terrorism, but that does not mean that the process is inevitable or determined to happen. Indeed all forms of Salafism are based on an anti-democratic worldview using self-exclusion (not only from the democratic society, but also from the majority of orthodox Islam) – but nevertheless 'Salafism' does not constitute a homogenous movement. For example the "Purist" Salafis mainly strive to withdraw from society and live out their understanding of Islam in peace. Another "Political-Missionary" (Arabic: da'wa) part of the movement – which forms the largest spectrum – aims to convince the society of a divine order based on their understanding of Islam but rejects violence as a legitimate means to implement this order. The "Political-Jihadi" Salafis – the third category – in turn pursue this goal through a radical distinction. They preach hatred towards all infidels and justify the armed and violent Jihad. The fourth group – "Jihadis" – build on this hatred through the execution of violence and terror. The transitions between the four fields are very dynamic and fluid

³ See for example: http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/06/world/europe/06germany.html?_r=0 (accessed February 2013)

⁴ See for example: www.swr.de/blog/terrorismus/2009/08/11/yilmaz-will-den-martyrertod-%e2%80%93-und-stellt-fest-dass-der-koran-schon-alter-ist (accessed February 2013) and www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,641908,00.html (accessed February 2013)

(for an in-depth discussion about the typology see Dantschke, 2013: 12). However, the “Purist” and “Political-Missionary” Salafis could very well be allies in the fight against terrorism and violence.

Political and Jihadi-Salafi groups have been active in Germany since the late 1990's. Their major geographical centres used to be Ulm/Neu-Ulm, Hamburg and Bonn and they were mainly a concern for the authorities. Salafism became visible to the general public not before 2004/2005 (cf. Wiedl, 2012) with the first wave of aggressive public campaigns by the “missionary” Salafis. Emulating their role models from the United Kingdom and the United States, half a dozen preachers from Leipzig, North Rhine-Westphalia and Berlin travelled through mosques in different cities and gave lectures in German. In the beginning the talks were audio recorded (later video taped) and posted on the Internet. Multi-day "Islam seminars" and the participation in the "Islam weeks" of several German universities were added to the campaigns. Websites were updated with German translations of Salafi writings and religious rulings (fatwas) – mostly with English origin. Among the first of these missionaries applying the described methods were the Syrian Hassan Dabbagh (Abul Hussein) from Leipzig, the Moroccan Abdul Adhim from Berlin and the Palestinian Abu Jibriel from Wuppertal.

Since then the number of nation-wide active Salafi "itinerant preachers" increased to at least 20. In addition there is no German state left without at least one vibrant Salafi group. While these groups acquired their own space in almost all major cities or have formed "German-Islamic circles" ('Deutsche Islamkreise DIK'), in small towns regular mosques are also used without hesitation - for example from Milli Görüs or DITIB (for an overview about Muslim youth cultures and associations see Dantschke, 2013; Dantschke, Mansour, Müller, & Serbest, 2011; Nordbruch, 2010; Wiedl, 2012).

The former professional boxer Pierre Vogel (Abu Hamza) used to be one of the most famous among these preachers – almost like a Salafi "idol". With his messages of "true Islam" he reached young German converts, young immigrants to be "returned" to Islam by Vogel and devout Muslim adolescents who met him during their own search for the "correct" Islam and became attracted to Vogel because of his youthful appearance, his charisma and his seemingly abundant knowledge. Vogel, who had studied for some time in Mecca, was born 1978 and converted to Islam in 2001 at the age of 21. In summer 2005 he joined Ibrahim Abou-Nagie in Bonn. Abou-Nagie, who is of Palestinian (Gaza Strip) descent, was a successful entrepreneur and acquired a multi million Euro asset before he turned to religion and "wanted to do something"⁵ as he said. At the beginning he decided to produce and distribute DVDs in large numbers for free, in order to take a stand on the

⁵ See Abu-Nagie, Ibrahim: „Mein Weg zum Islam“; source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rmmEHMeY8D8> (accessed February 2013)

"headscarf debate" during that time in Germany. This project quickly evolved to become a webpage jointly used by many other Salafi groups, for example the Moroccans Abu Dujana (Said el-Emrani) and his father Sheikh Al Araby in Bonn⁶. Meanwhile Vogel started to travel through Germany and performed his sermons in large conference halls. In the winter of 2008, six months after the arrest of the 'Sauerland cell', Vogel split up from the representatives of the group "The True Religion" ('Die Wahre Religion' DWR) and created his own network with the name "Invitation to Paradise" ('Einladung zum Paradies' EZP). In a joint statement Vogel and Abou-Nagie announced their separation in February 2008: "The brother Abu Hamza wants to perform this dawa work in a big style, namely in halls and in large conference rooms. And we want to take care of the people who have embraced Islam, who started practicing this religion. Our ways have parted only for Allah's sake and the sake of Allah. And our goal is the same."⁷

However, this separation was characterized by fierce disputes, which lasted until the end of 2009 and divided the entire movement (see also for an overview about the internal fraction Wiedl, 2012: 42). Vogel did not miss a single opportunity to verbally attack his old comrades in order to acquire a more favourable standing. He received support from his new companions in Braunschweig (Muhammed Ciftci Abu Anas) and Mönchengladbach. In addition to the question of when a Muslim is not a Muslim but an infidel and who is entitled to decide this (takfir), the dispute evolved also around the notion of armed Jihad. After all between 2007 and 2009 several groups of young people from North-Rhine Westphalia, Hamburg and Berlin joined the armed Jihad and left to Afghanistan. While Vogel tried to distance himself from terror and violence, the group around Ibrahim Abou-Nagie, Abu Dujana and Abu Abdullah – still called "Die Wahre Religion (DWR 'The True Religion')" – legitimizes and promotes militant Jihadism. In addition to Bonn this part of the Salafi movement found a second stronghold in Frankfurt am Main with Abdellatif and his now banned group "Dawa FFM". The members of the former Taiba Mosque (former Al Quds mosque) in Hamburg belonged to the DWR spectrum as well, but the mosque was closed in August 2010 by the authorities.

In the meantime Vogel had discovered another advantage for himself. On April 23, 2008 simultaneous house searches in 16 apartments, mosques and publishing facilities were conducted by the German authorities, mostly affecting the leaders of the political-missionary Salafi spectrum in Germany - Abu Jamal (Mohammad Benschain) from Bonn and Hassan Dabbagh from Leipzig. Together with six other people they were charged by the Munich public prosecutor for sedition and forming a criminal association in August 2009. The investigations went on until March 2010 when

⁶ First „islamweb.info“, later „DieWahreReligion.de“ resembling „TheTrueReligion.org“

⁷ Source: a video interview with both; archive ASTIU/ISRM

the judge, after examination of the charges, could not find proof for the establishment of a permanent association under firm rules for decision-making and decided for this case not to fall under the territorial jurisdiction of Bavaria⁸. These investigations, however, had the consequence to paralyze the Salafi preachers who were leading the movement until then. This power vacuum came as very welcomed opportunity for Vogel with his new partners.

Later in December 2010 the Federal Ministry of the Interior launched preliminary investigations against Pierre Vogel's "Invitation to Paradise" ("Einladung zum Paradies" EZP) with the aim of obtaining a ban for that association in the end. However, Vogel had already left that group. Without any organizational responsibility in the EZP network a ban would have not affected him personally. During that time he shifted most of his operations to his own homepage. On June 20, 2011 he announced his reunion with the DWR group in a joint video statement with Abu Dujana. During one of his large events in April 2011 he even embraced his old comrade Ibrahim Abou-Nagie, who was the subject of investigations due to sedition charges at that time, in front of 1,500 mainly young demonstrators in Frankfurt am Main and thereby ending the internal fraction that could very well have led to something called 'Salafi burnout' (i.e. internal rivalries leading to fragmentation and subsequent collapse of the Salafi movement), which some scholars argue also happened for example in the United Kingdom and the United States (Hamid, 2008; Wiedl, 2012: 42). Referring to the concept of 'radical flank effect' (Gupta, 2002), Wiedl argues that the fragmentation of the German Salafi movement in combination with an undifferentiated repression policy by the German authorities towards Salafis in general led to a 'negative flank effect' (Gupta, 2002: 9; Wiedl, 2012: 43), meaning the adaption of extremist views by mainstream Salafis because this group could not gain a significant advantage of being moderate compared to violent Salafis. This ideological shift towards the extremist position in turn provided the base for the reunification within the German Salafi movement according to Wiedl (2012: 43). This analysis of the fraction and reunification process in the German Salafi movement is too narrow however, and does not cover the internal and external dynamics involved. Internal rivalries, repression by the government, media attention and the public image of Salafism in Germany all played together in a complex process which led several leading individuals of the movement to reconsider their strategies and tactics.

Among others a major force behind this development was the failure of the EZP initiative, which dissolved in summer 2011. The aggressive rhetoric and campaigns of this group in Mönchengladbach together with Vogel's mass rallies had heavily damaged the missionary Salafi scene altogether. Increasingly "Salafism" became an intensely debated topic in the German public

⁸ Holger Schmid in www.swr.de/blog/terrorismus/2010/03/30/radikal-islamisch-ja-kriminell-nein/ (accessed February, 2013)

and the repressive pressure from the authorities increased, what directly led many mosques to reject Vogel and other Salafi preachers. This kind of attention triggered a very heated criticism within the Salafi movement, publically visible for the first time after Vogel announced his plan to hold an Islamic funeral prayer for Osama bin Laden on May 7, 2011 aiming to use Bin Laden's killing as anti-American propaganda to show the "cowardice of the US kuffar", which did not work as hoped as the general rejection of Bin Laden within the German Salafi movement predominated. Not only the German courts denied their approval, but also Vogel had to face fierce opposition from prominent preachers of the missionary Salafi scene, even among the ranks and files of the EZP association. When asked by journalists whether he wanted to provoke, Vogel admitted his motivation: "I would not call it provocation, I would call it marketing"⁹ he was quoted by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. He simply wanted to attract as many listeners as possible. In the end his rally was allowed by the authorities with strict requirements. Vogel entitled the event: "How Islam stands on terrorism" and discussed, among other topics, the distinction between civilians and military personnel regarding the legitimacy to attack and kill them. Although this contradicts Vogel's usual rejection of violence and terror, this came as a consequence of his reunion with the group DWR and the view shared by his former preacher colleagues. Consequently for example the Braunschweig Imam Muhamed Ciftci (Abu Anas) officially distanced himself from Vogel within a mass-email addressing about 5,000 of his followers, because Vogel "is constantly becoming more political." "We should not provoke others and call for the victory of Islam like Vogel does" Ciftci told the news agency DAPD later. "Because," Ciftci said, "the young people could misunderstand this, and, without Vogel's intention, religion could cause extremism and violence."¹⁰

Other missionary Salafi preachers like Abu Abdul Adhim Jibriel also increasingly distanced themselves from the 'icon' Vogel and his activism. Abu Jibriel publicly declared that he no longer would preach together with Pierre Vogel. His speeches about the introduction of the Sharia were too provocative in his view: "We are not living in a Muslim country and should not confront people with the things with which they do not identify themselves" the preacher explained in Wuppertal to the DAPD news agency. Vogel is merely concerned with show, he claimed. "It seems like he wanted to declare war on the German society,"¹¹ criticized Abu Jibriel. As a consequence of this internal criticism Vogel announced that he would no longer preach in large halls or organize

⁹ www.sueddeutsche.de/Z5M386/4079422/Prediger-mit-wenig-Zulauf.html (accessed February, 2013)

¹⁰ Dapd press agency, see also: <http://www.domradio.de/nachrichten/2011-06-24/nachrichtenarchiv-24062011-1208> (accessed February, 2013)

¹¹ Dapd press agency, see also: http://nachrichten.t-online.de/bund-will-radikalisierung-bei-muslimen-bekaempfen/id_47447492/index (accessed February, 2013)

demonstrations in the early summer of 2011. For a short period of time the public discourse on "Salafism" in Germany had seemingly become obsolete in the summer of 2011.

In fall 2011 the very controversial "Read!" campaign started - the distribution of free German copies of the Quran in pedestrian areas – organized by the radical fraction of the DWR network, effectively establishing the group with its preachers as the leading Salafi force – even in the non-violent missionary field. At the same time a 'Pop-Jihadist' youth network formed itself under the label "Millatu-Ibrahim"¹² and increasingly became a violent arm of this radical wing, remodelling examples like "Islam4UK" from Anjem Choudary in the United Kingdom. On June 14, 2012 "Millatu-Ibrahim" was banned by the Federal Minister of the Interior and preliminary investigations against the preacher networks "DawaFFM"¹³ (Abdellatif) and DWR were initiated. "Millatu-Ibrahim calls Muslims in Germany to participate in an active fight against the constitutional order. The aggressive-militant attitude of the group manifests itself in the promotion and acceptance of criminal and illegal behaviour, including the use of violence as a means to fight the existing political order. The consequences of this ideology can be seen for example in the violent riots in early May 2012 in Solingen and Bonn. "Millatu-Ibrahim" has legitimized the riots in "battle videos" and called for further violence,"¹⁴ the Ministry of the Interior reasoned.

In short, Vogel's exaggerated attempt to gain more publicity in combination with the violence perpetrated by "Millatu Ibrahim" and the subsequent repressive governmental measures against the group strengthened the moderate political missionary wing of the Salafi movement with their positioning as an alternative within the movement. However, the government failed to recognize this internal shift and did not support the moderates' position during the public debate in 2011 and 2012. Through the Quran distribution campaign by "Die Wahre Religion (DWR)" which started in 2011 the radical wing managed to advance into the moderate wing of the movement and to gain acceptance for their methods and involved actors – not for their radical ideas – within the missionary field of the German Salafis and even to a certain degree in other parts. In this respect radical groups were the overall winners of this situation with a clearly enlarged space for operation within the German Salafi scene.

¹² "Millatu Ibrahim" is one of the major publications of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (* 1959): born as Isam Barqawi in Palestine, raised in Kuwait, and one of the most important intellectuals of modern Jihadism. He was incarcerated several times since 1994 in Jordan. He is thought to be the mentor of the former Al Qaeda leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was killed in Iraq 2006. In 2005 al-Maqdisi declared Jihad against the West. The German "Millatu Ibrahim" group regards al-Maqdisi as their main spiritual father.

¹³ "Dawa FFM" was banned by the Federal Minister of the Interior in March 2013

¹⁴ www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2012/mitMarginalspalte/06/vereinsverbot.html (accessed February, 2013)

The 'Pop-Jihadist' network nevertheless did not come out of nowhere. Its leaders (the Austrian Mohammad Mahmoud [Abu Usama al Gharieb], Abu Ibrahim [Hasan Keskin] from Bochum or Abu Talha al Almani [Mamadou Cuspert, alias Deso Dogg] from Berlin) already went through a long career of Salafi radicalization. They belong to a generation of young people who were born in Germany or Austria and grew up without finding their place in society. The case of the former 'Gangster Rapper' Deso Dogg uniquely illustrates this mechanism.

II. Abou Maleeq/Abu Talha al Almani: From 'Gangster Rap' to Jihad.

Missionary Salafi preachers like Abu Jibriel from Wuppertal or Abdul Adhim from Berlin neither preach violence nor glorify the armed Jihad. Their approach is active street work and street mission. They approach Muslim adolescents living a 'wrong life' in their perspective. The focus of this work lies on young people who are members in gangs or groups living on the streets. Their declared mission is to bring these young people away from petty crime and drugs - by integrating them into the Salafi community. Many of these young people experience in these communities something like security and family for the first time. These adolescents get the image of belonging to a supposedly superior and strong community, which raises their previously low self-esteem through degradation and rejection of everything "non-Islamic". However, what drove the teenagers to drugs and crime in the first place is hardly discussed among the Salafi groups and preachers.

In order to address these particular young people most effectively and directly, Salafi missionaries strategically try to use the kid's idols as multipliers. It was a huge success for the Salafi network to persuade the Berlin 'Gangster Rapper' Deso Dogg to leave Hip-Hop, drugs and violent crimes and join the Salafi community. Deso Dogg, who changed his name to Abu Maleeq, did not find this sufficient however. His potential was firstly recognized by the radical DWR network, which made him its figurehead in late 2010. He started to openly praise an armed fight and thus draw much attention to himself, what might be one of his central motives. Being 14 years old he answered to a youth judge in court: "I want to be famous, no matter how"¹⁵. Regarding the numerous, even international, media reports about him, he obviously succeeded through Jihadi propaganda.

In his religious songs (Anasheed) and lectures, he skilfully linked his personal experiences of exclusion and social marginalization with the discrimination and exclusion felt by many Muslims in Germany; he connected both elements using the suffering in Muslim countries to create the image of Islam as a global 'victim-community'. According to him it is now the task for young Salafis to defend this great community, even with their lives, which will earn them the status of a martyr.

¹⁵ As the judge reported to the author in an interview.

Deso Dogg was born in 1975 as Denis Mamadou Cuspert in Berlin-Kreuzberg being the son of a Ghanaian father and German mother. The family lived in Africa for a short time but soon moved to Berlin. Deso Dogg himself fathered two children; his son, Maleeq, and his daughter, Maimouna, live with their mothers.

In an interview for the radical Salafi Internet magazine "Dajjal TV" and using the name Abou Maleeq, he explained that his Muslim father was deported a few years after his birth. He himself faced conflict with the law very early, living in criminal milieus and as a gang member; until 2004 he was imprisoned several times for various offenses, including for drug related crimes. Deso Dogg started his music career in 1995 while being in prison in order to "tell everyone what I was thinking."

Already in the early 1990's Cuspert had contacts to the Turkish Islamist group Kaplan (caliphate), which was banned 2001, the pan-Islamic Hizb ut-Tahrir, which was also banned in Germany in 2003, and the Islamic fundamentalist missionary movement Tablighi Jamaat. Starting in 2002 he used the pseudonym Deso Dogg and earned some limited fame in the German Rap music scene, although he never reached the nation-wide breakthrough like others. Since 2007 he distanced himself increasingly from Hip Hop due to a lack of success and disappointment about missing recognition within the German Rap scene. "Actually, I was always down; I just had not even realized how deep down I was actually! When I met the big bosses of the music industry, I realized that I was not as down as I thought. Where these musicians were, I did not want to end up" he concluded in "Dajjal TV"¹⁶.

His last album "All Eyes On Me" was released in November 2009 followed by Deso Dogg's announcement to end his career in November 2010. From then on he wanted to live as an Islamic preacher with the name Abou Maleeq. He started the way leading to this decision already in late 2009, initially brought about through the missionary Salafi branch connected to Imam Abdul Adhim in Berlin. Together with his group (the "Tawheed Association"), he created the T-shirt brand "All4One" with the slogan "I am a Muslim, not a terrorist", for which he acted as an advertiser until winter 2011: "I created All4One together with three other brothers. I got the idea through the Tawheed Association from islamvoice.com, when they asked me, if we could make T-shirts. Then I created the logo, using the colours I saw on many NBA T-shirts. Usually these T-shirts picture typical things for Kuffars like women and athletes. So I thought, ok, I'm doing something for

¹⁶ Dajjal TV – das Endzeit Magazin: www.dajjal.tv/download/get/von-deso-dogg-zu-abou-maleeq-dajjal-tv/51/ (accessed February, 2013)

Muslims out of that inschAllah and boom, there was All4One, al-hamdulillah"¹⁷ he explained the history of that label in the Dajjal-TV interview.

Pierre Vogel also recognized him as a useful tool for his operations. During an interview in February 2010 both were very excited about the potential effect on Deso Dogg's young supporters and the prospect of gaining access to other idols, such as Massiv and Bushido, and to reach many more young people in order to lead them on the "right path"¹⁸.

When he joined DWR in November 2010, the missionary Salafis more and more distanced themselves from Deso Dogg/Abou Maleeq. That however did not affect his growing fame among young Muslims.

In fall 2011 he took over the spokesperson position within the Pop-Jihadi group "Millatu-Ibrahim" and changed his name again to Abu Talha al-Almani, based on the alias name of the German-Moroccan Bekkay Harrach. Harrach became nation-wide known in Germany because of his videos produced by "as-Sahab" in Waziristan before the 2009 parliamentary elections, in which he threatened to commit terrorist acts. In 2010 Harrach was killed while attacking a U.S. base in Afghanistan.

In numerous videos the members of "Millatu-Ibrahim" portray themselves as the German arm of a global Jihad, always ready to fight and die for the cause. Camouflage, Pashtun hats, cartridge belts and Kalashnikovs shaped the outfit of the self-proclaimed "Lions of Germany" from then on. They received support and recognition from the DWR preacher-network, which had become the sole most visible bearer of Salafism in Germany through their "Read!" campaign. When later the right-wing populist ProNRW party used municipal elections in North Rhine-Westphalia as a reason to spread massive islamophobic propaganda, both - DWR and "Millatu Ibrahim" - saw their chance to join and create the image of being "the true and only defender of Islam and Muslims in Germany". That they were indeed also driven by the desire for recognition by the global Muslim community became obvious in an interview with Abu Talha/Deso Dogg in mid-April 2012. "ProNRW will provide us with the pictures we need," Abu Talha told the author in this conversation. "We only need to spread them in the appropriate chat rooms and then the answer from the Islamic world will follow". He was adamantly convinced of this, because Islam, in his view, will prevail as it was revealed, and all evidence suggests that we are close to the final decision.

This prophecy almost came true on May 1, 2012 in Solingen, when police forces harshly tried to prevent "Millatu Ibrahim" demonstrators to attack an approved ProNRW rally. Pictures of

¹⁷ Dajjal TV – das Endzeit Magazin: www.dajjal.tv/download/get/von-deso-dogg-zu-abou-maleeq-dajjal-tv/51/ (accessed February, 2013)

¹⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPqQkc47kfU> (accessed February, 2013)

policemen using excessive force and handcuffed “Millatu Ibrahim” members lying on the ground were distributed to al-Qaida related chat rooms on the same day. But the hoped-for response remained absent. An attempt to produce even more shocking pictures a few days later in Solingen was unsuccessful. On the contrary, the rampant violence and especially a knife attack on police officers completely isolated “Millatu Ibrahim” within the German Salafi movement. The international response remained modest, if at all, even when the German-Moroccan Yassin Chouka of the terrorist group "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan" praised the fight of the brothers and sisters with a video message from Waziristan and called for further action in Germany.

After the ban of ‘Millatu Ibrahim’ by the Federal Ministry of the Interior on June 14, 2012 Abu Talha managed to leave Germany heading for Cairo despite intensive observation through the German authorities. However, he distributed a ‘farewell’-video shortly before his departure to the German TV channel ZDF, portraying himself as a martyr. In August 2012 an arrest warrant was issued against him by the Public Prosecutor of Berlin. Right now it seems highly unlikely that he will return. After several months of silence during which he allegedly without success tried to join active fighting groups, he released another Nasheed entitled “We immigrated” in mid-November 2012. Abu Talha argued that Germany would be a battlefield too on which Islam is attacked everyday: "How can you stand there between all this scum and filth; how can you eat there and sleep; how can you breathe this air? Come out of this hole!" he calls to Muslim adolescents in Germany and praises the martyr-death on the battlefields of the world as a worthwhile alternative. Together with an Austrian born citizen with Egyptian roots - Mohammad Mahmoud, aka Abu Usama al Gharieb – Abu Talha tried to re-establish ‘Millatu Ibrahim’ in Egypt and focused on developing and perfecting German-language Jihadi propaganda. The hope for the establishment of a German Jihad propaganda base in Benghazi, Libya, was however disappointed in late 2012¹⁹.

III. The Evolution of Salafism in Germany to a Radical Youth Culture – a Three Generational Evolution Model and the Development of a ‘Pop-Jihad’ Movement

The *first* generation of Salafi preachers and Imams came to Germany as adults under asylum protection or as students. All of them were religiously educated, sometimes by renowned Saudi Arabian authorities and Salafi scholars. These first generation preachers (e.g. Hassan Dabbagh, Sheikh al Araby; Abdel-Akher Hammad [from Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya]) were not socialized in Germany but had (and sometimes still have) direct access to recognized international authorities,

¹⁹ See for example: <http://ojihad.wordpress.com/2013/01/page/3/> (accessed February 2013)

which led to their strong reputation even outside their communities in Germany. They became teachers for the *second* generation Salafis in Germany since the late 1990's and early 2000's. Being established as something that can be called 'intermediate layer' of Salafism in Germany, the second generation comprises typically of very charismatic and young individuals who are familiar with the life in Germany, where they permanently live. Being closer to adolescents in their appearance and charisma, the religious knowledge clearly decreased compared to the first generation Salafis. Attempting to compensate this lack through extensive self-study (cf. Wiedl, 2012: 18) and more 'user-friendly' approaches, most of the second generation Salafis (e.g. Abu Abdullah, Pierre Vogel, Abu Dujana, Abdul Adhim)²⁰ partly try to distance themselves from their teachers and became 'freelancing' preachers. The *third or 'Pop-Jihad'* generation started to develop since 2010/2011 and typically consists of teenagers and adolescents who were born and grew up in Germany. They usually become Salafis through the contact with charismatic second generation Salafi preachers and change their life completely during the conversion process. Focussing almost entirely on everyday life situations and individual experiences, these 'Pop-Jihadis' are highly politicized and usually use religious aspects only as a legitimization framework. Compared to the first generation Salafis the religious knowledge is almost absent among 'Pop-Jihadis' but they strongly distance themselves from their idols and teachers, convert own followers and bear far reaching authenticity due to their own life experiences and biographies (e.g. Deso Dogg).

IV. 'Pop-Jihad': Aspects of a Radical Youth Culture

'Pop-Jihad' seemingly offers a way out of a perceived unproductive and pointless life to possible recruits and provides a clear pattern of good and evil (for an in depth analysis see: Dantschke, 2013: 13 et seq.; Dantschke, et al., 2011; Wiedl, 2012: 31 et seq.). The movement and ideology answers the question of guilt for experienced disappointments and/or exclusion – whether in the family, school, social or political environment. Through 'Pop-Jihad' individual recruits get closer to an elite which does not tolerate humiliation and degradation but instead 'fights back' and defends justice. It strengthens the individual self-esteem, establishing the recruits to be part of that specific elite, even if the member does not fight him or herself. 'Pop-Jihad' is very adaptive to youth culture media (YouTube videos, easy and very catchy Nasheed/ballads, Rap style Nasheeds, Internet portals and forums, Facebook groups) and outfits (apparel, merchandise). Easy and cheap to produce, the movement realizes a very high distribution network, spreads virtually and quickly and thereby

²⁰ Muhammad Ciftci (Abu Anas) is another representative of this generation, although untypical. Born in Germany he studied in Medina Saudi-Arabia between 1998 and 2006 and knows the German society very well – a fact missing among the other preachers of his and previous generations.

creates a high reputation through self-appreciation and self-expression of members. The anonymity of the Internet seemingly guarantees protection against repression with the maximum possible provocation effects at the same time, which in turn provides attention and status through taboo-breaking (e.g. the glorification of Osama bin Laden) for the members. By using New Media techniques 'Pop-Jihadis' managed to become part of a nationwide Muslim youth culture and thereby directly access their main target group of adolescents. The main elements of this process are *adaption*, *dissemination* and *imitation*. A central role within 'Pop-Jihad' is played by 'battle-Nasheeds' with highly militant lyrics. These Nasheeds are traditional chanting focussing on the lyrics and thus providing the possibility to connect with youth Rap and Hip-Hop cultures of the 90s and early 2000s. Consequently the main target group of this element was and still is comprised of relatively marginalized immigrant adolescents stemming from Muslim families. Through this music the movement expresses resentment and anger, but also contempt about social situations in the German communities, as well as hopelessness and exclusion. The emotional appeal reaches mainly adolescents who neither are interested in long sermons online nor visiting the famous 'Islam-seminars' of the second generation Salafis (e.g. Pierre Vogel). Reduced to simple messages carried by the Nasheeds, Jihadist ideology becomes attractive to adolescents who neither practice religion nor are devout Salafis already, but have formed a Jihadist worldview on their own beforehand through New Media consumption instead. The strong rebellion and protest against a passive and inactive parents' generation (Muslim and non-Muslim) becomes a central part of this third Salafi generation.

Summarized 'Pop-Jihad' offers a relatively simple and accessible form of self-appreciation and protest for many teenagers and thereby functions as a catalyst of tensions and social problems. The case of Abu Talha/Deso Dogg also shows how several aspects (personal experiences and socialisation, meeting with facilitators, yearning for recognition and self-appreciation) can converge and transform protest into activism. The authenticity of the actor carries the strong element of becoming a role model for other adolescents. Central to 'Pop-Jihad' is the Internet, especially YouTube and Facebook, which has been shown to be essential to understand the phenomenon of 'Pop-Jihad' in the previous study (Dantschke, 2013: 16-17).

V. Conclusion

'Pop-Jihad' as a very specific youth culture movement (or: subculture) managed to establish itself in Germany with a very distinct outlook and dynamic. Its main idols and leaders have successfully disconnected themselves from their former teachers and started to create an own version of Jihadi-

Salafism, customized to the needs of adolescent Muslims eager to prove themselves, to live out adventures, action and the fight against the infidels without long years of study. This movement combines an extreme militancy with a modern outlook (e.g. music, apparel) and attractiveness of other youth subcultures. Thereby ‘Pop-Jihad’ found a way to become directly a part of the potential target group while leaving out the scholarly preacher level, requiring a certain amount of resources, time and structures. The imminent danger of this development is obvious: possible recruits for the armed Jihad abroad or at home are radicalized and channelled to training camps with a maximum pace leaving aside theological debates and argumentations, which might make the radicalization process vulnerable to outside intervention. In short: Jihad became a lifestyle ‘looking and sounding cool’. A very distinct ideological iconography²¹ and virtual networks have proven to be very effective cornerstones for this movement.

It is important to understand the different radicalization dynamics compared to the second generation of Salafism, where theological arguments and the charisma of the preacher played the major role. In ‘Pop-Jihad’ the authenticity of the role model Jihadi is transferred to the lifestyle waiting to be realized by the individual within a *virtual radicalization community* bound together by iconography. These virtual communities are no less real in perception and effect on individuals compared to offline communities (see Dantschke, 2013: 16-17; and Köhler, 2012). Interestingly ‘Pop-Jihad’ with its massive virtual presence provoked a counter-reaction of young purist Salafis who use the same networks and media techniques attempting to reconnect to the first generation of Salafis and renowned ‘purist’ scholars. By translating fatwas, sermons and publications, putting them online in videos on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter they try to counter this perceived ‘hooliganization’ of Salafism with theological arguments – but with the same methods. Emulating but reinterpreting the violent iconography, these ‘Pop-Purists’²² even try to establish a foothold in mosques through ‘Islam-seminars’ but without much success so far. Mosques and traditional Muslim associations in Germany are afraid to draw the authority’s attention on themselves by letting the purists speak. The only Muslim network in Germany which seemed to be in favour of this current right now is the Muslim Brotherhood, which is currently monitored by the Intelligence Service – contrary to the purists. Consequently these young Salafi activists who try to counter ‘Pop-Jihad’ refused the Muslim Brotherhood’s offer to avoid becoming monitored themselves.

²¹ The term „ideological iconography“ describes an ideology without theoretical explanations working solely through core messages displayed through visual iconographical elements.

²² See for example Tarek X (<http://www.youtube.com/user/Da3waYourSelf>) or <http://madrasah.de/> (Mahmud Kellner) (accessed February, 2013)

To find new tools of deradicalization, prevention and intervention to this new style of radicalization will be the major task ahead as already waves of young German Muslims leave the country to fight abroad every year.

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