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Counter-Terrorism - The Hague

Violent and Non-Violent Extremism: Two Sides of the Same Coin?

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ICCT Research Paper

May 2014

In this Research Paper, ICCT Visiting Research Fellow Dr. Alex P. Schmid seeks to clarify some conceptual issues that tend to obscure the debate about how best to counter violent extremism. The main focus of this Research Paper is on obtaining a clearer understanding of what "Islamist extremism" entails in the context of the ongoing debate on allegedly "acceptable" non-violent extremists and "unacceptable" violent extremists. The author discusses a number of conceptualisations of religious extremism in the context of liberal democracies and also distinguishes, *inter alia*, between merely "not (yet) violent" militancy and principled non-violent political activism in the Gandhian tradition. The author argues that the distinction between "non-violent extremism" and "violent extremism" is not a valid one. The paper provides a set of twenty indicators of extremism that can be used as an instrument for monitoring extremist statements and actions, with an eye to challenging and countering such non-democratic manifestations.

About the Author

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1. Introduction

When, after the attacks of 11 September 2001, the United States (US) and its Western allies were faced with increased levels of terrorism from violent extremists claiming to fight in the name of Islam, one of the responses was to look for allies in what the US President George W. Bush termed the Global War on Terror. Allies were sought at home and abroad.

Abroad, the US government approached the Taliban in Afghanistan and asked for the extradition of al Qaeda (AQ)'s leaders. When the Taliban first procrastinated and then refused, the US turned to Pakistan, the main sponsor of the Afghan Taliban, for help. The US government urged Pakistan's military ruler President Pervez Musharraf to take sides. "You are either with us or against us in the fight against terror" was what President Bush told the world on 6 November 2001.[1] While there was overwhelming sympathy and support for the US in and beyond the Western world[2] in the first weeks after the 9/11 "Manhattan raid" (as AQ called its surprise attack on New York and Washington D.C.), there was also a considerable degree of *Schadenfreude,* sympathy and even support among some sectors of Muslim populations, especially in parts of the Arab world. Many of them saw the terrorist attack of 9/11 as a deserved slap in the face of the superpower that had meddled in the Middle East since the Second World War, making and breaking regimes as it saw fit to access cheap oil, protect Israel and counter the Soviet Union's influence.[3] Since most Middle Eastern regimes felt threatened by AQ too, they overwhelmingly sided, certainly in their declaratory policies, with the US. The extension of the struggle from themselves – the "near enemy" in AQ's terminology – to the "far enemy" appeared to make both "enemies" natural allies.

On the Western home fronts, in North America and Western Europe, there are sizeable Muslim populations that are only partly integrated into their host societies. After the Second World War, millions of Muslims from the Middle East, Turkey, the Maghreb and South Asia had migrated to Western democracies, attracted by the promise of political freedom and economic welfare or pushed out of their countries by authoritarian regimes and sectarian pressures.[4] Feelings among these migrants varied, depending on the reasons for leaving their Arab or Muslim home countries and depending on the reception they received in the host societies. While the generation of Muslim migrants that arrived in Europe before 1973 were generally conservative and moderate in their political outlook and religious orientation, there emerged a rebellious streak among some members of the second generation, as well as among students from Muslim countries who had come to the West in search of higher education. Some of them became extreme in words while others were also keen to put deeds by their words, with a few of them going to conflict zones like Bosnia and Chechnya in the 1990s and to Afghanistan and Iraq in the first decade of the 21st century, in search of adventure and in defence of their Muslim brethren.

After 9/11 and even more so after the US intervention in Iraq there was also a rise of "home-grown" terrorism in several Western countries, often lone wolf-type individuals of Muslim origin or converts to Islam but sometimes also a "bunch of guys", partly stimulated by jihadist veterans returning from conflict zones, partly exhorted by Wahhabi and Salafist imams from the Arab world who used Western mosques as platforms not only for "da'wa" (missionary work) but also for calls to jihad by the sword (religiously sanctioned "holy" war).[5]

Some Western policymakers, fearing radicalisation among Muslim diasporas, especially after the ill-considered American intervention in Iraq in 2003, looked for "moderate" Muslim leaders as allies in the hope to

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[1] "You are either with us or against us", *CNN* (6 November 2001). http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/11/06/gen.attack.on.terror/.

[2] The leading French newspaper wrote the day after the 9/11 attack "*Nous sommes tous Américains!"* (We're All Americans!), *Le Monde*, 13 September 2001; See also Rik Coolsaet, "Europe: Reinforcing Existing Trends", in Mohammed Ayoob and Etga Ugur, Eds., *Assessing the War on Terror* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2013), p. 137.

[3] Rashmi Singh and Sarah Marsden, *In the Eyes of the Beholder: Developing Metrics of Success and Failure in the Global War on Terror and the Global Jihad* (St. Andrews: CSTPV, 2011), p. 3.

[4] Olivier Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 41- 42.

[5] Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan* (London: Gibson Square, 2006).

mobilise their support against young violent extremists. However, since many of these orthodox Muslim leaders had apparently little credibility with rebellious Muslim youth, some Western governments, most notably the United Kingdom (UK), also turned to non-traditional Islamist Muslim leaders. Although most of these Islamists were not openly advocating jihad, nevertheless they were, to varying degrees, "extremist" in their political outlook when compared to the mainstream of their host society. Nevertheless, some of these so-called "non-violent extremists" were thought to have greater "street credibility" among rebellious and alienated young Muslims in Western diasporas than orthodox Muslim leaders. For this reason, some policymakers and security officials sought to collaborate with such non-violent extremists in the hope to find in them allies against more violent extremists.

This policy was controversial and has remained so to this day. While some consider it a viable option, others see it as a dangerous illusion.[6] For some observers, these Islamist leaders are not acting as a "firewall" against further radicalisation but act, voluntarily or not, *de facto* often as a "conveyor belt", setting vulnerable young people on a path that might prepare the ground for violent extremism in the form of terrorism. The fact that several terrorists were formerly members of seemingly "non-violent extremist" organisations like the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) or Hizb-ut-Hahrir (HuT), lends credence to the fact that such organisations can serve as stepping stones to terrorism.[7] The debate about this policy dilemma[8] has been most articulate in the UK and the following section shall sketch some of its contours, before turning to a more theoretical conceptual discussion. That discussion will address the following issues:

- Who can be considered a "moderate" Muslim in the context of Muslim diasporas in Western democracies?
- To what extent do Muslims in Western diasporas maintain fundamentalist beliefs?
- Can Islamists be considered "moderates" in the context of Western liberal democracies?
- Are non-violent extremists really different from violent extremists?
- How does not violent militancy differ from non-violent militancy?
- How does social science literature define (religious) extremism?
- What are the relationships between extremism, radicalism, fundamentalism, salafism, islamism, jihadism and terrorism?
- How can one recognise extremism on the basis of indicators?
- Should governments engage with non-violent extremists to fight terrorism?

The main conclusion is that the distinction between acceptable "non-violent extremists" and unacceptable "violent extremists" is a false and illusionary one since religious extremism (as opposed to some form of more secular radicalism) is inherently violent. Islamist extremism needs to be challenged and confronted rather than accommodated and tolerated by liberal democracies.

2. The British Debate

In the second half of the twentieth century, Great Britain became an increasingly tolerant society – tolerant to different political convictions, religious practices as well as ethnical backgrounds of immigrants. Some

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[6] To be sure, the problem is not entirely new. In the first half of the twentieth century Western liberal-democratic governments, opposing international communism, forged alliances with non-communist socialists and social democrats at home. During the Second World War, when much of Europe was overrun by the armies of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, England and the United States allied with Stalin's totalitarian Soviet Union.

[7] Jamie Bartlett, Jonathan Birdwell and Michael King, *The Edge of Violence* (London: DEMOS, 2010), pp. 105-114.

[8] This policy dilemma, while less acute for some other countries, has been generally under-researched. One of the few exceptions is the brief study of Floris Vermeulen and Frank Bovenkerk, *Engaging with Violent Islamic Extremism: Local Policies in Western European Cities* (The Hague: Eleven international publishing 2012).

of those who came to its shores were political refugees (often from former colonies like Uganda), others were part of labour migration (e.g. Jamaicans), yet others were students from former League of Nations trusteeships (e.g. Jordanians). London, in particular, became a very cosmopolitan city but other major British urban areas also saw the emergence of de facto multicultural societies. Many newcomers, especially those coming from rural areas of developing countries, had not much education and therefore fewer chances on the British labour market, finding it hard to integrate let alone assimilate. Many members of these foreign diasporas, especially second generation young Muslims, encountered discrimination and some even racism. They felt rejected and, in turn, began to reject "the system", turning away from both mainstream British society and from orthodox imams in their own sub-cultures. Caught between two cultures, some looked for a 'third way' and found it in various manifestations of political Islam as formulated by Islamist thinkers like Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) from Egypt, Abdul A'la Maududi (1903-1979) from Pakistan or Abdallah Yusuf Azzam (1941-1989) from Palestine.

These young Muslim discontents in the UK no longer looked for guidance from "embassy Islam" – mosques run from the embassies of countries of origin like Saudi Arabia, where the imam in a mosque would read on Friday a sermon faxed from Riyadh.[9] They preferred to go to mosques run by opposition forces in the countries of origin, associations like the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (MB) or the Palestinian Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HuT). Both of these organisations professed to be non-violent, though at other times and at other places leaders or followers of these associations had advocated and practiced various forms of political violence. While both MB and HuT were rejecting in public the use of violence in the UK, they also rejected democracy, favouring instead the introduction of sharia law which, by its alleged divine nature, is incompatible with secular constitutionalism. Beyond these two organisations, there were other Islamist organisations (e.g. the South Asian Jamaat-e-Islami) and groups that had established a foothold in London and in some other British cities with a high density of Muslims. Some of them recruited young men to go to zones of conflict (e.g. in the Balkans) and fight there alongside their Muslim brethren. Some of the more extreme among them were even prepared to bring the armed struggle into the UK.[10] To be sure, they were a tiny minority among the Muslims in the UK as well as continental Western Europe. At the same time, both non-violent and violent extremists were often very vocal, claiming to speak for the entire *ummah*, the worldwide Muslim community of more than a billion believers in Islam. Since the media gave them more publicity than was given to the largely silent Muslim majority, they gained a prominence and influence way beyond what was justified by their mere numbers.

There was – and is – a struggle for the religious market in the UK as well as elsewhere in Europe where Islam has become the second-largest religion – or so it is often claimed. In reality, most of the close to 40 million Muslims in Europe, like many Christians, are only "cultural" members of the faith they were born into and in the process of becoming more secular. Lorenzo Vidino, in his study on *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (2010), observed:

> [T]he vast majority of Western Muslims are connected with no organization. Separate studies conducted in several countries have consistently found that no more than 10 to 12 percent of Muslims are actively engaged in or even belong to a Muslim group, indicating the presence of a silent majority who do not feel represented by any of the competing organizations. Moreover […] studies suggest that most Western Muslims can be categorized as "cultural" or "sociological" Muslims.[11]

Nevertheless both conservative, but mostly mainstream, Muslim organisations (often linked to embassies of countries like Algeria, Morocco, Turkey, Tunisia, Egypt or Saudi Arabia) and more "extreme" Muslim non-state organisations (such as the MB, HuT and TJ) are competing on the Islamic "religious market" in Europe and the US.

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[9] Lorenzo Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 9.
[10] Alison Pargeter, *The New Frontiers of Jihad: Radical Islam in Europe* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), pp. 140-65.
[11] Ibid., p. 10.

They claim to represent substantial sections of the Muslim immigrant communities and offered themselves as spokesmen and interlocutors with Western governments. Some of these governments were, after 9/11, looking for Muslim community leaders who could assist them in countering violent extremism and radicalisation of vulnerable young Muslims and recent converts to Islam who were attracted to terrorism. The problem, however, was that it was difficult to find Muslim partners that were representative of immigrant communities and could be relied upon to provide the necessary cooperation. Understandably, the representatives that were linked to embassies of Muslim countries were not acceptable as speaking for immigrants who, in many cases, had already become citizens of the host country. But then, who else? In that situation it was tempting for Western governments to turn to alternative Muslim leaders with a high degree of visibility who made a claim to leadership of Western Muslim communities,[12] although it was not at all clear how representative these alternative leaders were since they had not been elected by Muslim communities. These Islamist leaders – in many cases members of the MB (which has branches in some 70 countries) – often had their own hidden agendas, including the spread of Islam in Europe.[13] In the UK as well as elsewhere in Europe, these new religious leaders were generally eager to enter into some form of partnership with Western governments as this could enhance their standing in the Muslim community and possibly also protect them, as recognised interlocutors, from uncomfortable governmental scrutiny. To interact with them on the political level or at least on the grass roots level became tempting, especially for the police.

Perhaps the prime example of this collaboration with non-violent extremist activists in the UK was the Muslim Contact Unit (MCU) of the London Metropolitan Police which was led by Robert Lambert between 2002 and 2007. The MCU tried, for instance, to work with the British section of the MB against AQ-linked violent extremists who had taken over the North London Central Mosque in Finsbury Park - a mosque that had been built in the early 1990s with money from Saudi Arabian donors. The ringleader of these violent extremists was Abu Hamza, a former Egyptian engineering student who had lost an eye and an arm in Afghanistan. He claimed to have "a long association with the Taliban government", but was also suspected of being AQ's representative in London. Among his entourage at the Finsbury Park mosque figured young hotheads like Richard Reid (the "shoe bomber"), Nizar Trabelsi (who was alleged to have been involved in a foiled plot to blow up the US embassy in Paris with a truck bomb), Zacarias Moussaoui (the supposed 20th hijacker of the 9/11 attacks), Anas al-Liby (whose ties to Al-Qaeda go back to 1994) and Mohammed Sidique Khan, the ringleader of the attack on the London transport system on 7 July 2005.[14]

In early 2003, the team set up by Robert Lambert played a crucial role in taking back the Finsbury Park mosque from the violent extremists associated with AQ in a raid involving some 200 police officers. In the "liberated" mosque, military-style equipment, guns, hunting knives, gas masks and chemical and biological warfare protection suits were found.[15] The mosque was subsequently handed over to the MB, whose UK members publicly opposed the use of violence in the UK.[16] Lambert also teamed up with Brixton Salafis whom he considered to be the most effective group to fight the violent extremists of "Londonistan".[17]

However, others who had observed non-violent extremists at close quarters disagreed with this approach and held that such short-term tactical alliances might in the long run create more harm than good, legitimising extremist leaders who were at the same time rejecting Western values and taking advantage of the freedoms offered by a democratic society to subvert the host society. Gradually, a different approach gained more prominence, one suggested, among others, by the Quilliam Foundation which was founded in April 2008 by

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[12] Ibid., p. 15.

[13] Cf. Sylvain Besson. *La conquete de l' Occident: Le project secret des islamistes* (Paris: Seuil, 2005).

[14] Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan* (2006), pp. 52-53.

[15] Sean O'Neill and Daniel McGrory, *The Suicide Factory: Abu Hamza and the Finsbury Park Mosque* (London: Harper Perennial, 2006), p. 260.

[16] L. Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (2010), p. 219. For Lambert's own account, see Robert Lambert, *Countering al-Qaeda in London: Police and Muslims in Partnership* (London: Hurst, 2011).

[17] Jamie Bartlett, Jonathan Birdwell and Michael King, *The Edge of Violence* (London: Demos, 2010), p.53.

former extremists like the former leader of the AQ-affiliated Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIDG) Noman Benotman as well as Ed Husain (author of 'The Islamist') and Maajid Nawaz. The latter two had been members of HuT before they decided to change sides and work with the British government.[18]

The change of government from Gordon Brown to David Cameron in May 2010 sped up the shift in counter-terrorism policies from collaborating with non-violent extremists to seeing them as part of the problem rather than as part of the solution. The new British Prime Minister explained his new, "Prevent 2.0" policy in February 2011 in a speech he gave in Munich:

> We need to be absolutely clear on where the origins of these attacks lie – and that is the existence of an ideology, "Islamist extremism".[…] We need to be clear: Islamist extremism and Islam are not the same thing. […T]here is so much muddled thinking about this whole issue. Many of [those convicted of terrorist offences] were initially influenced by what some have called "non-violent extremists" and then took those radical beliefs to the next level by embracing violence.[19]

Cameron therefore pleaded to tackle all forms of extremism and said that "we need to think much harder about who it's in the public interest to work with."[20] As a test of whether or not to cooperate with Muslim organisations he asked four questions:

- Do they believe in universal human rights – including for women and people of other faiths?;
- Do they believe in equality of all before the law?;
- Do they believe in democracy and the right of people to elect their own government?; and
- Do they encourage integration or separatism?

He noted that failing these tests, "the presumption should be not to engage with organisations. No public money. No sharing of platforms with Ministers at home. […] And to those who say these non-violent extremists are helping to keep young, vulnerable men away from violence, I say nonsense."[21]

The policy change in the UK was, at least in part, brought about on the basis of advice that reached the British Prime Minister from analysts and former extremists from organisations such as the Quilliam Foundation.[22] Cameron's Munich speech was also the same speech in which the British Prime Minister confessed that "multiculturalism" was a policy that had gone wrong – something echoed by Angela Merkel for Germany and Nicolas Sarkozy for France in the same year.[23]

With regard to the United Kingdom, critics noted that the government's multiculturalist doctrine had in fact facilitated Islamic extremism as these policies often unwittingly imposed Islamist leadership upon Britain's Muslim communities. As Samuel Westrop noted:

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[18] Robert Lambert, *Countering al-Qaeda in London* (2010), p. 253. Cf. Michael Jacobson, "Learning Counter-Narrative Lessons from Cases of Terrorist Dropouts", in E.J.A.M. Kessels, ed., *Countering Violent Extremist Narratives* (The Hague: National Coordinator for Counterterrorism, 2010), p. 74. For the Quilliam Foundation , see http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/.

[19] David Cameron, 5 February 2011. Full transcript of speech on radicalisation and Islamic extremism. *The New Statesman* http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/02/terrorism-islam-ideology; Cameron's new approach was influenced by recommendations from the Quilliam Foundation.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed, "UK's flawed counter-terrorism strategy", *Le Monde Diplomatique* (English edition), 9 December 2013; https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/142d9f674c74c4f2

[23] "Kanzlerin Merkel erklärt Multikulti für gescheitert", *Die Welt*, 16 October 2010; http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article10337575/Kanzlerin-Merkel-erklaert-Multikulti-fuer-gescheitert.html; "Nicolas Sarkozy declares multiculturalism had failed", *The Telegraph*, 11 February 2011; http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/8317497/Nicolas-Sarkozy-declares-multiculturalism-had-failed.html.

> British multiculturalism has encouraged British society to exist as a federation of communities in which each minority community was *not* required to adopt the values of the majority. This inverse segregation only served to chain particular communities to their self-appointed community groups. Among Britain's South Asian community, these groups were Islamist-run. Consequently, multiculturalist polices served to homogenise a community whose very diversity it had promised to preserve. (…) Of course, Western governments are not morally responsible for the hateful ideas and murderous actions of the Islamist networks. That wickedness lies with the Islamist groups themselves. But by continuing to promote pernicious policies of multiculturalism while failing to protect the individual liberties on which the West was built, government policy does serve to provide ammunition and willing recruits to the Islamist cause.[24]

David Cameron's new approach of confronting extremism rather than winning over so-called non-violent extremists was, however, soon losing momentum without a decisive or complete answer being given to the question whether or not Western governments should engage with non-violent extremists in the fight against violent Islamist extremism.[25] Therefore, in April 2014 former British Prime Minister Tony Blair raised the issue again in a widely quoted speech on the Islamist threat emanating from the Middle East and its impact on the West. He spoke about "[…]a deep desire to separate the political ideology represented by groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood from the actions of extremists including acts of terrorism" and noted that "The Muslim Brotherhood and other organisations are increasingly active and they operate without much investigation or constraint."[26]

In his speech, Blair referred alternatively to "radical Islam", "politicised view of Islam", "Sunni and Shia extremism", "religious extremism" and the "Islamist ideology" but admitted that "[…]one of the frustrating things about this debate is the inadequacy of the terminology and the tendency for any short hand to be capable of misinterpretation, so that you can appear to elide those who support the Islamist ideology with all Muslims".

In an earlier Research Paper for ICCT, the case was made for separating open-minded (secular) "radicalism" from closed-minded "extremism", based on the history of ideas of these two ideological currents. [27] In the next section here, the focus will be on separating "moderate" Islam from "extremist" Islamism in an effort to provide a clarification of terminology. Subsequently, it will be demonstrated that making a distinction between so-called non-violent extremists and violent extremists is illusionary.

3. The Search for "Moderate" Muslim Partners in the Fight against Terrorism

Like languages that have a standardised mainstream version and local dialects, religions too tend to have mainstream and side-stream variations. Sometimes, dialects become languages of their own, for example when a

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[24] Samuel Westrop. UK Multiculturalist Doctrine Breeding Islamist Extremism, *The Clarion Project*, 27 April 20014; http://www.clarionproject.org/analysis/uk-multiculturalist-doctrine-breeding-islamic-extremism; accessed 29 April 2014.

[25] The question poses itself both in international relations and on the domestic front. An example of the first has been the attempt of the Obama administration to bond with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. That effort backfired after the failure of the Morsi government to meet popular expectations which led to his overthrow by a coup d' etat orchestrated by Egypt's armed forces. The Egyptian military has since July 2013 been looking to Russia for external support. US credibility with the liberal-democratic elements in Egypt has gone, let along with other sectors of society. A similar experience was made earlier by Israel with regard to Palestinian political parties. In an effort to weaken the power of the Yassir Arafat's PLO, Israel facilitated the rise of Hamas, the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, only to find that Hamas was more extreme than the PLO when it begun to engage in a campaign of terrorist suicide bombings against Israel.

[26] Tony Blair, "Tony Blair's speech on the Middle East: full text," *The New Statesman*, 23 April 2014; http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2014/04/tony-blairs-speech-middle-east-full-text David Cameron asked for a policy reassessment regarding the Muslim Brotherhood only in April 2014. See Government review of the Muslim Brotherhood. Press Release. Downing Street, 17 April 2014.

[27] See A.P. Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation and Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review" (The Hague: ICCT Research Paper, March 2013), http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013_2.pdf.

region where it is spoken secedes from a country. Linguist Max Weinreich once called a language "a dialect with an army and a navy".[28] Something similar can happen with religions and sects when adherents of one religious "dialect" become stronger or more numerous than the other. In the case of Islam, we have the original split between Sunnis and Shiites which goes back to the mid-seventh century when Muslims could not agree whether Muhammed's closest friend Abu Bakr or his cousin and son-in-law Ali should succeed him and become the new leader (*caliph*) of the Muslim community (*ummah*). Shiites who had sided with Ali, in turn would later split into further branches (e.g. Alawites, Ismailis) as did adherents of Sunni Islam which has branches like the Sufis, Wahhabis and Salafists.[29] More recently, since 1979, when Shia revolutionaries managed to take state power in Iran, other terms used to distinguish some varieties of Islam are "political Islam", "Islamic fundamentalism", "radical Islam" or simply "Islamism". Some authors consider one term such as "Islamic fundamentalism" an umbrella term, subsuming other sub-categories. The same is true for Sunni Salafism, a very strict form of Islamism. It is generally divided into three branches: (i) a non-political, quietist branch, (ii) a political branch, to which Wahhabism associated with Saudi traditionalism has also been linked, and (iii) an extremist jihadist branch.[30]

Since Muslims arrived in Europe at different times and from different countries, the Muslim communities in Europe are almost by definition segmented rather than unified.[31] To the extent that their members are more than "cultural" Muslims, they tend to be organised in matters of their faith either by officials from their countries of origin or by non-state transnational religious associations which are in many cases Islamist in orientation. Some of these organisations have been eager to collaborate with Western governments while others rejected collaboration with any system that is not Islamic. The first group, which for tactical reasons, if not by conviction, appears willing to accept secular democracy and expresses an interest in taking part in the democratic process, has been termed "participationist" while the second group has been called "rejectionist".[32]

While one would expect the "participationist" group to be the "moderate" one and the "rejectionist" group to be the "extreme" one, that is not necessarily the case. An organisation partnering with the host government can profess to be "moderate" for merely tactical reasons. Despite its willingness to participate in dialogue with Western governments it can, at the same time, be extremist in its ideology and reject Western core values. The temptation for some Western governments has been to engage with Muslim leaders who publicly distanced themselves from AQ and spoke out against terrorism in general without having a closer look at what tied them to AQ's ideology and goals, and without examining whether they shared the same understanding of what should be called "terrorism".

Western governments' efforts to engage with moderate Muslim leaders for the struggle against Islamist terrorism have not been easy since their visibility has been generally low. Another problem is, a As Lorenzo Vidino put it, that "moderate Muslims" is "a term that is as fashionable as it is inherently controversial, vague, and subjective".[33]

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[28] Max Weinreich (1945), see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_language_is_a_dialect_with_an_army_and_navy.
[29] John L. Esposito, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (Oxford: University Press, 2003), pp.292-293, 306-307.
[30] Fiore Geelhoed, "Fundamentalism", in Jeffrey Ian Ross, ed., *Religion and Violence: An Encyclopedia of Faith and Conflict from Antiquity to the Present* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2011), pp. 359 - 368.
[31] Floris Vermeulen and Frank Bovenkerk have observed that: "…Muslims [in Western Europe] have various national backgrounds, speak different languages, go to different mosques, are of various Islamic persuasion (Shiites, Sunnis, Alawites, and Sufi) and identify themselves along different ethnic lines. Secondly, all of them are considered Muslims from a sociological perspective without taking into account that they may not even practice their religion very actively. These form a silent majority that is considered moderate by the authorities. They are, thirdly, sometimes unorganised or participate in different organisations. There are organisations that are run from abroad … as well as radical organisations such as the Muslim Brotherhood that found exile from persecution in the West; there are pietistic groups and ultra-orthodox Salafist networks. Fourthly, Muslim groups first and foremost lack leadership". - Floris Vermeulen and Frank Bovenkerk, *Engaging with Violent Islamic Extremism* (2012), p. 25.
[32] L. Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West (2010)*, p. 15.
[33] Ibid., p. 12.

Should the term "moderates" be applied to the majority of Muslims in Western diasporas who peacefully go about their daily lives and who are seemingly neither anti-Western nor anti-modern?[34] These Muslims are supposed to constitute the "silent majority". Many of them are simply Muslims by birth rather than by individual religious choice and are not far removed from being "cultural" Muslims only. Most of these Muslims do not speak up in public either for their host government or, more importantly, against AQ and other violent extremists. Many of these Muslims, like many Christians in Europe, do not regard every word in sacred texts – the Koran or the Bible – to be literally true. As Sam Harris has observed:

> Moderates in every faith are obliged to loosely interpret (or simply ignore) much of their canons in the interest of living in the modern world. […] Religious moderation is the product of *secular* knowledge and scriptural *ignorance* and it has no bona fides, in religious terms, to put it on par with fundamentalism. [...] The difference between fundamentalists and moderates – and certainly the difference between all "extremists" and moderates – is the degree to which they see political and military action to be intrinsic to the practice of their faith. In any case, people who believe that Islam must inform every dimension of human existence, including politics and law, are now generally called not "fundamentalists" or "extremists" but, rather, "Islamists".[35]

While the large majority of Muslims are not Islamists, there might be large numbers who are "fundamentalist" in the sense of taking every word of their holy script literally. A six country survey among 9,000 Muslims in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden, conducted in 2008 by the Science Center Berlin (*Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin*), came up with some surprising findings: majorities of Muslim immigrants believe that only one interpretation of the Koran is possible and that such a view is as widespread among younger Muslims as among older generations. The study, conducted by Ruud Koopmans, also found that 54 percent believe that the West is out to destroy Muslim culture. (On the other hand, in the sample of indigenous Europeans, 23 percent of the Christians interviewed believed that Muslims are out to destroy Western culture.)[36] The study aimed at assessing fundamentalism in both the Christian and the Muslim camps, using the definition of fundamentalism proposed by Robert Altermeyer and Bruce Hunsberger.[37]

Key findings were, in the words of Koopmans:

> Almost 60 per cent agree that Muslims should return to the roots of Islam, 75 per cent think there is only one interpretation of the Koran possible to which every Muslim should stick and 65 per cent say that religious rules are more important to them than the laws of the country in which they live. Consistent fundamentalist beliefs, with agreement to all three statements, are found among 44 per cent of the interviewed Muslims.[…] Among Christians agreement to the single

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[34] F. Zakaria has observed: "Most Muslims' daily lives do not confirm the idea of a faith that is intrinsically anti-Western or anti-modern". Fareed. Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), p. 123; Sam Harris, *The End of Faith. Religion, Terror, and The Future of Reason* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2004), p. 148.

[35] Sam Harris, *The End of Faith. Religion, Terror, and The Future of Reason* (2004), pp. 17, 20-21, 110.

[36] Eric Voeten, "How widespread is Islamist fundamentalism in Western Europe?", *Washington Post,* 13 December 2013. http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2013/12/13/how-widespread-is-islamic-fundamentalism-in-western-europe/. The survey was based on telephone interviews of Moroccans and Turks and comparable groups of native Christians. For details, see Ruud Koopmans, *Fundamentalism and out-group hostility: Muslim immigrants and Christian natives in Western Europe* (Berlin: WZB Mitteilungen) Dezember 2013, http://www.wzb.eu/sites/default/files/u6/koopmans_englisch_ed.pdf.

[37] Ruud Koopmans, (2013), p. 1. The study operationalised these definitional elements in terms of three questions asked to both Muslims and Christians in the six countries: (i) "Christians [Muslims] should return to the roots of Christianity [Islam];" (ii) There is only one interpretation of the Bible [the Koran] and every Christian [Muslim] must stick to that;" (iii) "The rules of the Bible [the Koran] are more important to me than the laws of [survey country]."

statements ranges between 13 and 21 per cent and less than 4 per cent can be characterised as consistent fundamentalists who agree with all three items.[38]

The author of the study concluded that:

> These findings clearly contradict the often-heard claim that Islamic religious fundamentalism is a marginal phenomenon in Western Europe or that it does not differ from the extent of fundamentalism among the Christian majority. Both these claims are blatantly false, as almost half of European Muslims agree that Muslims should return to the roots of Islam, that there is only one interpretation of the Koran, and that rules laid down in it are more important than secular laws. […] Of course, religious fundamentalism should not be equated with the willingness to support, or even to engage in religiously motivated violence. But given its strong relationship to out-group hostility, religious fundamentalism is very likely to provide a nourishing environment for radicalisation.[39]

This finding that more than half of the Muslims in European diasporas are in fact more "fundamentalist" than "moderate' and that, by implication, "moderates are not mainstream", is disquieting. Yet, what people say when asked specifically in an interview and what people do in their daily lives are not always the same. However, there is clearly a link between mainstream fundamentalism and political Islam. Fiore Geelhoed has argued that "militant groups are usually the offshoot of more moderate movements and that the difference between mainstream movements lies not in their ideology and objective, which is the creation of an Islamic state, but in what they regard to be the appropriate strategy".[40] In that regard, there is still a clear divide between moderate Muslims and extremist Islamists.

While the study by Koopmans used only three indicators for establishing whether or not respondents were "fundamentalist" or "moderate", Joshua Muravchik and Charlie Szrom, suggest six criteria for identifying "moderate" Islam:

1. Does it both espouse democracy and practice democracy with in its own structures?
2. Does it eschew violence in pursuit of its goals?
3. Does it condemn terrorism?
4. Does it advocate equal rights for minorities?
5. Does it advocate equal rights for women?
6. Does it accept a pluralism of interpretations within Islam?[41]

It would be worthwhile to conduct an empirical cross-national study in Western diasporas to have these questions answered. Given the findings of Ruud Koopmans, one cannot automatically expect that a majority of Muslims in Western Europe would score 'positively' in answering some of these questions.[42]

A minimum definition of "moderates" could simply be, "those who reject terrorism", as Shamit Sagger has suggested.[43] However, even such a minimum definition is not without ambiguity since there is, especially

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[38] Ibid., p. 2.

[39] Ibid., p. 5.

[40] Fiore Geelhoed, "Fundamentalism", in Jeffrey Ian Ross, ed., *Religion and Violence: An Encyclopedia of Faith and Conflict from Antiquity to the Present* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2011), p. 368.

[41] Amanda Hiber, ed. *Islamic Militancy* (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2008) (Opposing Viewpoints Series), Box containing "What Makes a Group Moderate?" by Joshua Muravchik and Charlie Szrom, "In Search of Moderate Muslims", *American Enterprise Institute*, February 1, 2008), p. 168; www.aei.org.

[42] Leonard Weinberg et. al. have observed, "One of the most longstanding findings in the study of politics is that the more religious people become, the stronger their objections to the democratic way of thinking". L. Weinberg and A. Leonard and Ami Pedahzur, eds., *Religious Fundamentalism and Political Extremism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp.167-168.

among Muslims, no consensus as to what constitutes "terrorism" and how it differs from "jihad". Is it merely a tactic or is it (also) an ideology?[44] Zeyno Baran, who works for the Hudson Institute, argues that a group should not be identified as "moderate" on the basis of its use or support for terrorist tactics but based on its ideology. In her view, any group with an Islamist ideology (such as the Muslim Brotherhood) cannot be considered moderate.[45] Her conclusion is that

> The prevailing view – that Islamists should be co-opted into existing political systems – simply will not work. The fallacy in this policy of appeasement lies in assuming that an individual or group that *sounds* moderate in fact *is* moderate. Often Islamists are willing to make superficial concessions while continuing to hold an uncompromising worldview – one that they share with fellow Muslim audiences when they are confident that the West is not paying attention.[46]

One of the more comprehensive answers to the question: "who is *not* a Muslim moderate?", has been given by Jeffrey Bale :

> Many observers have naïvely assumed that all Muslims who are not directly participating in jihadist terrorism, either as perpetrators or as active facilitators, must ipso facto be moderate in terms of their core beliefs and ultimate goals. This is false. First, no Muslim who is also an Islamist, even if he or she eschews or abjures the use of violence and terrorism for essentially pragmatic or tactical reasons, is really a moderate given his or her Islamic supremacist aims. Second, neither other types of Islamic fundamentalists (e.g. of the 'quietist' rather than the 'activist' variety) nor hardline Islamic traditionalists can be justly characterised as moderate with respect to their doctrinal tenets. Third, even the very large number of semi-observant or non-observant Muslims (i.e. those who do not strictly follow Muslim rituals or regularly attend mosques, or who engage periodically in certain religiously-proscribed activities like gambling and drinking) are not necessarily moderate with respect to their basic theological beliefs, their social and political attitudes towards 'infidels' or their views about armed *jihad.* After all, conveniently ignoring Islamic injunctions is not the same thing as explicitly repudiating them.[47]

Bale's view that no Islamist can be a moderate, is, however, contested by the Egyptian political scientist Omar Ashour. In Ashour's view, even Islamists can in fact be "moderate" in a Muslim-majority country context.

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[43] Shamit Saggar, *Pariah Politics: Understanding Western Radical Islamism and What Should be Done* (Oxford: University Press, 2009). Saggar suggested: "It is important to have a clear definition of who you want to support, and to be useful this needs to be more detailed than everyone who does not commit violence. How can we be sure that the entire silent Muslim majority rejects terrorist acts of violence? And what about tacit support? For the purposes of moving ahead with the discussion, a working assumption can be made that moderation is defined relatively, but in this case would be defined as those who reject terrorism as a tool to achieve their ends. This still leaves sympathizers who supply, however, unwittingly and passively, the crucial moral oxygen for those committed to and involved in violent confrontation. They are sometimes referred to as 'fence-sitter'." Ibid., p. 214.

[44] Terrorism can be both tactic and ideology. The revised academic consensus definition (2011) describes terrorism on the one hand as "[…]a *doctrine* about the presumed effectiveness of a special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence and, on the other hand,[as…] a conspiratorial *practice* of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action […] targeting mainly civilians and non-combatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effect on various audiences and conflict parties". A.P. Schmid, ed.,*The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 86.

[45] Zeyno Baran, "O Brotherhood, What Art Thou?", *The Weekly Standard,* Vol. 12, No. 30 (April 23, 2007). She holds that "Allies in this war cannot be chosen on the basis of their tactics – that is, whether or not they eschew violent methods. Instead, the deciding factor must be ideology: Is the group Islamist or not? In essence, this means that a non-violent, British-born Islamist should not be considered an ally. Yet a devout, conservative Muslim immigrant to Europe – one who does not even speak any Western languages but rejects Islamist ideology – could". Ibid., pp. 146-147.

[46] Zeyno Baran, "Countering Ideological Support for Terrorism in Europe: Muslim Brotherhood and Hizb ut-Tahrir – Allies or Enemies?", *Connections,* Vol. V, Number 3 (Winter 2006), p. 25.

[47] Jeffrey M. Bale, "Denying the Link between Islamist Ideology and Jihadist Terrorism: 'Political Correctness' and the Undermining of Counterterrorism", *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 7, Issue 5 (2013), pp. 45, note 75.

Discussing religious-political movements in Northern Africa before the Arab Spring, he identified the existence of "moderate" Islamists:

> By *a moderate* Islamist group, I mean an Islamist movement that ideologically accepts, at minimum, electoral democracy as well as political and ideological pluralism, and that aims for gradual social, political and economic changes. Behaviourally (tactically and strategically), moderate groups accept the principle of working within the established state institutions, regardless of their perceived legitimacy, and shun violent methods to achieve their goals. Moderate Islamists could also be called reformists, pluralists or modernists. […] Finally, *moderation* is a process of relative change within Islamist movements that is mainly concerned with the attitudes of these movements towards democracy. Moderation can take place on two levels: on the ideological level, the key transformation is the acceptance of democratic principles, most importantly, the legitimacy of pluralism and the peaceful alternation of power. On the behavioural level, the key transformation is participation in electoral politics. […] Different levels of moderation can occur within both non-violent radical and moderate Islamist movements unevenly and across issue areas.[48]

Given the apparent contradiction between the position of Bale and Ashour, we end up with the paradoxical situation that, depending on the definition, we can have not only "moderate Muslims", but also "moderate Islamists". Since Islamists are widely considered "extremist", "moderate extremists" would appear to be a contradiction in terms. To emerge from this seeming paradox, we have to keep in mind that what is mainstream in Europe might not be mainstream in Northern Africa and extremism is, at least in part, a relational concept, referring to something that is not the norm in a given context. However, we also need to analyse more closely what "extremist" means and whether there is such a position as *bona fide* "non-violent extremism".

4. What is "Extremism"?

While other "*-isms*" (terrorism, imperialism, racism, anti-semitism, fascism, communism, and more) have a semantic core which at least in part explains the use of a concept, extremism has no such kernel which could offer guidance as to its meaning. Peter Coleman and Andrea Bartoli describe extremism as "[...]activities (beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, strategies) of a character far removed from the ordinary.[49] Since extremism is a relational concept,[50] to answer the question: "what is extreme?", one needs a benchmark, something that is (more) "ordinary", "centrist", "mainstream" or "normal" when compared with the (extreme) political fringe. Humans have a tendency to think that others should also think like they do and therefore tend to assume that their own position is shared by the majority of other "reasonable" individuals. Therefore it can happen that even those whom we may consider extremists call others "extremist". Recently Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of AQ – in the views of most analysts an "extreme" organisation or movement – disavowed the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) as being "too extreme".[51] In order to clarify what should be understood by (Islamic) "extremism", some views and findings of leading authorities in this field of study are reviewed here in the hope of establish common ground.

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[48] Omar Ashour, *The De-Radicalisation of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 4-7.
[49] Peter T. Coleman and Andrea Bartoli, Addressing Extremism, White Paper. New York: The International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution, Colombia University, p. 1; http://www.tc.columbia.edu/i/a/document/9386_WhitePaper_2_Extremism_030809.pdf ; accessed 28 April 2014.
[50] Floris Vermeulen and Frank Bovenkerk, *Engaging with Violent Islamic Extremism* (2012), p. 48.
[51] "Al Qaeda disavows ISIS militants in Syria", *BBC News Middle East*, 3 February 2014, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-26016318.

The American political scientist Manus Midlarsky, in his study *Origins of Political Extremism: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century and Beyond* has described extremism in 2011 in this way:

> Political extremism is defined as the will to power by a social movement in the service of a political program typically at variance with that supported by existing state authorities, and for which individual liberties are to be curtailed in the name of collective goals, including the mass murder of those who would actually or potentially disagree with that program. Restrictions on individual freedom in the interests of the collectivity and the willingness to kill massively are central to this definition.[52]

Uwe Backes, a German political scientist and author of *Political Extremes: A Conceptual History from Antiquity*,[53] found that what unites extremists is that they have a clear notion about what had to be absolutely rejected, namely:

1. Pluralism (they have a preference for decision-making solely by a dominant individual or group);
2. Orientation towards a common good of all people whereby different interests and worldviews are taken into consideration;
3. Legal rules to which even the rulers have to adhere; and
4. Self-determination (by the majority of people instead of outside determination).

Roger Eatwell and Matthew J. Goodwin have proposed to consider "extremism" as having two dimensions – one action-based and the other value-based.[54] Ronald Wibtrope, in turn, has proposed to distinguish between three types of extremists – those who are:

1. Extreme by method but not by goal;
2. Extreme by goal and method; and
3. Extreme by goal but not method.[55]

The book in which Ronald Wibtrope elaborates this bears the title *Extremism. The Political Economy of Radicalism*. This begs the further question: what is the difference between radicalism and extremism? These two terms are often used interchangeably, even by political scientists who should know better, based on the history of political ideas. It is tempting to define "non-violent extremists" in terms of Wibtrope's third option – "extreme by goal but not method" – "acceptable" extremists, as it were. However, that might be a premature conclusion since the absence of violence might be only a temporal tactical consideration with "true" extremists (the issue of use of violence will be discussed below). A more accurate distinction between extremism and radicalism can be gained by looking at the history of ideas of these terms. From that point of view, extremists tend to be closed-minded supremacists and radicals tend to be open-minded egalitarians.[56]

Religious extremists differ not only from radicals but, in some ways, also from more secular (e.g. right-wing) extremists. Charles Kimball has identified five warning signs (which do not exclusively apply to individuals only, as they may sometimes be applicable to a whole group or a theocratic regime):

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[52] Manus I. Midlarsky, *Origins of Political Extremism: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, (Cambridge: University Press, 2011).

[53] Uwe Backes, *Political Extremes: A Conceptual History from Antiquity* (London: Routledge 2010).

[54] Robert Eatwell and Matthew J. Goodwin, "Introduction: the 'new' extremism in twenty-first century Britain", in Robert Eatwell and Matthew J. Goodwin, eds. *The New Extremism in 21st Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 11.

[55] Ronald Wibtrobe, *Extremism: The Political Economy of Radicalism* (Cambridge: University Press, 2006), p. 84.

[56] For a discussion, see A.P. Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation and Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review" (The Hague: ICCT Research Paper, March 2013), http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013_2.pdf.

1. Absolute Truth Claims;
2. Blind Obedience;
3. Establishing the "Ideal" Time;
4. The End Justifies Any Means; and
5. Declaring Holy War.[57]

Having clarified, at least to some extent, what religious extremism is, this Paper will, before turning to its Islamist variant (which should not be confused with Islam, one of the major religions of the world),[58] have a closer look at the "non-violent" part of non-violent extremism since there is an ambiguity in that term that needs to be clarified.

5. Not-violent vs. Non-violent Militancy

We all know – or think we know – what "violence" is and many assume that "non-violence" is simply the absence of violence. However, like "terrorism", "violence" is a contested concept. Violence by organs of the state is sometimes labelled "force", a term used also for "defensive" violence which can give an aura of legitimacy to the infliction of physical harm to a person. A closer look at violence reveals a multitude of nuances and meanings, especially in combination with adjectives like physical, psychological, structural, cultural, direct or indirect, criminal, political, non-lethal and lethal.[59]

When it comes to "non-violent", there is at least one important distinction we have to keep in mind – the one between (i) "non-violent" and (ii) "not-violent". In general parlance, the epithet "non-violent" is used for both of them which can be a source of confusion. The reason for this is that there is a current of political thought, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Gene Sharp (among others), that has elevated the principle of using only peaceful means to achieve political ends to a political philosophy of "non-violence". In this understanding, "non-violence" is principaled and absolute, not pragmatic and opportunistically context-specific. Non-violence in the Gandhian tradition refers to an activist and at times even militant mode of conflict waging, based on sanctions other than (the threat of) violence even in the face of violence by the opposing party. Such non-violence as an activist strategy goes beyond passive, peaceful resistance: it involves an array of direct political actions, both individual and collective, such as hunger-strikes, demonstrations, sit-ins, blockades, acts of civil disobedience and other persuasive and even coercive tactics (such as non-cooperation in the form of strikes) - but all falling short of the use of violence against persons or objects (other than their own). Both means and ends of adherents of this political philosophy are non-violent. It is not just a violence-avoiding form of political conduct as with pacifists, but one that is completely dedicated not to kill while at the same time attempting to create conditions that will make killing unlikely. In this sense, it is the very opposite of the pro-violent politics of extremism that regards killing as necessary, useful and even heroic, with some extremists actively seeking opportunities for bloodshed and promising great rewards in the hereafter to those who sacrifice themselves while killing enemies.[60]

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[57] Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil: Five Warning Signs,* (New York: Harper, 2002), chapters 2-6 (The Five Warning Signs of Corruption in Religion).

[58] Cf. Jeffrey Bale, "Denying the Link between Islamist Ideology and Jihadist Terrorism: 'Political Correctness' and the Undermining of Counterterrorism", *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 7, No. 5 (2013), p. 28, note 7. It should be noted that "Islamist" is different from "Islamic"; the first referring to an extremist political ideology based on a non-mainstream interpretation of certain religious texts while "Islamic" refers to a major religion that condemns the use of violence against non-combatants and prohibits suicide. See Omid Safi, "What to call acts of terrorism committed by group of Muslims. Islamic? Islamist? Or something else?", *What would Muhammed Do?, Religion News Service*, 19 April 2014; http://omidsafi.religionnews.com/2014/04/19/islamic-or-islamist-or-al-qaeda/.

[59] For definitions, see the Glossary (pp. 598-706), in Alex P. Schmid, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (2011), esp. p. 700.

[60] Gene Sharp has defined "non-violence" as "A technique of conducting *protest, resistance* and *intervention* without physical violence by (a) *acts of omission* – that is, the participants refuse to perform acts which they usually perform, are expected by custom to perform, or are

Principled non-violent action is a radical alternative to existing forms of conflict waging where violence or at least the threat thereof is an instrument of achieving goals against an opponent's resistance. In that sense "non-violence" differs from "not-violent" forms of conflict waging where the non-use of violence is based merely on pragmatic, tactical and/or temporal considerations (in the sense of "not-now-violent"), not on a principled political philosophy that seeks to hold the moral high ground in the face of a violent opponent.

In the sense of the above, "non-violent extremism" is a misleading term. Gandhian non-violence is radical but not extreme. However, even such a statement hinges on where we draw the line between the concepts of radicalism and extremism, which many use interchangeably – partly because they both indicate a position at some distance from "centrist", "mainstream" or "moderate", "middle of the road" positions. Yet if we look at the history of political ideas in the nineteenth and twentieth century, radicalism and extremism really have different ideological genealogies: one is rooted in the egalitarian democratic tradition and the other in a supremacist authoritarian one.[61] While this is not the place to elaborate these differences in detail here,[62] a brief look at some other terms of contested terminologies is necessary.

6. Extremism, Radicalism, Fundamentalism, Salafism , Islamism, Jihadism and Terrorism.

A number of terms are used when ideological drivers behind some forms of contemporary Muslim-linked terrorism are discussed. Among them extremism, radicalism, fundamentalism, Salafism, Islamism and jihadism are prominent.[63] Some authors use them more or less interchangeably,[64] while others make an effort to differentiate between them.[65] The lack of precision is neither conductive to a constructive public debate nor to the cumulativeness of research.

A previous ICCT Research Paper[66] argued that, based on the history of political ideas since the late eighteenth century, the concept of radicalism ought to be differentiated from the concept of extremism – despite the fact that both radicals and extremists are, at a given time and place and in a given context, by definition, situated outside the mainstream political thinking of a given society. In that ICCT Research Paper it was also noted that radicals are not *per se* violent and while they might share certain characteristics (e.g. alienation from the state, anger about a country's foreign policy, feelings of discrimination) with (violent) extremists, there are also

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required by law or regulation to perform; or (b) *acts of commission* - that is, the participants perform acts which they usually do not perform, are not expected by custom to perform or are forbidden by law or regulation from performing; or (c) *a combination of both.* The technique includes a multitude of specific methods which are grouped into three main classes: *non-violent protest and persuasion, non-cooperation*, and *non-violent intervention. Non-violent action may be used as a technique of waging active struggle and as a sanction to achieve certain objectives in conflict situations where in its absence submission or violence might have been practiced".* Gene Sharp, *Abecedary of Nonviolence*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, Program on Non-violent Sanctions), p. 238; A.P. Schmid, *Social Defence and Soviet Military Power: An Inquiry into the Relevance of an Alternative Defence Concept* (The Hague, Government Printing Office, 1986), p. 10.

[61] Astrid Bötticher, *Radikalismus und Extremismus,* (forthcoming doctoral thesis, 2014); Astrid Bötticher and Miroslav Mares *Extremismus. Theorien – Konzepte – Formen* (2012).

[62] For a more detailed analysis of radicalism, see also A.P. Schmid, *Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation* (2013).

[63] Deepa Kumar, for instance, uses the term "political Islam" interchangeably for "Islamism", "Islamic fundamentalism" and "Islamic neo-fundamentalism", defining "'political Islam' as a *reinterpretation* of Islam by various individuals and groups to serve particular *political* goals." Deepa Kumar, *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012), p. 94. However, this is too superficial a definition

[64] For instance, no strict differentiation is made between radicalism and extremism in the description of Islamist extremism in the Netherlands in Peter R. Rodrigues and Jaap van Donselaar, eds., *Monitor Racisme en Extremisme* (Amsterdam: Pallas Publications, 2010), p. 85.

[65] For a terminological discussion, see the lemma "Islamic Fundamentalism" in Jeffrey Jan Ross (ed.). Religion and Violence: An Encyclopedia of Faith and Conflict from Antiquity to the Present, Vol. 2. (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2011), pp. 359-369, written by Fiore Geelhoed. She notes: "The concept of Islamic fundamentalism refers to a complex phenomenon with multiple facets. Other terms that are used to describe this and related phenomena are Islamism, political Islam, radical Islam, and Salafism. Sometimes these terms refer to a broader category, and at other times they demarcate a narrower category". (Ibid., p.359).

[66] Alex P. Schmid, *Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation* (2013).

important differences such as the willingness of radicals (at least those in the European political tradition) to see all human beings as equals while extremists (not only in the European political tradition) tend to be authoritarian. A major difference between radicals and extremists appears to be that the first have a (more) open mind while the second group has a (more) closed mind, as exemplified, for instance, in the observation that a Salafist "will not listen to a non-Salafist".[67]

Salafism, a transnational Sunni Islamic movement, has been growing fast in recent decades, especially among uprooted people estranged from their original ethnic or national culture. All Salafists are fundamentalist in the sense that they believe in the timeless "fundamental" truths of a holy script that is taken literally and seen as blueprint for the organisation of a society pleasing to God. A literalist fundamentalism exists in various religions; it can also be found among Christians, Hindus and Jews. Many of them are not violent in their political behaviour.[68] This also applies to many Salafists who are not violent jihadists. Salafists can be apolitical (quietist), political (reformist) or militant (jihadist). However, even in their non-jihadist variant, their fundamentalist value system is extreme by the prevailing norms of West European societies and widely considered incompatible with core principles of modern liberal-democratic societies such as the separation of state and religion, popular sovereignty, gender equality, respect for minority rights and acceptance of laws decided upon by a majority of people. Salafism which emerged in the 19th century in Egypt, is a growing religious movement within Sunni Islam that is largely opposed to integration into mainstream West European societies. Its puritan followers reject religious and moral pluralism and believe that they alone are in possession of the truth as they adhere to a literalist interpretation of the Koran and emulate the supposed practices of the first three generations of Muslims (*al-salaf al-salih*), following the death of the Prophet Mohammed in 632. Salafism comes in several variants, one of which is Wahhabism, the official variant of Islam in Saudi Arabia.[69]

Islamism, at least in its classical variant, is integrative: all questions of public and private life are supposedly answered by Islam while adherence to sharia law is considered mandatory.[70] Islamism is a supremacist variant of mainly Sunni "political Islam". It is anti-secular, anti-infidel and anti-Western, seeking to establish a state (caliphate) whose puritanical features are meant to resemble the situation in early Islam.[71] A very perceptive analysis has been offered by former Hizb-ut-Tahrir member Shiraz Maher and his co-author Martyn Frampton:

> Islamism (or "Political Islam") is a worldview which teaches its adherents that Islam is a comprehensive political ideology and must be treated as such. Its proponents believe that Islam must be placed at the centre of an individual's identity, as either the overriding or the only source of that identity. The Islamist outlook is one that essentially divides the world into two distinct spheres: "Muslims" and "the rest". Crucially, it is this binary division of the world that makes accommodation between Islamism and liberalism so difficult. The individualism and pluralism that lie at the heart of the latter run counter to the notion of a discrete communal-faith bloc that must be preserved, and for this reason Islamists often reject liberal democratic principles. Muslims are presumed to be members of a de-territorialised, globalized *ummah*, in which allegiance is defined through the fraternity of faith alone. Islamists suggest that Muslims are under constant attack, and it is this perceived perpetual danger that drives the Islamist narrative of victimhood and grievance. The practical consequences of such an outlook are varied, differing

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[67] Jamie Bartlett, Jonathan Birdwell and Michael King, *The Edge of Violence* (2010), p. 142.

[68] For a brief discussion, see lemma "Fundamentalism" in Alex P. Schmid, ed.,*The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (2011), p. 636.

[69] For a brief discussion, see lemma "Salafism" in ibid., p. 685. While Salafism is striving for a universal caliphate, Wahhabism is satisfied with local (Saudi) rule while demanding total obedience to authorities of the state. Ibid., p. 701. For an analysis of Wahhabism, see: Stephen Schwartz, *The Two Faces of Islam: Saudi Fundamentalism and its Role in Terrorism,* New York: Anchor Books, 2003.

[70] For a brief discussion, see lemma "Islamism" in A.P. Schmid, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (2011) p. 649.

[71] Cf. Jeffrey Bale, "Denying the Link between Islamist Ideology and Jihadist Terrorism" (2013), p.28, note 7.

from group to group. It is true that, for the most part, it is linked to a belief that *Shari'a* (Islamic law) should be implemented, either within existing nation-states or in the context of a pan-Islamic theocracy (often referred to as the 'Caliphate'). The absence of a purist Islamic state is judged to be responsible for the current problems of the Muslim world, and only if such an entity is re-established, it is argued, will the Muslim world be restored to global pre-eminence. [72]

Today, Islamism is a social-political movement of mainly Salafists that has also found adherents outside Arab and Muslim countries in Western diasporas. Most of the contemporary variants of political and militant Islam go back to the Muslim Brotherhood which was founded in 1928 in Egypt by Hassan al-Banna. The Brotherhood's motto remains "Allah is our goal, the messenger [Prophet] is our model, the Qur'an is our constitution, jihad is our means, and martyrdom in the way of Allah is our aspiration".[73] The Muslim Brotherhood, and its chief ideologue Sayyid Qutb, the author of *Milestones* (1964), have stood at the cradle of present-day Salafist jihadism, which is directed at overthrowing apostate regimes in the Islamic world, reconquering the territories that were once ruled by Islam (e.g. Spain) and excluding Western influences that threaten "true" Islam. AQ and its affiliates are only the most violent sub-streams of this Islamist trend which includes not violent variants as well as violent Islamist extremism.

The presence of a growing number of Salafists who often separate themselves from mainstream society in Western democracies, has, in the view of some observers, created an enabling environment for those who share the goals of not violent Salafists – such as the introduction of sharia law to which everybody must submit – but are extremist in the means they utilise or achieve their political objectives. In the view of knowledgeable observers, even peaceful, apolitical, quietist Salafism can be served as an "antechambre" to terrorism, acting de facto as a "conveyor belt" by facilitating socialisation to violent extremism in the form of terrorism. In the words of the former Dutch Deputy National Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism: "for most of the known Dutch terrorists, the non-violent (i.e. not-violent if one accepts the terminological distinction introduced earlier), variety of Salafism was the first step towards acceptance of jihadist Salafism".[74]

While much has been written on jihadism and even more on terrorism[75], the question of the relationship between these two concepts is still a source of confusion. Islamists sometimes claim to be opposed to terrorism but when one refers to a particular act of violence perpetrated by Islamists that is widely understood as an act if terrorism, they claim that is part of a legitimate jihad (effort or struggle on God's way to ensure the supremacy of Islam) and therefore cannot be possibly labelled terrorism.[76] In the perspective of militant jihadists, much

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[72] Shiraz Maher and Martyn Frampton, *Choosing Our Friends Wisely: Criteria for engagement with Muslim groups* (London: Policy Exchange, 2009), p. 18.

[73] Cf. Roel Meijer and Edwin Bakker, eds., *The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe* (London: Hurst & Co., 2012), p.7.

[74] Ibid., p. 51. A somewhat different position is taken by Ineke Roex who wrote a dissertation on Salafism in the Netherlands. In a forthcoming article she writes: "The jihad as a violent means to protect, defend and spread Islam is soundly rejected by quietist and political Salafi religious leaders in the context of the Netherlands and other Western, non-Islamic countries. Salafi organisations commit to combating the legitimisation of violence in many ways. Nonetheless, there are believers in and around the Salafi networks that do sympathise with jihadist ideas and legitimise violence. In regard to defensive jihad in the context of Islamic countries, these networks assume an ambiguous position. In some networks, the current situation in, for instance, Syria is designated as jihad, but they simultaneously call on followers not to go there. There are other Salafi networks that contend there is no jihad whatsoever going on in Syria. In short, quietist and political networks in the Salafi movement respect democratic authority in Europe, do not want to institute Sharia law, react to critical statements about Islam in a non-violent manner and do not call followers for jihad. The political detachment of some Salafists (by refusing to participate in the political system or refusing to react politically to dissatisfaction) can result in societal detachment, but it is not primarily a problem of security. Jihadists violate democratic values explicitly by calling people to commit violent acts in certain circumstances. This is why it is so important to distinguish various Salafi networks from one another." Ineke Roex. "Keeping Taps on the Salafi Movement: Should we be Scared of all Salafists in Europe?". *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. VIII, Issue 3, June 2014 (forthcoming).

[75] See Alex P. Schmid, ed. *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (2011).

[76] For instance, "Jihad is Not Terrorism. Jihad is our Life", is a slogan of Jaish-e-Mohammed, an Islamist extremist group in Peshawar, which "[…]subscribes to an interpretation of jihad in which it is the duty of all Muslims to use any means necessary to ensure worldwide expansion of Islamic rule". Cecile Van de Voorde, Lemma "Jihad", in Jeffrey Ian Ross (ed.). *Religion and Violence: An Encyclopedia of Faith and Conflict from Antiquity to the Present* (2011), p.401.

depends on who is the target rather than what is the nature of the act and who are the victims. In that the discussion reminds one of the deliberate confusion between freedom fighting and terrorism. Just as one can be a freedom fighter and a terrorist at the same time (the first concept referring to goals, the second to tactics), assuming the role of a jihadist is no excuse for engaging in terrorism. Jihad, or holy war, refers to a type of defensive or offensive struggle against infidels (non-Muslims) or Muslims who do not adhere to the right interpretation of Islam, such as heretics and apostates – often as defined by the perpetrators rather than a legitimate state authority (like, until 1924, the caliph).[77] Contemporary jihadists have pushed the concept of jihad much further, declaring jihad to be the sixth pillar of Islam and an individual duty for every Muslim. In their targeting practices, most restraints that just war doctrine in Islam imposes on fighters seems to have vanished. In the words of Cecile Van de Voorde:

> Religious terrorism[…]is based upon an extremist understanding of a necessary cosmic battle between good and evil, in which killing is a sacramental act. It also relies heavily on the demonization of any and all enemies of Islam, who are viewed as the ultimate source of evil. Jihadism has produced the utmost form of Islamic fundamentalist violence. According to true believers, violence is required to annihilate the enemies of Islam; it is a duty incumbent upon every able Muslim, and holy war against non-Muslims therefore becomes unavoidable. Religious rhetoric is used by jihadists in order to explicitly permit the use of violence, which makes terrorist acts sacred and holy and leads to deified terrorism, arguably the most dangerous form of all".[78]

Religion is one interpretative framework in the human search for meaning and focuses on things sacred, unseen and supernatural which are considered to be true. Contrary to science (an alternative framework to make sense of the world and our place in it), it is dogmatic and tolerates no scepticism. That is why true believers are sometimes prepared to die for their faith. In contrast, a sceptic like the British philosopher Bertrand Russell, when asked whether he would be willing to die for his beliefs, answered: "I would never die for my beliefs because I might be wrong"[79]. The trouble with religious terrorists is that they are not only prepared to die for their beliefs but also to kill others who do not share their beliefs. These others – infidels, heretics and apostates - are a challenge to the true believer's religious or ideological framework. Rather than trying to reason with them, the terrorist extremist seeks to silence them by threats of violence.[80] Religious fundamentalists have, as Rik Coolsaet has pointed out, only this to offer as their answers to the uneasiness caused by the globalisation of the world: "nostalgia for times gone, simple certainties, distinct scapegoats and simple solutions".[81] Coolsaet concluded "Jihadism has become the religion of resistance – an ideological role once played by Marxist Utopia".[82] Salafist jihadism stands at the far end of political Islam, going beyond Islamist parties that seek to gain political power by "marching through the institutions" of the state, and also going beyond missionary (da'wa) Islamism that concentrates on conversion of moderate Muslims to their militant ideology. However, jihadist Islamism is part of a broader social-political-religious movement of which Al-Qaeda is only the most prominent manifestation.[83]

The regularly used term "non-violent extremists" in the context of Islam would seem to be covering, however inappropriately, members of the first group just mentioned: political Islamism in the form of parties and lobby (interest) groups. The term is also used to cover some members of the second group, missionary Islamism.

[77] Kirsten Bauer, *Fundamentalismus,* München: Wilhelm Heyne Verlag 1999, p.23.
[78] Cecile Van de Voorde, *Jihad* (2011), p. 402.
[79] Quoted at http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/b/bertrand_russell.html.
[80] Owen Anderson, Lemma 'Philosophical Perspectives'; in Jeffrey Ian Ross (ed.) Religion and Violence: An Encyclopedia of Faith and Conflict from Antiquity to the Present (2011), pp.560.
[81] Rik Coolsaet, 9/11 – Five Years Later – The Age of Rage, in Global Futures Forum, *Radicalisation, Violence and the Power of Networks*. Ottawa: Global Futures Forum, 2006, p.16.
[82] Ibid. p. 17.
[83] (Translated from German by author), Miroslav Mares, in Astrid Bötticher and Miroslav Mares, *Extremismus* (2012), p. 260.

Both these categories have in common that they do not openly plead for the use of jihad by the sword, at least not in the West under present circumstances. These two groups of Islamists can be found in many Muslim foundations and missionary societies that are active in Western diasporas. They include the Muslim Brotherhood (Egypt-based), the Muslim World League (Saudi-supported), Tablighi Jamaat (Levant-based), Hizb ut Tahrir (South Asia) as well as many others.[84] The main problem, however, are those who embrace offensive violence as an instrument to advance towards their version of utopia. They clearly are "violent extremists".

We should, however, not lose sight of the fact that in addition to "violent extremists" falling under last category - and "non-violent extremists" falling under the first two categories - there are many non-organised Muslims in Western diasporas who are "cultural" Muslims only. Many of them have, in their daily practice, if not in some of their (solicited) statements (as Ruud Koopman's study cited earlier revealed), de facto consented to Western core values like democracy and the separation of religion and state; they are peaceful and open-minded.

Those who are not open-minded, not willing to integrate into their host societies nor willing to compromise but on the contrary work towards the establishment of a worldwide Islamic caliphate and sharia rule are the problematic group. They completely reject Western core values and there is no alternative than to confront them vigorously since appeasement would be dangerous. Even when they are not engaging themselves in acts of violence in the West but only engage in missionary work (da'wa) they are pushing the Islamist agenda. They ought to be assessed in terms of:

- respect for the constitution and the laws of the democratic state of which they are citizens or residents;
- respect for universal human rights in general and equal rights for women in particular;
- presence or absence of efforts to create a parallel society that is separate from the democratic society;
- presence or absence of efforts to introduce and enforce sharia-law in its own communities;
- evidence of incitement to jihad or glorification of (suicide) terrorism;
- evidence of financial support for jihad in Muslim-majority countries facing Islamist insurgencies; and
- participation in armed struggles in conflict zones.

The difference between non-violent extremists engaged "only" in political and missionary work (da'wa) and violent extremists who advocate or practice jihad is often only one of strategy and tactics, depending on place and time. Even those who engage ostensibly only in missionary work (da'wa) can have maximalist goals. To give an example: one of the most influential and popular imams in the Muslim world is Muslim Brotherhood member Yusuf al Qaradawi. Not so long ago, this sheik was said to have about 60 million followers on the Arabic service of *Al Jazeera*. Already in 1995, he had preached that:

[…] Islam will come back to Europe for the third time, after it was expelled from it twice […]. Conquest through Da'wa, that is what we hope for. We will conquer Europe, we will conquer America! Not through sword, but through Da'wa.[85]

Da'wa means not just proselytising - something which Islamists prohibit to other faiths where they are in control – it refers, in this case, to Islamisation[86]. Al Qaradawi has rejected terrorism on various occasions and could therefore be considered a "non-violent extremist". In his book *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the*

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[84] For an overview, see Patrick Sookhdeo, *Global Jihad. The Future in the Face of Militant Islam* (McClean: Isaac Publishing, 2008); Miroslav Mares, "Übersicht über den islamistischen Extremismus", in Astrid Bötticher and Miroslav Mares, *Extremismus* (2012), pp. 262-274.

[85] Al-Qaradawi in Toledo (Ohio) at a conference of the Muslim Arab Youth Association (MAYA); al-Qaradawi, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yusuf_al_Qaradawi. His widely circulated works include: Y. Al-Qaradawi, *Islamic Awakening Between Rejection and Extremism* (London: Zain International, 1991); Y. Al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam* (London: Al-Birr Foundation, 2003).

[86] David Burkay, Why Da'wah Before Jihad (Da'wah Qablal-Jihad), American Centre for Democracy, 11 March 2014; http://acdemocracy.org/why-dawah-qablal-jihad-dawah-before-jihad/.

Coming Phase (2000), this "global mufti"[87] advocated against a violent confrontation but he did so – in the words of Lorenzo Vidino:

> [N]ot because it is wrong, immoral, or against his interpretation of Islamic texts, but simply because it is at present ineffective. It is a moral duty in places where Muslims are, according to al Qaradawi's interpretation of events, under direct attack, such as in Palestine, Kashmir, and Iraq. In those cases his endorsement of jihad is open and constant, urging fellow Muslims all over the world to aid their brothers.[88]

In 2013 Yusuf al Qaradawi, urged Sunnis throughout the Islamic world to join the battle in Syria: "Every Muslim trained to fight and capable of doing that [must] make himself available."[89]

While al Qaradawi passes as a non-violent Islamist, the difference between his virulent language and the one of clearly "violent extremists" of the AQ type is often merely a matter of degree.[90] AQ itself has been unambiguously and uncompromising as it can, for instance, be gathered from the introduction to a training manual for the military jihad discovered by the police in Manchester in May 2000 in a AQ safe house:

> The confrontation that we are calling for with the apostate regimes does not know Socratic debates [...], Platonic ideals [...], nor Aristotelian diplomacy. But it knows the dialogue of bullets, the ideals of assassination, bombing, and destruction, and the diplomacy of the cannon and machine-gun. [...] Islamic governments have never and will never be established through peaceful solutions and cooperative councils. They are established as they have been by pen and gun by word and bullet by tongue and teeth.[91]

In the light of such statements, distinguishing between non-violent extremists who use only the "pen" and the "tongue", and violent extremists who use the "gun" and the "bullet", becomes very problematic. Both types of Islamists are both parties to a common agenda as a study of their political programmes makes clear. Miroslav Mares has made a synopsis of the step-by-step political programme of Islamist extremists:

1. Restoration of Islamic regimes in traditionally Islamic regions (by means of terrorism, civil war, revolutions and coups d'etat);
2. Establishment of new Islamist states in territories in which contemporary Islamist separatist movements are agitating (guerrilla warfare, terrorism);
3. Subversive activities of Islamists in the diasporas of Western democracies as well as other non-Islamist regions (quasi-legalist Islamism; use of Western anti-discrimination norms for prohibiting critique of Islamism; terrorism, mass unrest, formation of an Islamist parallel society [also with the help of demographic expansion; in general acquisition of the most important positions and influence in originally non-Islamist states]);
4. War of Islamist states against non-Islamist states (classical war, war and terrorism with ABC-weapons, utilization of the Islamist diaspora for sabotage and uprisings) and systematic Islamisation of other territories;

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[87] Bettina Gräf and Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, eds., *The Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yusuf Al-Qaradawi* (London: Hurst & Co, 2008).
[88] Lorenzo Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (2010), p. 214.
[89] "Syria conflict: Cleric Qaradawi urges Sunnis to join rebels", *BBC Middle East News*, (1 June 2013), http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-22741588.
[90] For examples of some of Yusuf al Qaradawi's extreme statements, see the lemma Yusuf al Qaradawi in *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yusuf_al-Qaradawi.
[91] *The Al Qaeda Manual* (2000), p.4; translation reprinted at http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/manualpart1_1.pdf.

5. Establishment of Islamist rule with strict application of sharia on a global scale;

6. Maintenance of Islamist rule by means of totalitarian regimes – theocratic state structures and ideology, suppression, execution and liquidation of opponents, reformists and non-believers, control of private lives by means of secret police and theocracy – with the support of state-guided fundamentalist control organs.[92]

This Islamist step-by-step plan reflects the goals outlined in Islamist texts and ought to serve as a warning for thoughtlessly and opportunistically engaging in alliances with non-violent Islamist extremists, even on a temporary basis. Ronald Wibtrobe has argued convincingly that "[T]he more extreme the goals of the group, the more likely it is to use extremist methods to further those goals.[...O]ne should look at the goals of extremist groups in order to understand their actions. The reason is that it is the indivisibility of the goal that explains the extremism of the actions.[93]

The conclusion that trying to distinguish between non-violent (religious) extremists and violent (religious) extremists is futile seems inescapable. It makes more sense to look at what both groups of extremists share in their political outlook . The idea that one can hold extremist beliefs without being inclining to use extremist methods to realise them when the opportunity presents itself – something attributed to non-violent extremists - is naïve and dangerous. Religious Islamist extremism is a unitary phenomenon of which violent and non-violent extremism are two sides of the same coin. To be clear: this statement refers to the *ideology of Islamism* and not to the *religion of Islam.* Islamists, however, seek to equate the two and accuse of Islamophobia all those who speak out against their particular interpretation of the tenets of one of the world's main religions. [94]

7. Twenty Indicators of Extremism

In a paper titled *The Edge of Violence*, issued by the London-based DEMOS think tank, the authors suggest that "Government policy must distinguish clearly between radicalisation that leads to violence and radicalisation that does not". [95] However, how can a government know this in advance? We need to be able to distinguish Islamist extremism from other forms of political speech and behaviour, from mere dissent and protest, from forms of activism and radicalism that might be non-conformist and critical of the existing socio-political order but do not pose a fundamental threat to liberal democracy the way Islamist extremism does. There is a need for an instrument that allows the identification of extremist tendencies in individuals and groups challenging open democratic societies.

Based on the discussion so far and based on two seminal works on extremism, one German by Bötticher and Mares, the other American by Midlarsky, one can identify twenty indicators of extremism that not just apply to Islamist extremism but cover a broader spectrum of extremist ideologies. As indicated earlier, extremism can only be defined with regard to a benchmark that, in the present situation, is constitutional liberal-democratic

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[92] Miroslav Mares, "Strategische Merkmale des islamistischen Extremismus (Strategic Characteristics of Islamist Extremism)", in Astrid Bötticher and Miroslav Mares, *Extremismus. Theorien – Konzepte – Formen* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2012), p. 259.

[93] Ronald Wibtrobe, *Radical Extremism* (2006), pp. 76-79.

[94] The charge is used in a similar way the term "anti-semitism" is used. As Ali A. Rizvi, a Pakistani-Canadian writer has put it: "For decades, Muslims around the world have rightly complained about the Israeli government labelling even legitimate criticism of its policies "anti-Semitic", effectively shielding itself from accountability. Today, Muslim organizations like CAIR (Council of American-Islamic Relations) have borrowed a page from their playbook with the "Islamophobia" label – and taken it even further. […] The phobia of being called "Islamophobic" is on the rise – and it's becoming much more rampant, powerful, and dangerous than Islamophobia itself. […]When you're unable to introduce Pakistan-style blasphemy laws in a secular, Western society, you have to find alternative ways to silence those who offend you, right? And that's where the "Islamophobia" smear comes in – the ultimate, lazy substitute for a non-existing counter-argument. Don't fall for it". Ali A. Rizvi. The Phobia of Being Called Islamophobic, *The Huffington Post;* http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ali-a-rizvi/the-phobia-of-being-calle_b_5215218.html.

[95] Jamie Bartlett, Jonathan Birdwell and Michael King, *The Edge of Violence* (2010), p. 127.

Western societies. The following table is an attempt to create such a yardstick that allows the identification of dangerous trends in individuals and groups driven by ideological extremism, especially, but not exclusively, of the Islamist sort.

Table: Twenty Indicators for Monitoring Extremism [96]

From a liberal-democratic perspective considered "centrist" or "mainstream", extremists tend to:

1. Situate themselves outside the mainstream and reject the existing social, political or world order;
2. Seek to overthrow, with the help of a revolutionary vanguard, the political system in order to (re-) establish what they consider the natural order in society – whether this envisaged order be based on race, class, faith, ethnic superiority, or alleged tradition;
3. Are usually in possession of an ideological programme or action plan aimed at taking and holding communal or state power;
4. Reject or, when in power, subvert the liberal-democratic conception of the rule of law; use the political space provided by it to advance their cause in efforts to take state power;
5. Reject universal human rights and show a lack of empathy and disregard for rights of other than their own people;
6. Reject democratic principles based on popular sovereignty;
7. Reject equal rights for all, especially those of women and minorities;
8. Reject diversity and pluralism in favour of their preferred mono-culture society, e.g. a worldwide Islamic state;
9. Adhere to a (good-) ends-justify (-any)-means philosophy to achieve their goals;
10. Actively endorse and glorify the use of violence to fight what they consider "evil" and to reach their political objectives (e.g. in the form of jihad);
11. Show a propensity to engage in mass violence against actual and potential enemies when in power or when enjoying impunity;
12. Are single-minded, black-or-white thinkers who want to purify the world and demonise, debase and dehumanise their enemies in hate speech, characterising them as "inferior" and earmarking them, implicitly or explicitly, as expendable;
13. Subordinate individual freedoms to collective goals;
14. Refuse to engage in genuine (as opposed to tactical and temporal) compromises with the other side and ultimately seek to subdue or eliminate the enemy;
15. Exhibit intolerance to all views other than their own dogmatic one and express this in anger, aggressive behaviour and hate speech;
16. Exhibit fanaticism, portray themselves as threatened and embrace conspiracy theories without necessarily being irrational in their strategic choices;
17. Exhibit authoritarian, dictatorial or totalitarian traits;

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[96] This Extremism Monitoring Instrument (EMI-20) is derived from the sources quoted earlier in this paper but most importantly from the works of Manus I. Midlarsky, *Origins of Political Extremism: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (Cambridge: University Press, 2011), and Astrid Bötticher & Miroslav Mares, *Extremismus,* (2012). Similar instruments have been developed by others, e.g. the set of "Vera -2" indicators, developed by Pressman and Flockton. Cf. D. Elaine Pressman and John Flockton, "Violent extremist risk assessment: issues and applications of the VERA-2 in a high-security correctional setting", in Andrew Silke, ed., *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism: Critical Issues in Management, Radicalisation and Reform* (London: Routledge, 2014) pp. 122-143; or the set of ERG22+ (Extremism Risk Guidance) indicators developed in the United Kingdom in 2011. The 22 factors in the ERG list are working hypothesis, focusing on imprisoned extremists. These factors partly overlap with the 31 factors in the VERA-2 model (Ibid., p.118) as well with some of the 20 factors presented here. All require (further) empirical verification.

18. Are unwilling to accept criticism and intimidate and threaten dissenters, heretics and critics with death;

19. Expect obedience to their demands and commands rather than allowing to subject their views and policies to discussion even within their own group; and

20. Have fixed ideas and closed minds and believe there is only one truth – theirs. In its pursuit, they are often willing to face punishment or even death and sometimes actively seek martyrdom.

While a few of these factors from this list might be insufficient to identify extremist speech or correctly interpret extremist militancy, the presence of multiple factors lends weight to an assessment of an individual or group as being "extremist". The more of these indicators that can be found in documents or action patterns of militants, the more likely they have to be considered "extremists" and as such need to be considered as serious threats to liberal-democratic societies.

This tentative list ought to be operationalised and empirically validated and some of the indicators might have to be broken down into several separate indicators. In doing so, one should also keep in mind that not all of the indicators have the same weight. When engaging in content and discourse analysis based on such an Extremism Monitoring Instrument (EMI-20), mechanical adding up of indicators should be avoided by analysts. Examination of discourses such as hate speech or monitoring of direct action patterns involving hate crimes with the help of such a checklist should be repeated at fixed intervals or, resources permitting, be an ongoing exercise in a systematic monitoring process. Only when analysts engage in repeated assessments can significant changes in socialisation (i.e. radicalisation to use a widely-used term) to (further) extremism be detected. An extremism measurement instrument based on such a list, as exemplified in the table above, once tested and validated by empirical research, can not only help to identify extremist trends but, conversely, also help to identify better what is legitimate political dissent and healthy radicalism – political activism that every society needs to reform and renew itself. Secular radicalism short of violence, as opposed to extremism, should be accepted and be seen as compatible with vibrant pluralistic Western democracies. To differentiate between dangerous extremist militancy and less dangerous forms of non-conformist radical or non-radical activism is more fruitful than trying to distinguish only between violent and non-violent extremism.

One should also keep in mind – especially when assessing individuals – that people can and do change their minds and behaviour: individual extremists can become radical reformists or even moderates under the influence of external factors (e.g. in a prison situation where an offender has time to reflect). However, for better or worse, most people do not change their minds easily; more often than not they stick to the views acquired early in their life in the family, school, church or mosque.[97]

8. To Engage or Not to Engage with Non-Violent Islamist Extremists?

The literature on the issue whether or not governments should engage with non-violent extremists is very limited. One of the few empirical studies on the subject was published in 2012 and authored by Floris Vermeulen and Frank Bovenkerk. They looked at local policies in five Western European cities – London, Amsterdam, Berlin, Antwerp and Paris – to see how these dealt with the question whether state actors should treat violent and non-

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[97] The period between late adolescence and early adulthood, when young men and women often rebel against their parents or their social surroundings, is a period where extremist ideologies are most likely embraced. Once acquired, they are hard to get rid of if the person in question has not learned to engage in critical thinking, does not possess a healthy dose of general scepticism and has not been exposed to alternative normative systems and life styles outside his or her own (sub-) culture. To bring about cognitive openings in those who have already embraced an extremist *idee fixe* remains a major challenge for so-called de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation efforts. It therefore appears better to reach out to vulnerable young people at an early age, encouraging them to join boy or girl scout organisations, sport clubs and offer them as many occasions as possible to integrate into mainstream society. A *laissez faire* policy on the side of the authorities and local communities will leave their "education" to street gangs, religious sects, extremist political organisations or online radicalisation via the internet.

violent extremists[s] the same or not and, if so, whether non-violent extremist organisations should be seen as suitable partners for state engagement.[98]   They found that different city authorities gave different answers to these questions. In their volume's conclusion, their recommendations for local authorities confronted with the threat of violent Islamism included the following:

> How to deal with the dilemma of defining the enemy and/or choosing a suitable partner? In theory, we believe authorities should be as open as possible, primarily because they do not want to exclude groups and individuals whose views differ fundamentally from those of the surrounding society. Furthermore, it does not make sense to only engage with "moderate" organisations to counter radicalisation, these organisations will agree on most issues and their communities are often limited. However, local authorities should not be naïve. Presumed extremists will not always be that interested and willing to engage in a genuine discussion, regardless of whether it concerns pragmatic or value-based issues. They may even try to use the engagement for their own benefit, i.e. more political influence and a more influential position in the neighbourhood or city. So when there is little development or progress in the discussions it might be better to end the engagement altogether, and perhaps even to define them not as friend but as foe.[99]

While Vermeulen and Bovenkerk appear to be willing to give non-violent extremists the benefit of the doubt, their last sentence points in the same direction as the one reached in this Research Paper. Vermeulen and Bovenkerk's answers are tentative as their research was explorative and did not amount to a full policy evaluation – something that is urgently needed.[100] We still lack good answers from empirical studies to the some of the questions raised here as we have not yet gained enough empirical, evidence-based insights into the ideologies and violence-proneness of various movements and organisations in Muslim communities in Western Europe. For instance, regarding the Netherlands, a recent doctoral dissertation by Ineke Roex arrived at some ambivalent findings:

> The jihad as a violent means to protect, defend and spread Islam is soundly rejected by quietist and political Salafi religious leaders *in the context of the Netherlands* and other Western, non-Islamic countries. Salafi organizations commit to combating the legitimisation of violence in many ways. Nonetheless, there are believers in and around the Salafi networks that do sympathize with jihadist ideas and legitimise violence. In regard to defensive jihad in the context of Islamic countries, these networks assume an ambiguous position. In some networks, the current situation in for instance Syria is designated as jihad, but they simultaneously call on followers not to go there. There are other Salafi networks that contend there is no jihad whatsoever going on in Syria.[101]

Yet as the conflict in Syria is drawing thousands of hitherto not violent young Muslims from West European diasporas into the vortex of extremist violence on the side of the AQ-affiliated Al-Nusra Front and the even more extreme ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), the signs are getting stronger that non-violent and

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[98] Floris Vermeulen and Frank Bovenkerk, *Engaging with Violent Islamic Extremism: Local Policies in Western European Cities* (2012), p. 49.
[99] Ibid., pp. 193-194.
[100] F. Vermeulen and F. Bovenkerk suggested: "[…] we strongly believe that empirical evaluations of some sort are needed and should be conducted in the near future". Ibid., p. 187.
[101] Ineke Roux, "Keeping tabs on the Salafi movement" (2014) p. 7.

violent religious extremism must be considered as two sides of the same Islamist coin.[102] Depending on contextual factors, "non-violent extremists" can easily transform into "violent extremists", practicing terrorism and war crimes in the name of jihad. The claim that non-violent extremist organisations are preventing many rebellious youth from moving further towards terrorism, acting, as it were, as a "safety valve", "bulwark" or "firewall" is not proven (and admittedly hard to prove). Such a claim should not be used as a justification to accept Islamist extremism in Western societies.[103] There have been a good number of cases where members of non-violent extremist organisations like Hizb ut-Tahrir moved on to join terrorist groups.[104] On the other hand, former members of HuT who have joined mainstream democratic politics have warned us about the false tolerance of Western governments towards Islamist extremists. Maajid Nawaz, author of *Radical: My Journey out of Islamist Extremism* (2013) and now working for the Quilliam Foundation is one of them. He pleaded:

> For years, the intolerant Islamist ideology has been spreading unchecked across Western capitals, as we stand by navel-gazing and wondering what to do. There are thousands of young Muslims who already subscribe to the basic views of ISIS and al-Qaeda and thus are ready to be called upon for mobilization. Yet the ostensibly non-violent versions of Islamism are patronized as antidotes to Al Qaeda and violent extremism. It is time to challenge that idea and to challenge its advocates in civil society.[105]

Accommodating the political demands of Islamist extremists in the context of Western democracies as a quid pro quo for pacifying hotheads among their ranks runs the risk of degenerating into a never-ending appeasement policy. Tolerance against the intolerant comes at a high political price and is ultimately self-defeating. Collaborative engagements with non-violent extremists in ways that are likely to advance some of their "religious" demands (like creating Sharia courts and Muslim-patrolled zones in Western societies) ought to be considered unacceptable for democracies, since the creation of separate parallel societies in their midst means that some human rights of individuals (especially women) can no longer be guaranteed.

9. Conclusion

To return to our initial question: should Western governments seek to involve so-called non-violent Islamist extremists to counter violent extremists or is this a dangerous illusion? In the view of knowledgeable observers who have watched the operations of Islamists in Western societies very closely, the two camps share a similar uncompromising worldview and in the end disagree mainly on tactics.[106] If this is indeed the case, collaboration (as opposed to informal contacts and functional i.e. non-political engagements) should be avoided since it strengthens Islamist extremists in their battle for religious leadership of Islam in the West. Many of the non-violent extremist leaders work towards the establishment of a sharia-based state within a democratic state and ultimately wish to establish a transnational Islamist state.[107] Official collaboration with them only provides them with respectability and legitimacy.

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[102] The phrase is borrowed from the title of a panel at a workshop held in Singapore in September 2013: "Non-violent and violent extremism: two sides of the same coin? Joseph Franco, ed., CENS-Warwick GR:EEN Workshop. "Countering Violent Extremism: The State of Play"(Singapore: Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2-3 September 2013), p.10.

[103] Jamie Bartlett, Jonathan Birdwell and Michael King *The Edge of Violence* (2010), p.14; F. Vermeulen and F. Bovenkerk, *Engaging with Violent Islamic Extremism: Local Policies in Western European Cities* (2012), p. 51.

[104] Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan* (2006), pp. 12-13.

[105] Maajid Nawaz, Western Jihadists in Syria Threaten to Bring Their War Back Home, *The Daily Beast* (World News), 27 April 2014.

[106] This is, for instance, the view of Alain Grignard, the Deputy Head of the Belgian police's anti-terrorism unit who is also a professor of Islamic Studies at the Free University of Brussels. This view is shared by Alain Chouet, the former head of the French external intelligence service DGSE. L. Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (2010), pp. 208-209.

[107] Cf. Michael Jacobson, "Learning Counter-Narrative Lessons from Cases of Terrorist Dropouts", in E.J.A.M. Kessels, ed., *Countering Violent Extremist Narratives,* (2010), p.78.

Collaboration of democratic governments with Islamist Muslim organisations in Western Europe is not likely to lead to a better integration of marginalised Muslim youth. Many if not most of these young men and women are already citizens of European countries, being born in the diaspora. Western governments, especially local governments, should engage and interact with these Muslim citizens directly through non-faith-based forums rather than use non-violent extremists as intermediaries in faith-based forums. Government engagement with non-violent extremists also tends to weaken the position of other Muslim leaders in Western societies. Using non-violent (i.e. not-violent) Islamists as partners in communal or national policies is likely to wet the appetite of extremists to make more demands on liberal-democratic states, ostensibly in the name of the group they claim to represent but in reality to push their own hidden agenda, using freedom of expression, freedom of religion and freedom of assembly rights in democratic societies as instruments to augment their power within the Muslim communities and in Western societies. Democracies should not take Islamists as interlocutors to address legitimate grievances of Muslim community members or to address issues of radicalisation to violent extremism. On the other hand, cooperation with former Islamists who have credibly changed their ways and want that to be known is a viable and valuable option.

In terms of counter-terrorism policies, preventing violent extremism is not enough; rather all extremism – Islamist and other – ought to be prevented, given the bloody track record of extremism in power in the twentieth century and beyond.[108] Rather than distinguishing between non-violent and violent extremists, we should distinguish between extremists and non-extremists and support the latter against Islamists at home and abroad. Governments should challenge and resist all extremism, whether it is violent or not, whether it is Islamist or not.

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[108] For a well-argued plea along these lines, see Shiraz Maher and Martyn Frampton, *Choosing Our Friends Wisely* (2009).

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