How to Prevent

EXTREMISM AND POLICY OPTIONS

With a lead essay from

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Edited by

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TonyBlairFaithFoundation

INTRODUCTION
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Angela Salt OBE joined the Foundation in August 2015 from Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), an international development charity, where she was the UK Director. Previously Angela worked at the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games for over five years as Head of Nations and Regions, and played a key operational communications role during the Games. She has also worked on other high profile events including the Commonwealth Games in Manchester. Angela has a background in communications and stakeholder management, largely working in the public and government sectors as well as consultancy. This includes Director roles at the Electoral Commission and Millennium Commission. Angela was awarded the OBE in 2000 for public service.

STRATEGIC PREVENTION IS VITAL TO TACKLE EXTREMISM

The challenge we face from religious extremism is fundamental. It is a generational struggle, requiring new policies and a sustained, strategic international effort, writes Angela Salt.

Around the world, powerful ideologies are abusively using religious justifications to license horrific acts of violence. This global movement is adaptable to changing circumstances and its ideology is always ready to answer many different grievances. Vulnerable people, unsure of their identity and belonging, find answers in death, sometimes their own. The vast majority reject and condemn these actions, but if we are to stop them it will require us to both challenge the ideas themselves and develop resilience within those targeted for radicalisation.

The abhorrent roll call of violent attacks motivated by extreme religious ideology sadly continued in 2015. The assault by the Taliban on a school in Peshawar, Pakistan in December 2014 was swiftly followed by the attacks in Paris in January 2015, and set a grim precedent. Four years into the Syrian conflict, its character has become increasingly religious and sectarian. Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) is luring thousands of fighters to its so-called caliphate. Its ability to inspire attacks elsewhere is increasing as demonstrated in Sousse, Tunisia, where it aims to destabilise a country making progress following the Arab Spring. ISIS's growth in Libya shows it is equally adept at capitalising on a less stable post-revolution context. Boko Haram in Nigeria expanded its field of terror, carrying out attacks in Niger, Cameroon and Chad as well as declaring allegiance to ISIS as its West African

province. The Taliban has regained ground in Afghanistan, and continues to fuel conflict in Pakistan, with the death of Mullah Omar serving only to reinvigorate its resolve in the face of fracturing loyalty to his successor. There are obviously a whole host of factors and contexts that fuel this violence. But we cannot fool ourselves that there is no common thread.

The intersection of religion and geopolitics is crucial to understanding why these conflicts exist. There is a wider context of rising Hindu nationalist violence in India, extreme Buddhist nationalism across South East Asia, and Jewish extremist groups in Israel. This religious extremism should of course be condemned and challenged. But for the sake of the victims and those at risk, the majority of whom are Muslims themselves, we need to recognise that the scale, impact and global reach of Islamist extremism remains the biggest threat we face, visible in the focus of many of the articles in this volume.

This is a battle of ideas, and the only lasting solution will be one that fully understands these ideas and uproots them. Security is the first duty of all governments and whilst it will always be a vital part of the response, hard power alone has never and will never be the whole answer. This is more than just a political or economical problem.

Prevention of extremism is not something we will achieve overnight, in a year or within an election cycle. If we are to prevent people from being persuaded by extremist ideology, we must match the commitment that jihadis have shown to their cause. We have to build a strategy that reaches across generations. We must develop within young people the understanding, skills and support to resist and rebut extremism. We have to build citizenship based on the values that challenge the mind-set of the extremists, such as the rule of law, justice, open-mindedness, respect for diversity, equality of genders and basic human rights.

Having joined the Faith Foundation during a year of global turmoil, I am proud to be part of an organisation trying to offer understanding and practical solutions that can build resilience to extremism. The Faith Foundation has worked over the last seven years to raise awareness of the role of religion and its effect on global events, resulting this year in the launch of the Centre on Religion & Geopolitics, which provides informed analysis on the interaction of religion and conflict globally, offering policy responses to meet the scale of the challenge. The Foundation has also advocated for the important role that education can play in countering extremism. We have worked with over 150,000 children around the world, including recently in refugee camps, to instil core skills of dialogue and critical thinking.

Workable programmes that prevent extremism are notoriously difficult to implement. It is therefore essential to find a path that can help address policy gaps and obstacles. The difficult but necessary decisions that this volume highlights and the policy options it presents are not unrealistic, and take into consideration the full spectrum of challenges. It is always necessary to consider alternative options, as these ensure critical assessment and evaluation of methodology and approach. But we must also recognise what works, and where there is positive impact we must seek to replicate it.

There are three things that policy makers should take into account. First, we cannot avoid the fact that this is about religion. To deny this, as Tony Blair said recently, is to misunderstand the problem and therefore misconceive the solution.[1] These ideologies may be an abuse of religion, but as Peter Welby tells us, a recent report by the Centre on Religion & Geopolitics shows that they are nonetheless rooted in the values and ideas accepted by the mainstream.[2] This does not mean that we should pursue or denigrate mainstream values – as Hazel Blears and Usama Hasan state, we need them as integral parts of counter-narratives. The extreme fringes are not representative of the majority after all, and Francis Campbell is right to argue that policy makers must ensure they are not allowed to dictate policy. As he goes on to say, it does mean that we need a different attitude towards the discussion of religion in the public sphere that may be difficult for secular states to accept.

As Hazel Blears, Usama Hasan, Francis Campbell and Peter Welby all discuss, there is a desperate need for better understanding of modern, mainstream interpretations of religion amongst policy makers to stop them designing bad policy. This is also necessary amongst the public to prevent indoctrination by simplistic and corrupt interpretations and to counter prejudice and hate crimes against religious groups based on

misunderstanding. This need for insight, understanding and dialogue is reflected throughout, including in the portrayal by Feriha Peracha and her colleagues of their work in Pakistan, and by Jo Malone, Alpaslan Özerdem and Brian Grim.

Secondly, in understanding that this is a generational challenge, we need to implement reform now in order that the next generation has the understanding and skills necessary for building resilience to extremist ideas. It is clear from what Hazel Blears, Sara Savage, Feriha Peracha and Jo Malone write, that critical thinking – and to think critically about something we have to understand it – is essential to empowering young people to identify the flaws and bigotry of these narratives. This is reinforced in the examples given by Feriha Peracha and Usama Hasan of the de-radicalisation of former terrorists.

The lessons learnt from these experiences tell us much about the necessary purpose of our education systems. It is perfectly understandable that testing of literacy and numeracy is a key priority, but it should not be at the expense of social and emotional learning that can instil understanding of, and the ability to engage with, others. This is vital as research shows us that this is often lacking amongst extremists.[3] The recommendations made by Jo Malone get to the heart of this, and the training of teachers in critical, student-centred approaches and the evaluation of learning resources to eradicate prejudicial material should be a priority for policy makers.

Finally, we cannot underestimate the need to fight this problem together. As Alpaslan Özerdem, Rohan Gunaratna, Brian Grim, Hazel Blears, Usama Hasan, Feriha Peracha and Banke Adetayo point out, if we do not engage and support communities in this struggle we risk leaving them vulnerable to divisive voices in their midst. As Rohan Gunaratna points out, this needs to come from the top – governments must engage and implement clear strategies to ensure communities are engaged and committed. But as Alpaslan Özerdem suggests, we must also ensure that communities can take ownership of these projects on the ground, as ownership promotes participation. As Brian Grim suggests, whole community responses are vital to deliver appropriate support structures, and the role of business in particular can facilitate this.

Most importantly, as the problem is within religion, that is where the solution must be found. We have to engage different communities, as Banke Adetayo and Francis Campbell write, to be a part of the answer. The best people to rebut perverse interpretations of a religion are those in the mainstream of the faith themselves. We need to maximise the reach of those capable of offering an alternative interpretation that can rebut the propaganda of the extremists on religious grounds. But we need to make this as simple as possible. Religious leaders are crucial, but we also need to build up grassroots responses that challenge the extremists' narratives with simple competing and clear messages that are equally forthright and scripturally based.

For governments there are immediate and more long-term actions that need urgent attention. Given the role of ideology, developing understanding about that ideology and its use is fundamental, but building partnerships to undermine it is just as necessary. An example of this is a joint approach with technology companies, who understandably face a

lot of pressure. Governments need to work with digital and media organisations to promote credible sharable material to challenge extremist messages and ideology.

Perhaps most of all governments need to focus on education, on embedding the core skills and understanding that can prevent extremism. This brings its own challenges. Governments will need to work hard to build coalitions for this work, not just within society, but also across government. This work will be strategic and long-term, and it will need continuity and consensus. The ideas and experiences that are set out in this volume can form the basis of a pathway for policy-makers in navigating these issues. Our work and advocacy proves that this pathway is viable, and engagement with our work demonstrates that consensus is building behind this vision. But strategic action is needed quickly to implement solutions that are not just quick fixes, because the prevention of extremism is one of the greatest challenges facing this generation and the next. Extremism threatens everything the civilised world has built. Unless we counter it, and urgently counter it together, we face a very difficult future as a global community.

Endnotes

1. T. Blair, *Religion and Geopolitics: Why it Matters*, Speech delivered at the 9/11 Memorial Museum, 6 October 2015, [http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/religion-geopolitics/commentaries/opinion/religion-and-geopolitics-why-it-matters].

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HAZEL BLEARS

Former UK Police and Counter-Terrorism Minister and Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Hazel Blears trained as a lawyer in private practice and local government. She was a councillor on Salford City Council for eight years and was elected to Parliament in 1997. She served as a Government Minister for Health, Policing and Criminal Justice, Communities and Local Government, and latterly Intelligence and Security. Hazel oversaw the implementation of the UK's PREVENT Agenda to tackle radicalisation and extremism as part of the counter-terrorism strategy. She also dealt with the aftermath of one of the country's largest terrorist outrages in the 7/7 and 21/7 bombs on London Underground. She was responsible for the formulation of new counter-terrorism legislation, and built lasting relationships with the Muslim community. Hazel is currently a Non-Executive Member of the Board of the Cooperative Group, a Non-Executive Member of Aspire CIC which is a newly formed mutual social care organisation in Salford providing all adult care across the city, a Trustee of the Alzheimer's Society and Chair of the Institute for Dementia at Salford University. In addition she has established her own consultancy helping companies to move from traditional CSR to using their mainstream business models to make social impact, "Doing Good is Good Business".

HOW TO PREVENT EXTREMISM

Confronting extreme ideology is the most important challenge we face today. Empowering teachers and communities to tackle ideology requires informed and experienced officials. Governments must not shy away from taking the necessary action, writes Hazel Blears.

Over the last 15 years, preventing Islamist extremism has been one of the greatest challenges facing society. It has remained so because its root, an ideological narrative that raises one view above all others and which encapsulates a justification of violence, has gone unchallenged by governments. The result is that Islamist extremism is now on a larger, more aggressive scale than ever before, both in its physical manifestation and in the number of people involved. This is no longer a theoretical conflict but one being fought out on the ground.

This physical manifestation makes prevention all the more difficult. We can hope that the barbarity and horror of the actions we hear about will make most turn away from these perverse ideological interpretations. However, there is the possibility that this manifestation will reinforce the ideology, lending it glamour and excitement through the idea of combat and camaraderie.

It is the power of the ideology underpinning Islamist extremism that must be confronted. The evidence is clear that the ideology is important and policy makers must be brave and be prepared to step forward and tackle it whatever the cost. To truly prevent extremism governments need to work holistically. This requires that policy makers have the understanding and honest and authentic experience to work with communities to challenge the dangerous minority, and that they focus on ensuring education has the capacity to undermine the ideological lure.

The reason why Islamist ideology remains largely unchallenged is that politicians and government officials shy away from tackling the often controversial and tough decisions that abound in this area. Politicians are conflicted and wary about pursuing agendas if they are controversial for their constituency. Yet this is a tough area of policy, different to making a specific decision to nationalise the railways, for example, in that traditional policy methods and party political approaches will not work. Preventing extremism needs coherency across parties and across election cycles because it is a long-term challenge. This is the poisoning of minds for a violent purpose that threatens citizens and a solution will only be viable in the long-term if it is fully understood and supported across the political spectrum.

Political timidity has its consequences, however, and it has meant that our pursuit of violent extremists has been separated from challenging the underlying ideology. We cannot allow this to continue. There is now a lack of capacity and knowledge amongst, and support for, government officials to develop policy that truly empowers people in society to confront and undermine extremism. Officials'

degree of understanding often varies according to their exposure to, and interaction with, communities. Tackling ideology means tackling ideals, and dealing with what people think, feel and express requires more than the usual policy frameworks and levers that work for poverty reduction or homelessness. This challenge requires complex understanding, skills and experience, but more, it needs an ability to analyse where the line lies between, say, free speech and that which is unacceptable in a liberal democracy.

These arguments rage in political discourse all the time, but officials are not often in that space. This issue takes them there and they need support to develop their capacity and understanding, support which is often lacking. Direct interaction with community members is vital. During my time in the United Kingdom's (UK) Department of Communities and Local Government, my Muslim advisers were indispensable. Their contacts in communities and understanding of what was going on helped me to hear and empower voices other than those of the extreme minority. Too often extreme voices are heard by officials because they are vocal and insistent, and also because officials are too timid about risking being accused of denying people free speech. We have to ensure they have the support and confidence through appropriate training and immersive experience to stand up to extreme voices and, when it is right, to deny extremists a platform.

Working with communities on this is equally difficult and riddled with controversy. Of course it is not right in a democracy for governments to tell people what they should believe. But this violence is committed in the name of a perverted view of Islam; so combatting it must require an understanding of what Islam says, and of its interpretation. Whilst in government I commissioned respected Muslim scholars to work on a modern interpretation of Islam for a 21st century democracy where Muslims are a minority. Not only was it difficult to get people involved, but once the scholars agreed to undertake the work it was difficult to protect them from being pilloried by those who did not want there to be a modern interpretation, and after 12 months the project was ended.

However, I still believe that it is essential to be brave and empower moderate voices in the community to do this work. We are still unable to properly and authoritatively rebut ideological narratives because no one is sufficiently expert, particularly in government. There is now the capacity and willingness outside of government to do this work, which should be supported with funding equal to that which extremist organisations are able to gather. But governments should not step away completely. For it to remain a priority with government it must remain a priority with ministers, and this issue is currently too important for government to completely cede it to external bodies. There is a fine line that has to be trodden between not dictating to believers and shirking the duty to protect citizens.

There is a similarity here with the debates that raged in the UK around the naming of, and legislating on, anti-social behaviour. Previously classified as 'low-level crime', it was largely ignored despite having a huge impact on the lives of the poorest people in the country, just as Islamist extremism disproportionately affects Muslims today. Through the national Respect Programme,[1] a culture change challenged those who said we were simply demonising young people

and infringing civil liberties with anti-social behaviour and dispersal orders. In the same way that anti-social behaviour laws had to be pushed through to protect victims of anti-social behaviour, against the arguments of observers, fighting on behalf of moderate Muslims, whose beliefs are being perverted and abused in the name of violence, is important. That requires having a clear idea of a moderate interpretation of Islam.

Local government also has an important role to play, being close to communities, and can help to provide the insight and advice that central government needs. Removing the role of local government and centralising, or completely securitising, the prevention of extremism is a mistake, as we lose the capacity to work further upstream to prevent people becoming sympathetic to, or convinced by, extreme views. We have to work long-term, with policy looking across generations to undermine and eradicate extremist ideology. The police are important, but over-burdening them with the full spectrum of extremism prevention is counter-productive. They are not community workers, and there is a need for broader community resilience and cohesion work alongside security and surveillance.

We have to build resilience amongst women who have huge impact at the heart of communities, and we must empower young people with stronger knowledge of, and links between, identity, belonging and purpose of both religion and community. There must be an increased emphasis on citizenship, participation in democratic structures, and the development of successful role models who are relevant to the lives of young Muslim men and women. All of this work should be done in practical programmes on the ground which are open and accessible to people from all walks of life.

To achieve this, education must be a priority. Again there is controversy. In the same way that sex education and citizenship education were controversial when first introduced in the UK, the teaching of religion is difficult and addressing topics to do with extremism is challenging. There is a link between all three however, and that is the lack of support for, and confidence held by, teachers in addressing these issues. In the past, sex and relationship education was often left to staff who had the spare time, often without the appropriate support. The same occurred with citizenship education that was meant to bring politics and democracy alive. Teachers were not specialists and did not feel confident about teaching something that they felt possibly crossed a line. Teaching religion can be quite threatening unless you are a specialist, especially when you are teaching people about their own religion, let alone covering complex and emotive issues to do with extremism. Teachers must be empowered to own this agenda in schools.

This requires the proper support, training and resources. In the UK, before the retreat of this policy area to the security sphere, we developed lesson plans and support materials with teachers on these topics. Without this area being a cross-government effort, these important aspects have been neglected. Yet how these topics are taught is important. For example, the good thing about citizenship education in the UK when it is done well, is that it is action-based and addresses head on what young people are angry about, getting them involved and demonstrating the democratic process

for addressing grievances.

With the right materials that provide the right advice and support, teachers have the confidence to be creative. This approach is crucial to ensure that the safe space in the classroom is not shut down. It must be appropriate, proportionate and focus on building resilience. If we build the ability to critique, which should be developed within every education system, then we should not be afraid to introduce extreme ideology, whether it is Stalinist, Fascist or Islamist, and discuss how it should be challenged.

Critical thinking underpins the ability to resist simplistic extremist messages, which on the surface can be seductive. Wanting the revolution is part of growing up and stories of the excitement of being on the front line can be persuasive. It was the stories of the nationalist republican fight in Spain and about Ben-Gurion and the establishment of Israel that were part of my inspiration, for example. But these stories need to be discussed and critiqued, and classrooms with confident teachers in them are the right place to have those conversations.

At the end of the day, with such a complex challenge there is no one answer. Prevention work is some of the hardest there is. But that is why it is important that governments take a holistic, collective view. Government is often bad at working across departmental boundaries, the UK being no exception, and there is a need for a strong centre. In the UK, Prime Minister David Cameron has now expressed a strong personal commitment to this area. If he can translate that into the responsibility of each department to local government, government agencies, the police and institutions such as schools, then there is hope. During Tony Blair's premiership there were regular 'Grip' meetings where ministers were held to account by the Prime Minister on their performance in their policy areas. That form of accountability and ownership is vital to steering a clear and focused course on such essential issues. The whole country has to be mobilised, just as they would in a time of national crisis.

Empowering teachers to be confident in discussing and confronting ideology and providing critical education that builds resilience must be a high priority. Similarly with communities, governments must build strength amongst moderate voices that can challenge the minority and encourage the courageous. These actions, however, require officials who have the knowledge and the understanding to be confident in pursuing the necessary path. Of primary importance for governments is that they ensure their officials have honest, authentic, immersive experience, and that they are part of the discourse, not separate or above it, flying in and out. Preventing extremism is the most important challenge we face today and we must not shy away from defeating it.

Endnotes

1. More information on the Respect Programme can be found at http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070306080821/ http://www.respect.gov.uk/.

RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Prevention requires understanding the role of religions and their theology, ideology and communities.

FRANCIS CAMPBELL

St Mary's University, Twickenham

Francis Campbell joined the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) as a member of Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service in 1997. Francis has worked at the United Nations Security Council, the European Union, and at the FCO. From 1999-2003, he served on the staff of the then Prime Minister Tony Blair, first as a Policy Adviser in the No.10 Policy Unit, and then as a Private Secretary to the Prime Minister. He also served on secondment with Amnesty International as the Senior Director of Policy. From 2005-2011 he served as Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Holy See. From 2011-13 he served as Deputy High Commissioner in Pakistan. From 2013-2014 he was the Head of the Policy Unit in the FCO and Director of Innovation at UK Trade and Investment. In 2014 he was appointed as the Vice Chancellor of St Mary's University, Twickenham, UK. Campbell is a Member of the Advisory Panel of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, London. He serves as a governor of St. Mary's University, Twickenham, and also of St. Elizabeth's School in Richmond, Surrey. He is a trustee of Forward Thinking, a London based NGO and think tank, and is an Honorary Fellow of St. Edmund's College, Cambridge University. He is a columnist for The Tablet and is also a regular contributor to BBC Radio 4's Thought For The Day. Campbell has a Masters degrees from Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium, in European Integration, and from the University of Pennsylvania in International Relations where he studied as Thouron Fellow. He has Honorary Doctorates from Fordham University, New York, Queen's University, Belfast, Steubenville University, Ohio, and the Pakistan Institute of Business and Technology, Karachi, and has the President's Medal from the Catholic University of America.

RELIGION AS A PARTNER ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

Given its portrayal in the media, we may be forgiven for thinking religion can only do bad. But we must not allow its positive role in solving past global problems to be overridden by the actions of a very small minority. Global leaders must look to religion as a partner for its reach, ethical leadership and influence in society, argues Francis Campbell.

The former United States (US) Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, said that when travelling around the world she was always asked the same question: "Why can't we just keep religion out of foreign policy?" Her response was that "we can't and shouldn't. Religion is a large part of what motivates people and shapes their views of justice and right behaviour. It must be taken into account."[1]

The global significance of religious belief and identity is widely underestimated, but is in fact considerable. Religious adherence is growing and 'unaffiliation' is declining: between 1970 and 2005 all the major world religions saw significant increases in their numbers.[2] A Pew report showed that, in 2010, 84.6 per cent of the world's population adhered to a religious faith.[3]

The world's largest religions have expanded at a rate that exceeds global population growth. At the beginning of the 20th century, 50 per cent of the world's population were Catholic, Protestant, Muslim or Hindu. At the beginning of the 21st century, however, nearly 64 per cent belonged to these four religious groups.[4] Africa had 10 million Christians representing 10 per cent of the population in 1900; by 2000, that was up to 360 million, or 46 per cent of the population.

Far from being in decline, as many secular observers have claimed, religion is on the rise. The question for policy makers must therefore be, how to take account and bring the vast majority with them? In the context of religious extremism, the greatest challenge is ensuring that when policy makers do take religion into account, they do not let the exception, the extreme fringes of religious communities, dictate their whole approach.

Today many of the issues we face, especially the problem of religious extremism, require global solutions. Through engagement with religious leaders, governments can reach billions of people in communities across the globe to tackle factors that contribute to extremism.

History shows us that global religious communities can have a powerful and positive impact. The signs of the power of religion in international affairs were evident throughout the post-Second World War period, from the Catholic Church's role in the rise of Solidarity in Poland to the activity of the *mujahideen* in Afghanistan.

The late Professor Samuel Huntington of Harvard argued that religious movements helped to usher in a 'third

wave' of democracy in Latin America, Eastern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia from the 1970s to the early 1990s.[5] For example in Nicaragua and El Salvador, Christian churches played a prominent role within the reformist and revolutionary movements of the 1980s. In the 1990s, religion, ethnicity and nationalism collided with devastating force in the Balkans. Mainline Christian churches helped democratisation in Africa.[7] In the Philippines, Cardinal Sin and Catholic organisations openly condemned the Marcos regime and helped to bring it down.[7]

On poverty, faith-inspired charities such as Christian Aid, World Jewish Relief and Islamic Relief are working to alleviate suffering across the world. The Catholic Church, mainly through its religious orders, provides about a quarter of the care to HIV Aids patients in Africa.

So religion matters and religious communities have a role to play. Yet unless this is engaged and showcased appropriately the minority voice will continue to prevail. Fundamentally, the political class must begin to show greater curiosity and a proper understanding of religion. Furthermore, they must start to view it in broader perspective, not merely as a source of problems but as a solution to conflict and to challenges such as poverty and social divide that can play a role in radicalisation.

As an editorial in the Journal of International Affairs put it, "Religion can be one of the most powerful healers in post-conflict situations. It can play a significant role in establishing peace in the present and dealing with the past."[9] The challenge for policy makers is to harness the unifying potential of faith, while containing its capacity to divide.[10]

However, Western governments, which play such a pivotal role in international affairs, frequently fail to properly engage with matters of faith and religion. That reflects a process of secularisation that has eroded knowledge and understanding of religion in many Western societies. In the United Kingdom, the teaching of religious education has been described as inadequate,[11] while in the US, one of the most religious societies in the world, Stephen Prothero claims that just 10 per cent of teenagers can name the five major world religions and only half of adults can name the first book of the bible.[12]

The increasing marginalisation of religion in these Western states means that fewer politicians or political staff are themselves religious or have a proper understanding of its role or force. That has contributed to a loss of perspective within the body politic.

Set against this backdrop, it is unsurprising that religious illiteracy is giving rise to political problems. As Professor Bryan Hehir of Harvard University has said, "there is an assumption that you do not have to understand religion in order to understand the world. You need to understand politics, strategy, economics and law, but you do not need to understand religion."[13] Hehir says that, "policy makers must learn as much as possible about religion and incorporate that knowledge into their strategies. It's like brain surgery – a necessary task – but fatal if not done well."[14] Policy makers need training to understand the entire context to religions and problems or conflicts that might involve a religious dynamic. This is important not just for better policy, but also in order to know who to engage to ensure that an extreme minority subset does not define policy.

At the same time there is also a responsibility on faith groups and their leaders to actively engage in the broad representative democratic process. Collectively, religions need to recognise they are one voice among many in a pluralist, secular culture. They cannot expect to be heard in a noisy public square unless they are willing to speak out and engage. The extreme minority has realised this, and, aside from using violence to gain attention, they are increasingly outspoken. The mainstream must be helped and given guidance to engage better, persuading and convincing ministers rather than expecting special treatment. NGOs and faith-based organisations that engage in advocacy themselves can play a role in training and facilitating access for religious leaders, especially as they are more likely to bring in representatives from the majority communities rather than the extreme minority.

If policy makers were more open to the role of religion, religious communities may be more likely to come forward. Western democracies need debate and vibrant differences to remain alive and to achieve renewal. It is their oxygen. Instead of a 'programmatic secularism', which banishes religion from the public square, we need a shift in thinking with Western leaders welcoming religions as vital partners and contributors to a healthy civic society. This in itself will tackle extremism – by bringing religion in we potentially reduce feelings of marginalisation and irrelevance.

At the international level there are few institutions that can offer a global ethical lead other than religious ones. To understand current global challenges, we have to comprehend religion as a source of influence and motivation in peoples' lives. Policy makers must learn from best practice in the past and partner with religion and religious communities globally to tackle extreme minority views and the factors that foster them. They must acknowledge the positive that has gone before to show that they are aware that the negative minority are an exception and not the norm. If they get that wrong then they risk instrumentalising religion and religious communities, further alienating them and exacerbating the problem.

World religions have played their part in shaping globalisation as they offer identities that transcend cultural, national and class boundaries. Political leaders must now engage with this religious soft power, supporting mainstream religious leaders to stop it being manipulated by extremists. If religion is given its rightful place on the international stage, it can help to achieve positive change across borders.

Endnotes

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8. T. Shah and M. Duffy Toft, op. cit..

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THE IMPORTANCE OF THEOLOGICAL CLARITY AND REBUTTAL IN PREVENTING EXTREMISM

The public's understanding, or lack thereof, of religions and their theology has significant implications for preventing extremism. With regards to Islamist extremism, misunderstanding and piecemeal or distorted knowledge of Islam leave people vulnerable to prejudice and indoctrination, providing fertile ground for recruiters to both extreme Islamist groups and far-right Islamophobic groups. It is vital that policy makers support and magnify mainstream, nuanced theology to improve understanding and undermine extremist narratives built on theological perversions, writes Usama Hasan.

With the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Over 30 years' service as an imam in the United Kingdom (UK), including 15 years as a radical imam and 10 years as a reformist voice; three and a half years as a researcher at Quilliam, a think-tank promoting universal human rights, democracy and counter-extremism; and three and a half years as an 'Intervention Provider' (a mentor specialising in de-radicalisation) on behalf of the UK Government's Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism, I have come across many examples of the positive and negative impacts that can be gained through nuanced or poor theological clarity respectively. I would like to offer two important principles, backed up by various examples, to which policy makers need to respond to improve the prevention of extremism.

Firstly, theology matters, and can be very persuasive in both radicalisation and deradicalisation. Poor or pseudo-theological arguments are the mainstay of extremist binaries used to create simplistic reasoning for violence. Amongst many examples, the ringleader of the 7/7 terrorist attack in London in 2005 used (poor) theological arguments

in his videotaped message, recorded before the attacks, to justify his group's actions. The crux of the argument was an 'us versus them' wartime narrative. Similarly, the main instigator of the Woolwich terrorist attack in which Fusilier Lee Rigby was murdered in 2013, used pseudo-theological arguments based on 'Lands of War' and 'Lands of Islam' narratives, clearly inspired by the pre-modern Islamic conception of *dar al-harb and dar al-islam* respectively.[1]

On a more positive note, however, it is clear that an improved theological understanding that includes nuance and clarity can create a swing in the opposite direction. Javed (not his real name), a Western Muslim of Pakistani origin who is currently serving a long prison sentence after being convicted of terrorism, cited the theological works of staff at the Quilliam Foundation as having helped him along his journey towards renouncing his previous terrorist attitudes. As the authors of a report including his testimony amongst nine others state, Javed came to the conclusion that it was important to "understand the roots of modern Islamist movements" and the "errors in their simplified political and religious arguments."

Furthermore, Javed found that "nuanced arguments against the salafi jihadi movement are far more important than simple condemnations." Through his research, Javed was surprised by the level of improper analysis that was "simplified, misplaced or outright erroneous" and recognised that "many analysts are trying to explain a phenomenon they don't understand." He found that the complexity and multitude of factors that fuelled the problem are often not acknowledged. In his words, "*Improper analysis leads to misguided policy measures that are either ineffective, or worse, do more harm than good* [emphasis added]."[2]

Anecdotally, in 2014, a Religious Studies teacher at a London secondary school was having problems with a Muslim schoolboy who was expressing views intolerant of other religions and, indeed, of other Muslim viewpoints. The teacher handed the boy a copy of my treatise on freedom of religion from an Islamic viewpoint and reported that within ten minutes the pupil had read the main points, retracted and apologised for his previous views.[3]

There have also been several examples of families of British recruits to Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) engaging their sons and daughters in theological argument, with some success. For example, one of the youth justified joining the self-proclaimed 'caliphate' by claiming that Saudi Arabia is not Islamic enough because it does not levy the pre-modern *jizya* tax on non-Muslims. Ironically, this youth is unaware that the last acknowledged caliphate, the Ottoman Empire, abolished the *jizya* in 1839 on the basis of traditional, progressive Islamic jurisprudence.[4]

From these examples it is clear that

greater public understanding is needed, and moreover that that understanding is nuanced and informed. My second principle, therefore, is that misleading generalisations about religion and extremism, and a failure to understand nuances, can lead to counter-productive statements and policies.

Javed's testimony above makes this clear. But beyond this there is often a failure to appreciate the nuance of differing Muslim views on a variety of matters. In particular, the existence of reformist, progressive and/or liberal voices within the spectrum of Muslim opinion is often disregarded or ignored, thus strengthening the hand of extremist voices. For example, the current UK Government's CONTEST (counter-terrorism) strategy is summarised in a 125-page publication.[5] A previous version of this strategy ran into many more pages and used largely religiously-neutral language, except that it stated that any Muslim who believed in *khilafah* (caliphate), *sharia* (sacred law) or *jihad* (non-violent or violent struggle) was an extremist. This ignored the fact that there are moderate and progressive interpretations of these pre-modern, traditional Islamic concepts that are fully in line with modern norms, and risked alienating many Muslims, as well as ruining the impact of a 180-page document on UK Muslim communities because of three ill-advised lines.

In ignoring these interpretations, this statement removed the possibility of providing a viable alternative narrative, entirely compatible with current international standards. It ignored modern understandings of caliphate as just governance, progressive interpretations of *sharia* being in line with universal human rights including gender-equality, and classical interpretations of *jihad* that

include both inner spiritual struggle as well as just and ethical warfare.[6] The latter interpretations are crucial for effective counter- or alternative narratives to religious extremism, and must not be undermined by official documents that ignore them.

An even more dangerous failure of understanding is the cultural difference in classification in the West between 'mainstream' Western religions and 'Eastern' religions like Islam. Violent extremists or terrorists in Western countries who claim to act in the name of Christianity or Judaism, such as the Ku Klux Klan, Anders Breivik or Baruch Goldstein, are correctly dismissed as fringe elements who have perverted and dishonoured their faith. Because Christianity and Judaism have historically been intrinsic and intuitive to Western countries and Israel, and are therefore well understood, there is no serious attempt to link terrorist atrocities to a major world faith, except for an acknowledgment of extremist interpretations. However, it would be very easy for people in non-Judaeo/Christian countries to mistakenly think that these atrocities somehow reflect Christianity or Judaism, since there is a deficit of knowledge, experience and familiarity in this regard. There is a similar situation with the 969 movement, a violent extremist phenomenon led by Buddhist monks in Myanmar.

Similarly, when it comes to the world of Islam, the vast majority of Muslims everywhere intuitively recognise that extremists and terrorists are perverting their faith. Recent examples are the Peshawar school massacre in December 2014 and the massacre of Western, mainly British, tourists at Sousse in Tunisia in June 2015. In both cases, these

attacks happened in overwhelmingly Muslim countries and the heroic security forces as well as medical staff treating the victims were largely Muslim, as were the victims themselves in the Pakistan attack. Since Islam is 'part of the furniture' in these countries, it is in the background as a benign spiritual force, much like the Anglican Church in England. Locals intuitively recognise that the terrorists' claims to be representing their faith are utterly ridiculous and spurious.

However, in the Western world where Islam is still in the process of being 'indigenised' and is often seen as 'other', despite its centuries-old presence in Europe, there is still the unfortunate tendency to regard such terrorist attacks and groups, such as ISIS, as legitimately representing Islam. Analysts and historians have made this grave error.[7] It is vital to avoid this, as it is easily spun as 'Islamophobia' by both far-right and Islamist extremist groups, leaving Muslim communities open to marginalisation and demonisation, and their disaffected youth vulnerable to recruitment by terrorist groups, thus having another counter-productive effect.

Despite the above serious issues, there is good news. Policy makers are beginning to understand the importance of theological clarity and the need to support mainstream voices in order to disconnect the extremists from the Islamic faith. In the UK, for example, the 2011 version of CONTEST avoids the mistakes of the past and is theologically clearer. UK imams have also initiated a new online magazine *Haqiqah* (Reality) that engages in theological counter-narratives against ISIS' *Dabiq* magazine.[8] The UK Home Secretary quoted directly from the Quran twice in her conference speech of 2014, in support of inclusive

Islamic messages, notwithstanding the critics.[9]

With ISIS taking exclusivist interpretations of religion to the most barbaric, practical extremes, there is a pressing need, for theological clarity in promoting inclusive interpretations of religion. As President Obama once observed, inclusive interpretations of all major world religions are the only way forward, since the only alternative is further division, hatred and conflict.

There is need for greater public understanding and nuanced messaging that is supportive of the mainstream and which can counter and undermine radicalisation to both Islamist extremism and Islamophobic far-right extremism. As in any period of religious conflict, we require radical theology of the right kind to help heal divisions in the world. As Jonathan Swift put it, "We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another."

Endnotes

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2. For more on Javed's story and testimony, see R. Manning and C. La Bau, *In and Out Of Extremism*, London, Quilliam, 2015, [http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/in-and-out-of-extremism.pdf], pp. 50-52. For more detailed first-hand testimonies of former Islamists, see E. Husain, *The Islamist: Why I Joined Radical Islam in Britain, What I Saw Inside and Why I Left,* London, Penguin, 2007; M. Nawaz, Radical: *My Journey from Islamist Extremism to a Democratic Awakening*, London, WH Allen, 2013.

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7. Analysts: for example, Graeme Wood saying the "Islamic State is very Islamic" in 'What ISIS Really Wants', *The Atlantic*, March 2015. Historians: for example, Tom Holland, 'We must not deny the religious roots of Islamic State', *New Statesman*, March 2015. The error in the basic premise of this article may be illustrated by imagining a similar article about Christianity entitled, *We must not deny the religious roots of the Ku Klux Klan.*

8. ImamsOnline.com, *Haqiqah*, Issues 1 & 2, 2015.

9. For example, D. Murray, 'Why is Theresa May pretending that Islam is a 'religion of peace'?', *The Spectator*, September 2014. Would Murray have objected to similarly positive descriptions of Christianity?

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Case Study: Nigeria

HOPE, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITY: NIGERIA'S STRATEGY TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The last decade has seen many challenges for Nigeria to overcome. Perhaps the greatest threat to domestic security has come from the rise of Boko Haram. Nigeria has had to respond and innovate rapidly in the face of this extreme Islamist insurgency. The strategy that it has developed in response bears some important lessons and signposts for those who might wish to prevent extremism before it becomes violent, writes Fatima Akilu.

History has taught us that one of the most lethal weapons in a terrorist's arsenal is an audacity of imagination and an ability to adapt and respond swiftly. Many of today's extremists, born or raised in a technological age, have hijacked the very tools that have made our world and lives easier to navigate. With a potent mix of religion, hubris and marginalisation narratives, they have succeeded in convincing thousands of others who are dealing with a myriad of disappointments and vulnerabilities, or who are simply seeking new adventures. While modern day terrorists have been able to adapt and continue to reinvent themselves, states' responses have been slow and limited in their reach.

In Nigeria, a decade old movement that began peacefully, commonly referred to as Boko Haram and predominantly based in Nigeria's northeast, has morphed into one of the world's most deadly insurgencies. In the last three years alone they have caused the deaths of more than 10,000 people. Hundreds more have been kidnapped, while almost two million have become displaced, their homes and communities destroyed. In the last year the group has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) further internationalising the conflict.

Nigeria has had to innovate to meet these challenges. Terrorism has provided Nigeria with unexpected opportunities to reform its criminal justice system, broaden its legal frameworks with the introduction of new bills that address terrorism and money laundering, as well as create a counter-terrorism centre with an intelligence fusion unit. Highlighted by this response is the manner in which religion is understood and addressed in the public sphere, especially in addressing radicalisation and public awareness. States, whether fortunate enough not to be mired in conflict or not, should take note of this in developing strategies to prevent the build up of extremism in the first place.

Any response to violent extremism must be long-term, holistic and robust enough to address its root causes. A military approach can only be part of a solution. The response must also address more structural societal defects that make it difficult for some youth to access jobs, education or social security. While there is no defined pathway to terrorism, poverty, lack of opportunities for youth, and political and social marginalisation play their part.

However, governments must also begin by understanding the causes of youth anomie and disillusionment, and their

meaning that is at the heart of many radicalisation narratives. In this we cannot avoid the pull of charismatic religious leaders and narratives, and ideology based on religious principles, which prey upon identity conflicts, poor understanding of religion, and tensions between different religious and ethnic groups.

From 2012, the Federal Government of Nigeria adopted a broader approach to countering violent extremism that encompasses peace, security and development to complement the military response to Boko Haram. Nigeria's Countering Violent Extremism Programme is both vertical, involving federal, state and local government, and horizontal, involving civil society, academics, and traditional, religious and community leaders. It consists of four streams that engage people already radicalised, prevent others from becoming radicalised, counter extreme narratives, and provide psychosocial support for traumatised victims of terrorist activities.

The importance of prisons, both in terms of radicalisation in prisons and the opportunity to deradicalise inmates, was a priority. The deradicalisation stream aims to reintegrate convicted violent extremist offenders back into society through targeted programmes delivered by imams, psychologists, therapists and prison staff, which challenge radical thought and behaviour whilst respecting human rights. In particular, these programmes focus on religious education to improve understanding about both their own and others' religion, and imams are also being trained to deal with ideology based on Islam. The programmes also focus on cognitive behaviour therapy, anger management, relapse prevention, empathy, and risk management and

assessment. This stream is helping extremists to realise that certain forms of behaviour are incompatible with both their faith and the society to which they belong, enabling them to eventually transition through a community-based aftercare programme.

There are several important factors that engage religion in public work in this stream that other governments should look to develop. First, an expert group of religious scholars, trained in counselling, who can provide robust and critical rebuttals of Islamist narratives and ideology, and train others to provide this intervention. Second, expert psychologists and counsellors to facilitate an holistic approach to the rehabilitation of prisoners, using in-depth psychological analysis and research to understand the root causes of extremism and other criminal ideologies. Third, a package of vocational training for inmates that includes ensuring they have both a basic level of general and religious education, and which helps them acquire skills to assist their reintegration into society. Finally, it is vital to provide training for prison staff to professionally handle terror suspects and issues of rehabilitation, and to institutionalise this within the prison system.

The second stream in strategic communication, works to produce counter-narratives, by raising public awareness of moderate views as a stark contrast to violent extremism and by promoting core national values. The Nigerian Government has worked with religious leaders to design counter-narratives aimed at the population at large, especially those who may be sympathetic to extreme views without necessarily being violent. The aim is to reduce tolerance for extremist

rhetoric because this sympathy is often a widespread but overlooked problem. Media content for TV, radio and the Internet is being developed in order to improve public knowledge and raise awareness of the illegitimate claims made by extremists.

Connected to this drive, a project to strengthen the Government's public diplomacy is training civil servants in strategic communications. A parallel project is being developed with the Nigerian Defence Academy. This will provide long-term strategic communication capabilities for both civil servants and the Armed Forces, giving them greater capabilities in their fight against violent extremism. Efforts in this area have led to the development of a comprehensive public relations strategy across all Government agencies and the creation of a single counter-extremism information platform. Additionally credible voices on various other platforms addressing national identity, tolerance and community resilience are being amplified to communicate Nigeria's core values.

The radicalisation prevention stream focuses on community engagement and education-based projects. It is designed to stem the flow of recruits and reduce vulnerability to radicalisation. The Society Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) Project created by the Office of the National Security Adviser is responsible for this stream. SAVE takes a 'whole of society' approach, working in six states and with eighteen local governments to link Government interventions with civil society efforts, expanding the reach of both. The aspects of SAVE that have proved most effective to its objective in early evaluation are those that improve education provision by promoting critical thinking and logical reasoning; that promote intra- and inter-faith action to build community awareness, understanding, engagement and resilience; and which effectively foster and fund impactful engagement between government, civil society organisations and communities.

Finally, the fourth stream has created a framework for psychological intervention. Violent extremism has caused wide-ranging trauma across northern Nigeria and the government has had to develop a comprehensive trauma response. This has included a new policy for the provision of care for post-traumatic stress disorder through the National Primary Health Care Development Agency. This will need to provide care both for victims of violent extremism and for former extremists who have often witnessed horrific acts and need support to reintegrate. It is envisioned that Nigeria will need to train upwards of 7,000 healthcare providers and counsellors to meet this demand over the next five years. In response to this Nigeria is working on creating a Trauma Institute tasked with developing training and assessment tools.

It is still too early to assess the overall contribution of this programme to achieving national peace and stability, and the strategy is currently focused on the Boko Haram led insurgency at a time when more Nigerian's are joining ISIS. However, though it is still a young programme, it is built upon the needs that have directly arisen from dealing with the problem of extremism. If governments work proactively to pre-empt the problems to which Nigeria has had to react, these steps should offer some hope that extremism can be prevented before it turns violent.

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TO PREVENT, UNDERSTAND RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGY

There are a myriad of grievance factors that play a role in radicalisation, but to prevent people falling into this spiral we need to understand the role that ideology based on religion plays in tying them together. Only when policy makers understand how the ideology draws upon religious principles can they understand how to protect adherents of those religions and prevent them being lured into extremism, argues Peter Welby.

Governments tend to avoid the role of religion in extremism, meaning that policy and strategy to prevent extremism fails to address an underlying thread that ties grievance narratives together. There are two common roots to this neglect. The first comes from a well-meant desire to avoid stigmatising certain communities, stoked by a fear that ascribing motivating power to 'religious ideology' runs perilously close to finding the religion guilty for crimes committed in its name. The second, more dogmatic root is a secular rejection of ascribing motivating power to such an irrational force as religion. This position may regard religious ideology as a cypher for more underlying grievances, be they economic, social or political. However, Campbell, Hasan and Akilu clearly demonstrate the importance of understanding the role of religion in, and, moreover, in partnering with religion to fight back against, extremism if we are to prevent it.

There are encouraging signs at senior levels of governments of growing awareness of the importance of ideology. British Prime Minister David Cameron has repeatedly spoken of the importance of countering the ideology behind violent extremism. At a leaders summit on countering violent extremism at the United Nations General Assembly on 29 September 2015, President Obama spoke of the need to defeat extremist ideologies in a battle of ideas.

Yet despite such statements, even when the central importance of religious ideology is acknowledged, the lack of hard evidence as to its nature or role makes it difficult to apply the knowledge to a policy response. Many practitioners in the field of counter-radicalisation can see the link between extremism and religious ideologies, but do not know how to analyse them. Any analysis will inevitably struggle with the multiple reasons that people are drawn towards extremist narratives, and the language of grievance that accompanies the language of ideology: as Akilu writes, extremists are bred by a "potent mix of religion, hubris and marginalisation narratives." Hasan makes the valuable additional point that even when analysis is attempted, it is frequently stymied by "many analysts... trying to explain a phenomenon they don't understand."

Nevertheless, while we can acknowledge the political, social and economic grievances that create space for religious extremism, responses have to engage with what brings them all together: religious ideology. Without a mobilising ideology, those grievances are disparate; violent crime may be higher in areas of deprivation, but it will often coalesce around gang culture or organised crime rather than religious extremism.

The Tony Blair Faith Foundation's Centre on Religion & Geopolitics

recently attempted to address the lack of evidence that has stymied policy responses to the ideological element of religious extremism. Our report, *Inside the Jihadi Mind: Understanding Ideology and Propaganda*,[1] gathered 114 items of official propaganda from Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and Jabhat al-Nusra (al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria), including articles, videos and anthems. We then categorised the content of the propaganda into themes, which were in turn divided between 'ideological' themes (the core system of religious and political beliefs) and 'narratives' (how those beliefs are applied to the current situation).

Our findings presented for the first time quantitative evidence of two things: that Salafi-jihadi propaganda was imbued with a coherent ideology designed to appeal to the wider Muslim community; and that the ideology was broadly shared by three rival Salafi-jihadi groups.

Both findings are essential to policy makers in formulating a constructive policy response. Two clear policy pathways become obvious. First, with such different narrative themes (Jabhat al-Nusra frequently fights ISIS, contesting its claim to be a legitimate caliphate and denouncing it as 'extreme') the ideology must be a crucial factor in persuading people to join the groups. Therefore engaging in the battle of ideas will be necessary, and must focus on soft power and be robustly financed. Second, a response must focus on the nature of the extremist ideology's appeal to the broader community. It must understand how and why it connects with wider beliefs and lures recruits, and it must undermine those connections.

For the first, the difference between ideology and narrative is crucial in identifying a group's weaknesses. Ideologies do change over time, but slowly. Narratives, on the other hand, change rapidly, according to circumstance, focusing on the current dominant enemy, for example, or the location of the current conflict. Attacking the narratives that a group deploys to aid its recruitment may weaken the group, but it will not weaken the movement.

Moreover, though those ideologies are coherent, they are not without their weaknesses. For example, our research showed that the two Islamic values of *iman* (faith) and *ihsan* (good works) are used repeatedly in Salafi-jihadi propaganda, but are inconsistently defined. Targeting such weaknesses will disrupt the recruitment capacity of jihadis by emphasising the distance of the ideology from orthodox Islam. The Salafi-jihadi ideology depends on its understanding of Islamic creedal values, which can only be tackled if counter-narratives are based on a framework of orthodox Islamic theology. It also relies on a wider non-violent current of Islamism, represented by groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood or Jamaat-e-Islami, that call for an Islamic state. Counter-narratives must show that such ideologies are a modern phenomenon, outside of the orthodox mainstream. They must also recognise that 62 per cent of the world's 1.6 billion Muslims are under the age of 30, and must work with popular influencers, including celebrities, sportspeople and musicians, to spread their message.

This battle of ideas needs to be effectively resourced. Proponents of extremism – both violent and non-violent – have huge resources at their disposal, which are used to fund preachers, textbooks and

propaganda around the world. Those who oppose them must have similar funding if counter-narratives are going to be effectively amplified. This funding cannot only come from governments; it must also come from individuals.

For the second, an acknowledgment that extremist ideologies exploit and draw upon religious values to facilitate recruitment and to justify their actions is essential to an effective policy response. The countervailing temptation to deny the religious basis of the ideologies undermines our capacity to target their weaknesses. The evidence of *Inside the Jihadi Mind* shows that 62 per cent of Salafi-jihadi propaganda refers to Islamic creedal values; 42 per cent to Islamic end times prophecy; 87 per cent refers to Islamic scripture or scholarship.

The connection of the ideology to the religion is clear, and has to be recognised. Hasan is correct to say that all religions have extremists who claim to act in their names, and to identify them as fringe elements. This is true of Salafi-jihadism and Islam. The extremism depends upon the religion, but that does not mean, as Hasan rightly points out, that it is a legitimate interpretation. It is essential that policy makers both target their responses at the link between the ideology and the religion, and recognise, as Campbell notes and Hasan writes, that the majority of Muslims regard the jihadis' claim to represent Islam as "utterly ridiculous and spurious."

Greater engagement with communities and religious leaders, as Akilu and Campbell note, can "reduce tolerance for extremist rhetoric." This requires a greater dependence of counter-narratives on established theology, deployed in a similarly robust and emphatic fashion to that given by jihadis. Search engines and social media platforms should promote credible religious content that rebuts jihadi ideology and provide warnings when search terms might lead to extremist material. Grassroots efforts from within the Muslim community must be given the space and support to challenge the ideological framework of extremism. Greater funding will help, but the broader community need a greater understanding of the ideology they must challenge. If those with the power to effect change do not understand the source of the danger, their responses will not be appropriately targeted.

There are, of course, a great many factors that must be addressed by policy makers as they establish counter-extremism strategies. Without a doubt, social alienation, racism, poverty and a myriad of other factors play a role. But if we are to prevent religious extremism, we must recognise its motivating force. Religious ideology draws all the disparate grievances, real or imagined, together. Once it has been recognised, it must be understood, as only then will constructive and targeted policy options become clear.

Endnotes

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EDUCATING AGAINST EXTREMISM

Prevention requires embedding understanding and skills to build resilience to extremism.

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Dr Sara Savage is a social psychologist and is Senior Research Associate at the Department of Psychology, University of Cambridge. She and her colleagues have developed an intervention to address extremism, sectarianism and inter-group conflict based on social neuroscience principles and the operationalisation of Peter Suedfeld's construct of Integrative Complexity (IC). The IC model is now used in a range of countries, in venues including schools, supported by continual empirical assessment and publications. Savage has published widely on the theory, intervention model and results of this work, including 'Head and Heart in Preventing Religious Radicalization' in Head and Heart: Perspectives from Religion and Psychology *by Watt and Dumbreck for Templeton Press in 2013; with Jose Liht, 'Preventing Violent Extremism through Value Complexity: Being Muslim Being British', and with Liht and Anjum Khan, 'Preventing Violent Extremism through Value Complexity: Being Kenyan Being Muslim', both in the* Journal of Strategic Security *in 2013 and 2014 respectively. For more information about IC Thinking please visit www. ICTcambridge.org or www.iseescotland.org.uk.*

EXTREMISM AND COMPLEXITY OF THINKING: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL REASON FOR INVESTING IN EDUCATION

The intensification of religious identity that has marked the turn of the 21st century has seen religions, previously embedded as one of many cultural resources, being turned into abstracted clear-cut conceptual systems, employing mainly black and white, 'us versus them' categories, that impoverish critical thinking. To prevent extremism, policy makers must focus on interventions that raise the complexity of thinking, argues Sara Savage.

The current resurgence of religion is not simply a return to traditional religion. It is an intensification of religious identity, used as a tool to counter threats to individual or group identity. For those feeling threatened, an intensified, improved religion seems to be the only resource left to better human life. Believing that other efforts have only made things worse, their purpose is to achieve human values of equality, justice, dignity, social belonging and a sense of transcendence that confers meaning in life.

As a last hope, intensified religion requires dedication and sacrifice. Yet in distilling religion to a point of absolute moral clarity,[1] a clear demarcation is created between one's own religion and all others, with the knock-on effect of derogating, even dehumanising, out-groups.[2] Although meant to empower,[3] this intensification of religion seems to be a one-way dynamic from which no believer can be seen to withdraw.[4]

Religion is a great cultural resource. Problems arise when it is turned into the only resource for achieving justice, as intensified religion lacks the flexibility to contribute to practical economic, social and political problems, creating further frustrations. Here, a shift has occurred; religions that are rich, embedded and nuanced over history are turned, *in extremis*, into systems that are abstract, clear-cut, black and white.[5] This shift is underpinned by how the mind works – how the mind simplifies thinking in response to perceived threat to values and long-term stress.[6] By understanding this process, policy makers will not only improve prediction of extreme or violent behaviour, but can also improve the design and evaluation of interventions. To prevent this shift occurring and to reverse it once it has happened, we have to understand this psychological process and raise critical thinking standards.

A simplified structure and low complexity of thinking is precisely what is shown by analysis of the discourse of a range of extremisms measured by various constructs including Integrative Complexity (IC).[7] IC measures how a person thinks, not what they think, targeting behaviour rather than beliefs. Violent extremist or terrorist groups' rhetoric is even lower in complexity than their non-terrorist, but ideologically similar, counterparts.

Islamist, territorial (for example Northern Ireland), white supremacist

and animal rights extremisms show an increasing degree of commitment to violent action is attended by a steady and significant lowering of IC. In short, IC scores differentiate significantly across the ranked categories of (legal) activist, radical and terrorist groups.[8] This is in line with research over four decades regarding political actors' structure of thinking (measured by IC) which shows that when IC drops from its usual baseline, real world conflict, and even military action, is predicted within weeks. When IC rises, peaceful solutions to conflict ensue.[9]

Dozens of 'vulnerability to extremism' factors have been identified since 9/11. McCauley, for example, identifies 250 transition points between the holding of radical opinion and taking action.[10] Individuals can be drawn to, or away from, extremism by their experience of interventions or inhibitors, activations or catalysts, that in turn are modified or intensified by the surrounding culture and political context. The sum of research into violent extremism distils exactly this: there is no one pathway to extreme opinion or violent actions.

However, our research based on 43 IC Thinking group interventions (with four comparison studies, for a total of 47 studies) suggests that lowered IC acts as an amplifier for 'vulnerability to extremism' factors.[11] If taken into account in future research, measuring integrative complexity may indeed improve prediction; a core concern for policy makers focused understandably on the need to identify 'tipping points' to violence.

Yet for policy makers, focusing solely on acts of, or the tipping points to, terrorism at the expense of widespread extremist ideologies is a false dichotomy. Early pathways into violence or terrorism may in fact differ from early pathways into non-violent extremism. However, extremist ideology supports terrorism by providing legitimation, and by inspiring practical community support and an audience for whom the performance of violence is meaningful. The actions of terrorists maintain and intensify extreme beliefs, whereas the loss of broad-based extremist community support spells demise, within years, for the terrorist group. This is a story of mutual interaction between the two pathways, or ends of the spectrum, the violent and the non-violent. Both pathways share low complexity thinking, the non-violent being a stage on the pathway to the violent end, which shows the lowest complexity of all.

Conceptualising extremism of all kinds, and across the spectrum of non-violent to violent, in terms of its structure of thinking is pertinent to both primary prevention (for early stage radicalisation, sectarianism and intergroup conflict) and secondary and tertiary prevention and rehabilitation (for those showing signs of advancing towards violence or actual involvement in violence, respectively). Multi-agency security interventions are mandatory when violence has been involved. However, to rehabilitate offenders it is crucial also to increase the complexity of their thinking both to reduce the likelihood of a return to violence, and as an empirically measurable method. Complexity of thinking provides a non-fakeable baseline of measurement,[12] which can act as a common thread and indicator for the otherwise heterogeneous, culture specific, multi-agency approach to primary, secondary and tertiary prevention and rehabilitation.

For policy makers, the IC Thinking approach to prevention of extremism, sectarianism and inter-group conflict provides a method of designing and measuring effective interventions.[13] IC Thinking considers that whatever vulnerabilities are at play, extremist ideologies have a common, simple binary structure underpinned by value monism, the concern for only one value, per issue, at the expense of all other human values. It is precisely this lack of complexity on the 'hot' issues that are exploited by extremists, which offers a site for intervention and a pathway for rehabilitation.[14] For primary prevention, this fact offers an opportunity to reduce vulnerability by strategically embedding methods to promote complex thinking skills in education, without having to address every known pathway and factor in the progression of radicalisation for a given individual or group. This can greatly reduce the prevalence of the problem.[15]

The IC Thinking method develops complex values-based reasoning around these 'hot' issues used to bifurcate the social world and polarise social groups. It is important that these are explored in an open-ended way from multiple viewpoints, through multiple interactive learning styles. This enables the development of a more differentiated, but integrated, understanding of one's in- and out-groups' value hierarchies, whilst preserving the core of one's own value position. The method enables an understanding of emotional states and how these can motivate violence due to their impact on thinking and perception. The net result is that participants develop a larger, more complex problem space, validated by the intervention peer group, along with meta-cognitive and emotional management skills that are transferable to a range of life challenges. This also

practises unmasking the rhetorical strategies and social manipulation of extremist groups, for on-going resilience to extremism.

Results across 43 IC Thinking group analyses shows expected, statistically significant pre- to post-intervention patterns. These demonstrate that increased value complexity leads to increased empathy (for one's own and other groups), which leads to increases in IC and higher logical reasoning. This increase leads to an adaptive conflict style and pro-social behaviour and well-being, including improved academic achievement, according to independent teacher observations in schools in Scotland.[16]

There is a growing understanding amongst research and practitioner communities that to counter extremism, prevention measures should improve critical thinking. These thoughts have been articulated in different ways by counter-extremism think tanks, prevention providers and government bodies around the world, calling for schools-based critical thinking counter-extremism curricula. Better thinking abilities need also to draw on values and social intelligence, and education to support this should be made available as widely as possible to reduce the prevalence of constricted perception and worldviews that mark conflict and extremism.

IC abilities, and their equivalents, empower people to engage more fully with wider society by increasing their ability to perceive some validity in opposing viewpoints, and providing methods to integrate those viewpoints with their own for practical solutions without a loss of value integrity. These skills in 'critical thinking plus' are needed

for resolving practical social, economic and political problems that give rise to extremism in the first place. The evidence behind this approach should encourage policy makers that this would not be a wasted effort.

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Case Study: Pakistan

IMPROVE CRITICAL EDUCATION, IMPROVE PREVENTION: LESSONS FROM DERADICALISING YOUNG TALIBAN FIGHTERS

In Pakistan, widespread poverty, a heavily strained school system and an indoctrinatory mode of learning are leaving young people vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremist groups. Sabaoon, a deradicalisation and rehabilitation project for young militant fighters in Swat, provides evidence of these as significant underlying factors. There is a lot to learn about preventing radicalisation from this work, write Feriha Peracha, Raafia Raees Khan, Asma Ayub and Kanza Aijaz.

Pakistan has suffered significantly from terrorism over recent years. Most horrifying is the use of young people in suicide attacks, and attacks on young people. The mass shooting at the Army Public School, Peshawar, which killed over 130 students, or the shooting of Malala Yousafzai at point blank range in October 2012 are just two such incidents. Unfortunately this violence would seem set to continue as widespread poverty and poor education fail to provide hope to young people for their future, nor the ability to build their resilience to extremist narratives. Class sizes, the school dropout rate and the mode and form of teaching discourage questioning and enquiry, making young people vulnerable to indoctrination, radicalisation and recruitment by extremist organisations.

For over six years now, the Social Welfare Academics and Training organisation (SWAaT) has been working to deradicalise and rehabilitate former militant youth, involved in violent extremist activities, through the Sabaoon centre (meaning first ray of sunlight at dawn) in Swat, Pakistan. Our findings demonstrate the impact that can be made by improvements in the education system, and have important implications

for what needs to be done to prevent the growth of extremism worldwide.

Sabaoon is a flagship project, initiated by the Pakistan Army in 2009, which rehabilitates adolescent and pre-adolescent male members of extremist groups apprehended by the army in Swat and surrounding areas. SWAaT's team of psychologists have developed a highly individualised model that includes mainstream education, vocational training and psychosocial support (figure one).[1]

Profiles of the 230 young people at Sabaoon between September 2009 and September 2015, suggests the following common traits:

1. Inductees were between 14 and 17 with a mean average age of 15.6. They are generally the middle children from a large family (mean size of eight, maximum of 24), where the biological father is often absent (mostly working abroad in the Middle East).
2. Inductees have low socioeconomic status, coming from high poverty backgrounds of around 15,000-20,000 Pakistani Rupees per month (approximately 90-120

Britsh Pounds or 140-190 United States (US) Dollars). They will generally have dropped out of school or been truant and are largely illiterate, and may have run away from home as well. They have lacked supervision of their activities.

3. Inductees lack critical thinking or logical reasoning skills, and have little religious understanding of their own faith and almost none of other faiths.

4. Inductees often display signs of head injury and the possibility of soft neuropathology.
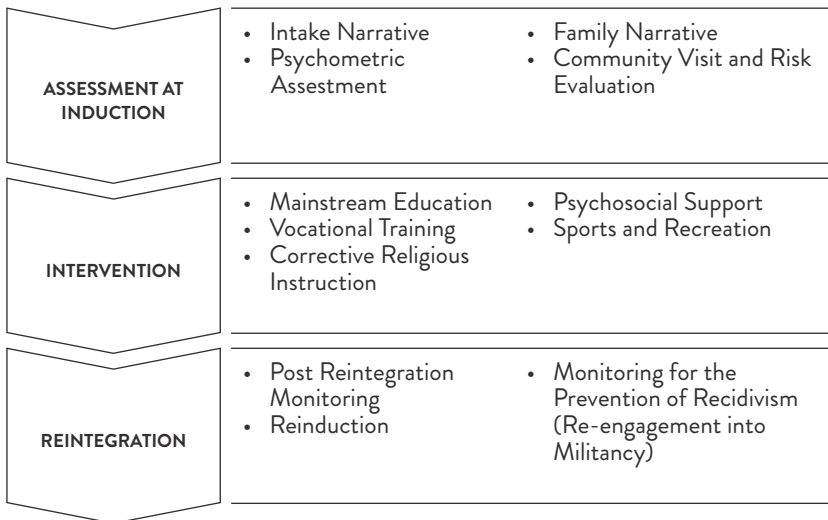
The most poignant impression gained from these analyses is that these are not dangerous children, but that they can be made to behave in dangerous ways.

These detailed profiles of each young person's motivations to join an extremist organisation are gathered and used to determine new coping strategies. Emphasis is given to building self-esteem and self-identity, anger management, problem solving and decision-making, critical thinking, logical reasoning, and to extra-curricular activities. Corrective religious instruction is given to counteract the indoctrination the young people have received from these groups, with interactive sessions designed to emphasise tolerance rather than focusing solely on Islam. Common themes of other existing religions are also discussed.

Sabaoon has successfully reintegrated 164 individuals so far, and, with continuing support and monitoring, there has been no recidivism, a fact that is internationally recognised. Sabaoon graduates are acting as ambassadors in their own communities and across Swat and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. More than 50 per cent are pursuing academic goals and hope to establish careers. Many are training in vocational skills and, where possible, are providing free services in their own communities.

FIGURE 1: *Sabaoon's deradicalisation and rehabilitation model*

ASSESSMENT AT INDUCTION	• Intake Narrative • Psychometric Assestment	• Family Narrative • Community Visit and Risk Evaluation
INTERVENTION	• Mainstream Education • Vocational Training • Corrective Religious Instruction	• Psychosocial Support • Sports and Recreation
REINTEGRATION	• Post Reintegration Monitoring • Reinduction	• Monitoring for the Prevention of Recidivism (Re-engagement into Militancy)

Our findings highlight two key aspects of education that policy makers must address if extremism is to be prevented, especially in developing countries or regions.

First, an important aspect in these interventions must be the raising of young people's logical reasoning and critical thinking skills. Our initial assessments of critical thinking and logical reasoning skills amongst students joining Sabaoon, using Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices (SPM), are dismal. A lack of these skills is strongly related to being easily indoctrinated. By way of demonstration, it is widely believed among inductees that, despite the evidence in front of their eyes, the soldiers at checkpoints belong to the US Army rather than the Pakistan Army. Furthermore, they have been led to believe that "It is written in the Quran that the Pakistan Army personnel are *kafirs* or *murtids* (non believers) and *jihad* is to kill them", and that directions to kill US soldiers are also given in the Quran. This despite the obvious fact that neither the USA nor Pakistan existed 1400 years ago, which makes it impossible for either to be mentioned in the Quran.

This is a clear indication that the Pakistani public school system does not develop students' ability to question information, meaning that they simply accept these dictated narratives from figures of authority. This is perhaps unsurprising given that teachers are overstretched with classes of 80-100 students, allowing little tolerance for questions and certainly no time to provide the answers. Rote learning is the mode that prevails for academic success, and the Quran is learnt by rote in Arabic, a language 99 per cent do not understand. As most young people have never read the Quran with translation, when verses were misquoted from the Quran they accepted false narratives without verification. Rote learning makes the teacher's job easier, but for students it raises their anxiety about being 'wrong' and makes them hesitant to ask questions. Independent thinking is discouraged in such large class sizes.

Furthermore, based on our analysis of information from inductees, families and ex-terrorists, we have distinguished that allocation of responsibilities at training camps or *markaz* is given by commanders based on levels of cognitive ability. Those with lower cognitive function, the young or poorly educated, are given menial or short-lived jobs, including suicide missions.

Critical thinking is essential to deradicalisation. Our initial assessments of inductees reflect the severity of the problem, as only one individual secured the average 50th percentile and no individual scored higher. However, as demonstrated in figure two, after a nine-month intervention at Sabaoon, eight individuals achieved the average 50th percentile, and an additional four reached the 75th percentile. At another project undertaken in Quetta called *Umeed-e-Nau*, findings from a smaller group of 15 students again shows a significant change in pre and post scores following a year of academic and psychosocial intervention (figure three).

The significant difference in the results shown in figure three reinforces the fact that even over a short intervention period, efforts to improve the critical thinking skills, using education methods that encourage inquiry and vocational training, have significant impact on the students, particularly if the teacher

FIGURE 2: *Sabaoon SPM assessment, number of people per percentile pre- and post-intervention (December 2009-December 2010)*
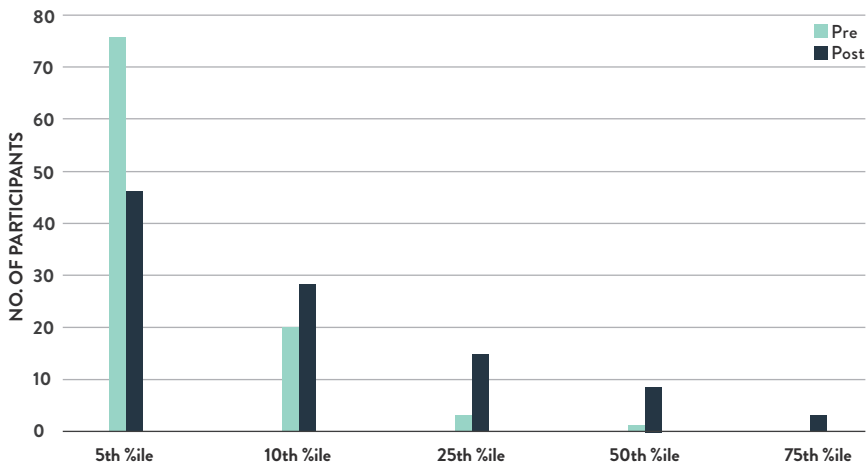
to student ratio is favourable. This improvement has obvious impact on the student's ability to critique and assess false narratives. On this basis, it is fundamentally important that policy makers work to incorporate such methods into their country's education curriculum in order to prevent extremism.

Second, where education does not provide the hope to escape poverty, provide an explanation of grievances, or contribute to the production of constructive and attainable goals, young people are particularly vulnerable to extremism. Contrary to Sageman and others,[2] our findings support Noricks's data that shows a negative correlation between a state's wealth and terrorist activities within that state.[3] Where school dropout rates are high, due to a need to work or because schooling seems pointless, recruitment is pervasive.

The promise of extremist religious narratives – a bountiful life after death, free from stress, worries and with an abundance of *hoors* (beautiful young

women) – becomes a potent stimulus for joining these groups. However, as economic indicators go down, the need for religious narratives also declines. A young boy earning two US Dollars per week is easily enticed by twenty US Dollars to place an IED at any given location. In Swat, as a majority of the population is under the age of 15, and considering school attendance and the school dropout rate, it may be extrapolated that approximately 200,000, or almost 25 per cent of, young people are vulnerable and at risk of recruitment by extremist or terrorist groups.

However, we have found that a short intervention focused on improving critical thinking skills actually increases school enrolment, attendance and grades, halting or decreasing the drop out rates in secondary and high schools. This significantly alters the likelihood of a young person being radicalised or recruited into an extremist or terrorist organisation.

The School Intervention Programme

FIGURE 3: *Quetta SPM assessment, raw scores per person pre- and post-intervention.*
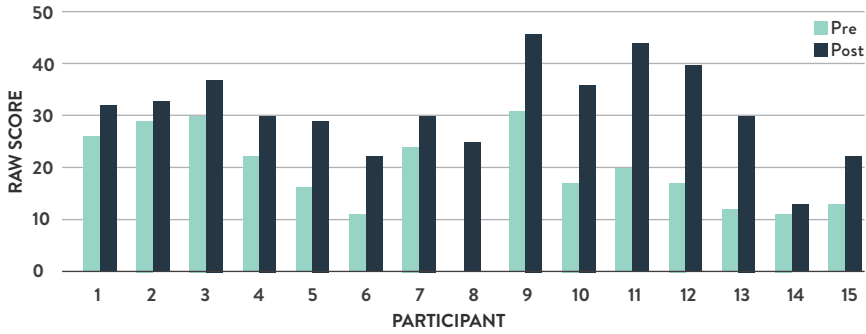
(SIP) was started in the most vulnerable areas of Swat where recruitment to extremism has been the highest. It is important to note that even though we were unable to improve the overall teacher to student ratio, encouraging study clubs, debating and literary interests by providing libraries and improving access to computers does have an impact on reasoning abilities.

SIP was implemented in five schools reaching approximately 4,500 students. In addition to improving classroom resources and access to the Internet (and therefore exposure to the world and beyond), teacher training modules were conducted after a thorough GAP analysis to assess ways to develop and enhance critical thinking in the student population. These cover teaching strategies that focus on active listening and interactive learning through research projects in study-based clubs (such as debating or science).

With minimum intervention, the student dropout rate fell from 32 per cent in 2012 to negligible levels of 0.5 per cent in 2013 (where this remainder indicates individuals who have migrated to other schools or joined the workforce). Figure four shows that SIP effected an overall improvement of 12 per cent in critical thinking (as assessed by SPM) across the five schools over a 12-month period. The improvement in critical thinking allows young people to assess the narratives

FIGURE 4: *Logical reasoning and critical thinking skills assessed by SPM pre- and post-SIP intervention (December 2012-December 2013)*
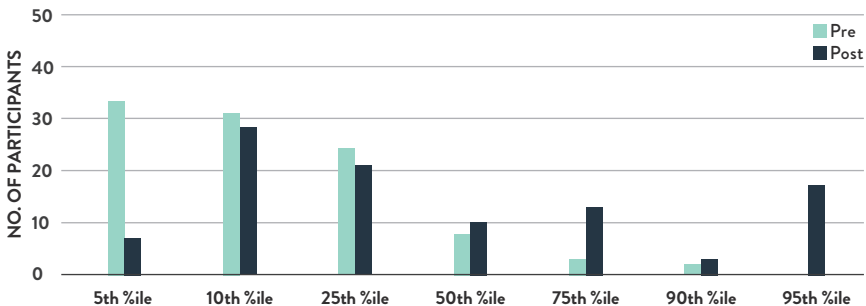
provided by recruiters. Minimising the drop out rate suggests that there has been no recruitment to extremist organisations from these vulnerable schools since the SIP intervention. Improving the quality of education improves the purpose of education, and this is critical not only to providing an environment that is conducive to building resilience amongst young people, but to keeping them in school in the first place.

It is well documented in the US State Department report of 2014 that neither economic sanctions nor military reprisals have proved to be successful in effecting positive changes to the policies of countries designated as terrorism sponsors.[4] Beate Hermilin once said, "there is little likelihood of a war in Europe and the Americas again; the average person has too much to lose." The average Pakistani has very little to lose in material terms and supposedly everything to gain in investing in 'life after death'.

We need to create an alternative. Our evidence demonstrates the urgent need to forge partnerships for education, health and economic uplift amongst poor and vulnerable communities in order to prevent extremism. Policy makers should work to improve existing school systems by providing supplemental resources to encourage practices that inculcate critical thinking. This will not only increase the chance that young people will not accept the narratives given by extremist recruiters, but can prevent extremism being a necessary or attractive option.

Endnotes

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Jo Malone is a Senior Project Manager at the Tony Blair Faith Foundation where she has responsibility for projects and elements of programmes related to dialogue and education. She joined the Faith Foundation at the inception of the Face to Faith programme and has played a lead role in its development. Malone is a Religious Education advisor in the UK, a member of the Religious Education Council of England and Wales and a professional member of various educational bodies in the UK. Prior to joining the Foundation, she was for 14 years a class teacher and a curriculum and pastoral manager in various state secondary schools in England as well as working as a consultant for safeguarding projects and for examination boards.

EDUCATING TO PROTECT YOUNG PEOPLE AGAINST EXTREMISM

Education remains our best hope of preventing extremism in the long-term, if we emphasise the aspects of education that can protect young people against radicalisation to extremism. For some educational systems this means rethinking their education priorities and introducing new approaches to teaching and learning. Governments urgently need to invest in teacher training and educational resources to implement these changes, writes Jo Malone.

The role of education in preventing extremism is paradoxical. Access to education in general or the raising of attainment alone will not combat extremism and terrorism. Many recruits are better educated than the average population, but they tend to lack critical inter-religious and inter-cultural literacy. Extremists also use a narrow curriculum and teaching approach to close the minds of students and indoctrinate them with extreme narratives, values and interpretations of scripture that create a binary worldview that justifies violence. Boko Haram and Taliban funded madrassas, for example, are well documented. Consider also the current *Saffronisation* of the curriculum in India under the Bharatiya Janata Party or the content of Saudi textbooks that are exported globally. Western education systems also struggle to adequately protect students, demonstrated by high profile cases of young people leaving to join violent extremist groups abroad or plotting attacks at home.

Yet used effectively, education remains our best hope to prevent extremism in the long-term. Despite billions invested by governments to fight violent extremism, terrorist attacks increased by 300 per cent between 2007 and 2013.[1] Unless we can prevent radicalisation to extremist ideology more young people will be recruited, perpetuating the cycle of violence. While education in general may not prevent extremism, there are five aspects to education that do. Policy makers need to ensure that education opens minds, builds critical thinking, increases cultural and religious literacy, and allows young people to explore their multiple identities and belonging to develop citizenship. Across all of this, teachers need support and training in appropriate teaching approaches.

To counter extreme and divisive narratives and ideology, education must open the minds of young people to be comfortable with diversity and difference, reducing misunderstanding, prejudice and stereotypes. It is important that young people can differentiate between different value positions, respecting and appreciating that each has its worth for the person or people holding it; what Savage terms 'Developed Integrative Complexity' (IC). It is significant that research shows that lowered IC (a more closed minded and simplistic thinking process) "acts as an amplifier for vulnerability to extremism".

In order to open minds, education needs to provide students with exposure to, and lived experience of, the other.

Experiential learning encourages enquiry and openness to new information and interpretations as well as deepening understanding of those different to ourselves. By teaching dialogue skills we can give students a voice, helping them to better negotiate difference. In the Tony Blair Faith Foundation's Face to Faith programme, for example, we do this through safe online interaction and videoconferencing, with teaching advice on creating safe spaces for dialogue and opportunities for encountering those of different cultures, faiths and beliefs. Policy makers can learn a lot from this experience and from the lessons learnt by other NGOs that have undertaken similar work, the resources that have been tried and tested, and the approaches that get the best results. Partnerships should be developed to mainstream the best interventions.[3]

Critical thinking enables open enquiry and the appreciation of difference. This is the overriding theme that comes from Savage's and Peracha, Khan, Ayub and Aijaz's articles. Their evaluation demonstrates that logical reasoning and critical thinking skills can inoculate against indoctrination, enabling young people to critically assess and engage with arguments presented to them. This has also been our finding from Face to Faith. Our experience is that students better understand the values, beliefs and lives of others if they have critically evaluated their own influences and how their assumptions are formed. We also need to teach young people to be critical consumers of the media and of what they see, hear and read online.

Improving the quality of education by reducing the student to teacher ratio and investing in teacher training to exchange teacher-centred approaches, such as rote learning, for student-centred practices can dramatically improve critical thinking, as Peracha et al show. Teachers feel unsupported, which we have seen reflected in reactions to the training and resources we provide for Face to Faith. This is especially evident in videoconferences where one teacher has used our methods and engaged their students with the resources thoroughly and another has not. The quality of students' dialogue skills and consequently the learning they can take away from the encounter in the latter is far below that of the former.

Open-mindedness will only be achieved, however, if young people are more culturally and religiously literate. Students should understand the teachings and beliefs of their own faith (if they have one) and learn about other world religions and the beliefs of those in their communities so that they have the knowledge to question misinterpretations of religious texts and teachings. Education reform and improvement must extend to the reform of religious education. If the young men at Sabaoon had learnt Arabic or had high quality translations of the Quran available, for example, they may have been able to engage with its teachings and rebut the Taliban's narratives.

Professor Robert Jackson goes a step further suggesting that education systems should also offer the opportunities for young people to understand *the life lived of faith and belief*.

> Education that includes knowledge of the other involves a moral and ethical position and is not merely a cognitive function. The opportunity to question and challenge through dialogue

and relevance to students' experiences are essential for developing empathy. This form of education, along with the promotion of a counter-narrative, can prepare students to develop the ability to critique extremist ideologies and refrain from succumbing to its sway.[4]

This importance of experiential learning directly with and from one another about how their beliefs, faiths and values impact their lives can change stereotypes and biases, as, for example with this United States student and the burqa. Her teacher reports that, "The response of the female student in Pakistan caught her by surprise. She remarked in class later that day that the belief that covering a woman's body actually extols a woman's dignity and value was one she had never considered."

Importantly, open-minded, critical education helps young people to explore and understand the complexity of their multiple identities and to develop a sense of belonging in their communities. Some young Muslims in the West, especially those from second or third generation diaspora communities, are struggling with an identity crisis. Elsewhere young people can feel torn by the consequences of globalisation. In looking for both a sense of identity and belonging, religion can fill the gap. If young people feel alienated both from their minority, ethnic or parental culture and from the majority mainstream culture, they may be unable or unwilling to fulfil either group's normative expectations. Religion can become the principal anchor of identity.[5]

One of the most attractive allures offered by extremist groups is a sense of belonging and identity. Peracha et al have identified self-esteem and identity as factors that pulled the young boys at Sabaoon into the Taliban, and these play a significant part in their successful de-radicalisation programme. Elsewhere, for the white supremacist this can mean the thrill of joining a secretive group such as The American Front, Wiking-Jugend or Combat 18, to name a few from the hundreds that exist. For the Islamist extremist this is a sense of belonging to the Ummah, being an Ally of Allah, the act of Takfir and identifying as an underdog.[6] By exploring identity and belonging, education can improve citizenship helping to tie people to their communities and reducing the pull of extreme groups. Across the international community, citizenship education is seen as a vital part of preventing extremism. Indeed, done well, action-based citizenship can help young people to feel a part of increasingly diverse communities.

Open-minded, experiential education that includes dialogue should be a part of this. A group of students in Devon, United Kingdom, participating in Face to Faith, for instance, were, according to their teacher, "in a fixed-mind-set about Islam. [They had a] deep-rooted ignorance that all Muslims are terrorists and should 'go home'." After using the Face to Faith resources and being connected with a group of Muslim students who could challenge these stereotypes and prejudices, the teacher reports that, "The change in attitude these boys had after the videoconference was extraordinary – something which is one of the most memorable moments of my teaching career."

To prevent extremism, governments must commit to implementing reforms that

embed these five aspects of education. Across all five, teacher training and resource creation are urgent priorities. Unless teachers have appropriate content and are confident about delivering it, educating to prevent extremism will not succeed. Governments must invest in identifying and developing appropriate pedagogical approaches and in improving teacher training. Opportunities should be created for teachers to access continued professional development and build professional communities for the sharing of good practice. To help teachers, there should be careful scrutiny of materials that are used in the classroom to ensure that they promote plurality and inclusivity and do not denigrate groups or communities. Governments must ensure that standards are maintained by setting up monitoring processes so that young people have the best quality education possible. We all have a duty of care to protect young people against the risks of being drawn into extremism and terrorism. Education allows us to do this.

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ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

Prevention requires a whole of society approach to undermine extremism.

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BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE TO PREVENT EXTREMISM IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED ENVIRONMENTS

Conflict transformation and peace-building efforts have a large role to play in building resilience amongst communities to pressures exerted by extremists. A community's ability to secure and sustain its own resources and be responsible for determining its own future creates greater solidarity against insurgents. But this approach must come through a community-based process of building understanding and dialogue if it is to create a lasting solution, writes Alpaslan Özerdem.

The last decade has seen an important shift take place within peace-building discourse toward more inclusive and participatory modes of working. This has sparked interest in community-based approaches and seen previous peace-building paradigms criticised for overlooking the importance of local ownership, with a lack of programming, research and analysis taking place at this level.[1] The importance of community-based approaches for appropriately addressing the extensive needs of conflict and post-conflict societies is further highlighted by the emerging challenge of extremism in conflict-affected environments. Contexts such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, the Philippines and Somalia, have made clear the importance of paying particular attention to the resilience of communities for preventing extremism.

Conflict-affected communities often find themselves radically altered in the aftermath of mass violence and this may have a profound effect on their capacities to build peace and guard against extreme voices in their midst. Some groups may be under or over represented *vis-à-vis* pre-conflict levels, due perhaps to displacement or deaths. Populations can be left with serious gender, ethnic or other imbalances. As such, peace-builders cannot simply aim to rebuild societies as they were. Rather, they must seek to understand how societies, identities, group boundaries and roles have transformed, and incorporate this into participatory community interventions.[2]

Despite the toll that conflict can take on communities, they have often proved to be the most resilient in the face of humanitarian crises caused by war or conflict. Many conflict-affected societies typically have public institutions that are weak or divisive, and communities will often step into the breach to provide basic services and coping mechanisms for survival. As such there is significant mileage in engaging communities in conflict transformation and in other related activities such as tension monitoring, relief work and reconstruction.

This is because community-based approaches transform conflict from the bottom up, empowering local community groups, and in turn institutions, by giving the community direct control over decision-making. They can be used to build social capital in divided societies by providing safe spaces for interaction,

communication and joint decision-making, as well as communicating and responding to local priorities throughout the conflict and in its aftermath.

However, this capacity is put at risk under the strain of competing bids for support and loyalty from participants in the conflict. Building community resilience really matters, therefore, in regard to community-combatant relations. This is particularly important, as non-state armed group interaction with the community can be mutually reinforcing, predatory, protective or even symbiotic.[3] Armed groups often rely on civilians to provide sanctuary, provisions, information and other resources, placing strain on a community's ability to fill the gap left by the absence of state structures.[4]

Key trends in current research highlight the nature of insurgency as being the primary determinant of rebel behaviour towards local communities. While opportunistic rebellions permit indiscipline in their ranks to maintain membership and retain recruits, predation is closely linked with limited access and heightened competition for resources and recruitment pools.[5] Insurgent violence offers a strategic tool for controlling local population and resources critical for group sustenance.

Another strand of research investigates presence or lack of group competition and active rivalry as the defining variable of rebel behaviour.[6] Civilians are at the centre of competing incentives from rebel and government forces for loyalty, support and local resources. Selective incentives in the arena of public services, wages or security by either side may make affiliation fluid and contingent on who offers better benefits. Legal power

wielded by the state may compensate for weak capacity by adding the leverage of imprisonment or reprisal by the military.

Targeted violence on civilians may seek to offset or undermine the government's primary role of protection, making it imperative to rely on stronger rebels for security in areas controlled by them. Credible security guarantees from rebels can incentivise civilian support for them.[7] Changes in relations between rebels and civilians are relative to rebel capability and the dynamic of the contest between insurgents and government. Hence, sympathy for, and collaboration with, rebels is contingent on the latter's ability to protect in the long-term. Conversely, indiscriminate violence may render civilians indifferent in their support to either side or simply lead them to evacuate.[8]

Organisational weakness can translate into violence directed towards civilians since governance provision and related benefits are less likely to be offered making it difficult to secure loyalty through peaceful means. Strong rebel groups often present a mix of selective incentives and selective repression to entice support. Government counter-insurgency strategies that are premised on indiscriminate regime violence can also undermine local support and result in the rebels being the populace's preferred security providers.

The transformative approach to peace-building and reconciliation recognises these tensions and their consequences for communities and seeks to identify the means to build resilience to them and bring about a lasting solution through dialogue and exchange. This solution should be based on meeting the needs of each party, and can involve major social,

economic and political restructuring to move towards a more just and equitable society. In the transformative view, conflict and change are recognised as normal parts of human life. They are neither inherently positive nor negative and can often provide us with opportunities to create constructive change processes that reduce violence and increase social justice.

Therefore, in seeking to assist communities in transforming conflict by building their resilience, there are three core principles that should be noted. Firstly, conflict transformation should be pursued through means that are actively non-violent. Non-violence involves a conscious and deliberate restraint from violence in circumstances where this might be expected, in a context of contention between two or more adversaries. Active non-violence is at the heart of conflict transformation, as a deep and sustaining solution requires dialogue and accommodation between the conflict parties that cannot be achieved in a context of violence or coercion. In other words, such an approach needs to be informed by a commitment to the study of how to wage conflict non-violently and promote peace, justice and human rights through peaceful means.[9]

For this, it is essential to understand intra-group conflicts in order to create the conditions of harmony and co-existence that can build the unity required for community resilience. For example, the end of the Israel-Palestine conflict has long been considered as needing a resolution between the two parties through third party engagement. However, neither Palestinians nor Israelis could be considered a homogeneous entity and are therefore both susceptible to being influenced by more extreme

elements amongst them. The differences within each group are so significant that creating the conditions for conflict transformation amongst them is likely to be as difficult as for a political settlement between the two sides. Conflict transformation strategies at grassroots levels with the full engagement of communities will likely bear much more effective and sustainable outcomes.

Secondly, in building resilience we need to be acutely attentive to ensuring that processes of transformation are locally owned. A peace-building process that places external actors in the driving seat imposing peace from above is fundamentally at odds with a conflict transformative approach. External assistance might be required to kick-start and create enabling conditions for dialogue, but external actors must act as facilitators rather than decision-makers if the local actors are to have a strong sense of ownership. There is now an urgent need, well recognised by peace-building practitioners, to move beyond assumed problem identification and inferred community needs towards more participatory and demand-led modes of action.

Local ownership is a frequently used term within peace-building and can connote local buy-in, consultation, participation, and/or leadership. Yet even with the recent move towards more local level programming work in peace-building, local ownership has not always been guaranteed. It is important to make the distinction between community-centred initiatives, where peace-building is placed within local communities but others retain decision-making power, and community-based initiatives where communities are in full control of the process. While there is a lack of consensus as to what level of

ownership yields the greatest results, there is a general consensus that there is not enough emphasis on ensuring local ownership within current practice. This negatively affects perceptions of legitimacy on the ground and also misses an opportunity for building capacity and ensuring sustainability.[10]

Finally, it is imperative that this respect for local ownership over peace-building processes is embedded within a supportive context. Local actors must be properly linked within the wider system in a way that supports integrated peace-building and sustains resilience.The political reality of peace-building is such that material and non-material support from external actors is a key determinant of success. The crucial factor is in how this support is channelled and how relationships between local and non-local actors are formed.

Again, international actors should act as facilitators to enable local actors to find their own path to peace, rather than leading it themselves. In other words, international actors need to revisit their traditional ways of responding to these challenges in a top-down way, and be prepared for not only listening to what local communities say, but also to act upon what they say through their means of facilitation, support and empowerment.

By empowering communities to maintain cohesive, sustainable resilience as a group during and after conflict in these ways, the ability of communities to resist and prevent extreme voices within their midst will be strengthened. This in turn decreases the likelihood of prolonged and diversified conflict, and increases the chance of lasting peace when a resolution is found.

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SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT:
AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO TACKLE RADICALISATION

Diverse pathways to extremism exist, and complex patterns of grievances unique to each individual make identifying and combatting radicalisation difficult. Amongst these grievances, unemployment and poverty are significant. The solution to radicalisation needs to look beyond government programmes alone and also involve building relationships with those at risk, including through business and faith communities, argues Brian Grim.

The January 2015 attacks in Paris, carried out by those with a reported link to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, reaffirmed an urgent question. If policing European streets and co-ordinating an international response to Islamist extremism is not enough to stem the tide of radicalisation, what more should be done? The answer involves understanding two things: the socio-economic context of the advance of Islamist extremists, especially the horrific advance of Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), and the diverse social and personal pathways to radicalisation.[1]

According to a Pew Research survey in 2013,[2] in the years running up to the ISIS advance, the Iraqi public's chief concern was unemployment. Less than half of those surveyed in Iraq considered conflict between religious groups to be a very large problem. But by contrast, three-quarters of those surveyed considered unemployment to be a "very large problem" for the country. Indeed, the lack of jobs arguably softened the ground for ISIS's sudden advance.

Although research indicates that a poor economy does not cause violent extremism, it contributes to the conditions that extremists can exploit.[3] Indeed, extremists know how to use poverty and wealth for their benefit. They recruit suicide bombers from the ranks of the poor and they look to the wealthy for cash because, as observed in the Yale Review of International Studies, the rich "would rather donate their money than their sons to the cause."[4]

More than that, extremists think strategically about business and the economy. The January attacks in Paris targeted two local businesses connected with much bigger industries: Hyper Cacher, the multi-billion dollar Kosher food industry, and Charlie Hebdo, the multi-trillion dollar media industry. On a larger scale, the 9/11 al-Qaeda attack on the World Trade Centre in New York – soaring symbols of development and progress – was not a random choice. In 2004, Osama bin Laden said in a taped speech, "We are continuing this policy in bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy. Every dollar of al-Qaeda defeated a million dollars [spent by the US], including the loss of a huge number of jobs."[5]

Some studies suggest that radical extremism can play a role during times of global economic downturn.[6] Whether or not this is the case, the foreign policy focus of many of the world's leading economies has without a doubt been on war and peace rather than business.

If violent extremists attack businesses and take advantage of a bad economy to sow seeds of religious discord and violence, better business must be part of the response to radical extremism. This requires an understanding that the radicalisation process is not only social but also deeply personal.

The "pathway by which one person is radicalised can have a completely different effect on someone else", observes Raffaello Pantucci of London's RUSI think tank.[7] A similar conclusion was reached by the Paris-based Centre of Prevention of Sectarian Derivatives linked to Islam (CPDSI), which finds that contemporary extremist discourse appeals to those from any background, not just those who are considered socially 'at risk'.[8] However, improving the lives and futures of those living on the edge or fringes of society will be beneficial. Being on the margins breeds feelings of powerlessness and isolation – the very conditions that can make people most susceptible to proposals to find power through violence.

Reflecting the views of many, Pope Francis said that "it is urgent that governments throughout the world commit themselves to developing an international framework capable of promoting a market of high impact investments, and thus to combating an economy which excludes and discards."[10] Similarly, British Prime Minister David Cameron argues, "Social investment can be a great force for social change on the planet. It can help us to build bigger and stronger societies. That power is in our hands. And together we will use it to build a better future for ourselves, for our children and for generations to come."

These are grand statements by world leaders. In implementing them we often overlook the way in which businesses and faith volunteers can build relationships with those at risk of radicalisation.

The instrumental link between social impact investing and countering radicalisation is person-to-person contact. Social investment that has impact requires personal and business relationships characterised by love and respect, not hate and intolerance. Accordingly, the need is for business people in partnership with faith volunteers to build personal relationships with those at risk of radicalisation. The involvement of interfaith teams (including humanists) is a critical component because countering religious hate can most effectively be done with "love of neighbour" as exemplified in the Good Samaritan (a foreigner with a foreign faith).

Here, neighbourly love is not an emotion but a practical commitment to help mentor those in need with individualised resources that help them provide for their own needs as well as those of their families and extended families. These toolkits, such as those being created at the moment by my Religious Freedom & Business Foundation together with St. Mary's University, Twickenham for our Empowerment+ initiative,[11] need to relate across faith traditions, being practical as much for Muslims as Mormons, for Humanists and Agnostics as Hindus and Catholics. They should have resources that can be customised as needed to address themes related to a balanced life: education, health, employment, productivity and stewardship, household finances, and spiritual strength.[12]

Building a network of mentors in this way will also help to identify

sustainable investments that promote integration and economic development in communities where people at risk of radicalisation live. Such projects should adhere to several important criteria: a high probability of a successful business venture; applicability of the business model to other situations; representation of different faith traditions; and promoting productive collaboration between religious minorities and other segments of society.

As the Rand Corporation note,

> The most successful programmes attend to a radical's emotional well-being by offering counselling and helping the ex-militant locate a supportive social network; address practical factors by, for example, providing training and a job; and work to moderate the radical's beliefs by challenging extremist Islamism. Moreover, to facilitate the reintegration of ex-radicals into society, de-radicalisation programmes should continue to support and monitor those who have reformed.[13]

Integration and empowerment can help those at risk of radicalisation to follow a different course, which is why the involvement of business is so critical. By mixing good information and support structures through business mentoring, it is possible to catalyse sustainable businesses that increase integration and resilience in communities where there is a high risk of radicalisation through personal interaction and the building of productive relationships.[14]

There are clear policy implications for tackling radicalisation by building relationships with those at risk through business and faith communities. First, governments should help fund, and collaborate with, carefully designed pilot programmes in key cities. Good pilots are very important because they test and establish the most effective way to run initiatives in various settings with multiple stakeholders. Well designed pilots with proper government support can win over sceptics and energise scores, perhaps thousands of volunteers.

Second, because the pathways into radicalisation are diverse, community-based initiatives, such as Empowerment+, should not be conceptualised as programmes that solely intervene when someone is thought to be on the verge of anti-social, criminal or violent behaviour. Rather, they should be conceptualised and branded as social cohesion and enterprise initiatives. They should be aimed at primary prevention through the sort of practical integration and empowerment that can help those experiencing a wide range of socio-economic risks to build resilience to radicalisation.

Third, the government can serve as a convening platform to invite businesses to join with faith groups in a programme of dialogue and exchange. In the case of Empowerment+, this would be done through community advisory committees. Businesses should advise and help communities through local mentors – and the reach of faith communities makes them prime candidates as mentors – to develop sustainable initiatives and strategies for developing welfare support and business mentoring. In this way local businesses can receive support and advice and help to improve the local economy.

In turn, businesses, by working with local volunteers from faith communities, would establish better contacts, insights and connections with communities, with new business opportunities possibly opening up. Employees can gain new experience by working with local communities and through voluntary service. Moreover, businesses can improve their corporate social responsibility record by providing opportunities through, and working with, initiatives for those on the margins of society, or by providing social impact investment funds for education, vocational training and community welfare projects.

When love of neighbour is accompanied by empowering social investment, integration and interfaith appreciation result. In the end, all this is good for business because, as the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby appositely notes, good business is about good relationships.[15] This applies to neighbourhoods in cities and communities throughout Europe, as well as suffering populations in northern Iraq.

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Case Study: Singapore

PREVENTION REQUIRES PARTICIPATION: THE NEED FOR STATE-SOCIETY PARTNERSHIPS

Since 9/11, the threat of insurgency, extremism and terrorism from non-state militant groups has increased exponentially. Considering the growth trajectory of terrorism and extremism, the fight can no longer be battled only by the state. Platforms of partnership between state and society should be built to enhance interaction and dialogue between diverse ethnic and religious communities that will lead to greater resilience, argues Rohan Gunaratna.

With the meteoric rise of Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and its affiliates, the nature of the Asian threat landscape has changed. The threat is territorial and global, but also local, the dominant threat being from self-radicalised home-grown cells and individuals that emerge within often marginalised or aggrieved communities. This new front of global terrorism presents an ever-growing threat to the security and stability of Asian countries and a severe threat to Singapore. It requires a response that builds better links between the state and diverse modern communities.

The fight against global extremism and the ideology of groups such as ISIS is long-term. It cannot be defeated by a military response alone. Governments must build strategic platforms and partnerships with civil society organisations, community groups and the business sector. The focus should be to prevent support and advocacy for extremism through education and awareness, and to disrupt the influence of extremist groups through early action by intelligence and law enforcement. To intercept funding streams, the support of the banking and financial institutions is paramount. To rebut propaganda, ideology and narratives, the support

of religious leaders, educators and the media is essential. With the threat posed by home-grown cells and foreign fighter returnees, it is paramount to invest in building both community engagement and rehabilitation.

Singapore, which has mitigated its terrorist threat through strong partnerships between its Government and its communities, can provide an example for governments elsewhere. Singapore recognises that as the threat is both national and international, simply raising its walls can no longer ensure its security. The Government's primary focus is maintaining the security and stability of Singapore and assisting its immediate neighbours to manage the threat. Developments in Southeast Asia and the world at large have an impact on Singapore's multi-ethnic and multi-religious terrain. The ties of Singapore and its residents to Malaysia and Indonesia makes managing Singapore's security a regional effort.

While maintaining highly capable tactical teams on the ground for quick response, Singapore has effectively integrated its hard and soft approaches to produce a smarter security. Singapore strives to develop a 'whole of society' approach by

working with a wide range of institutions including community, religious and academic organisations. Singapore's Government has concentrated its efforts in three areas. First, it emphasises community engagement to promote moderation, toleration and coexistence, especially amongst young people, through initiatives such as the Taman Bacaan programme, a grassroots community care organisation that works with Muslim youth. Second, it has improved terrorist rehabilitation and reintegration through the Religious Rehabilitation Group, which counters the ideological misunderstanding of detained extremists, and the After-care Association, which provides welfare and rehabilitation services to reintegrate ex-offenders into communities. Third, it has worked hard to raise awareness of the threat and improve its capacity to respond. It has done this through quality training workshops and study programmes, such as those at the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) and the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.[1]

Several lessons can be learnt from this experience. To secure countries threatened by terrorism and extremism, there is a need to create an environment hostile to terrorists and unfriendly to their supporters. A legal and a governance framework is needed to deny hate preachers platforms, and to stop the misuse of media platforms for terrorist messaging and the abuse of places of worship and educational institutions to indoctrinate. However, governments must also work with civil society, community and business partners to shape and influence the human terrain.

First, to disrupt terrorist planning, investing in the community is key,

especially engaging and partnering with community leaders. As an extension of the state securing society, they will ensure safety and security in their communities. To make them defenders of the community and protectors of their countries, community leaders must be empowered as valued stakeholders, encouraged, facilitated and supported by the government. By inviting leaders into networks that provide this support, governments can begin to build trust that will enable leaders to feel comfortable in engaging with them on security issues. State-society partnerships will not be built overnight, however. It will take many months of investment to earn the trust of the community, especially of young people. Important in this will be education, both formal and informal, to safeguard young people from extremist narratives and protect community-state relationships.

Friends, family and neighbours are often the first to recognise indications of radicalisation. Yet when a concern arises, they may be hesitant to report it to the security services. Governments should train communities to recognise radicalisation and pre-attack terrorist activity, and should publicise partner organisations that can help and provide advice to community members at risk. Properly constructed, such an approach can facilitate a 'safe', community-based pathway to counter radicalisation and prevent attacks. It should be inculcated in the public's consciousness: if the public are alert, vigilant and not complacent, a terrorist attack will never succeed.

Second, to enhance community interaction, awareness campaigns should be conducted through city, town and village community centres, associations and other bodies to reach the grassroots.

The local authorities should work with religious and other community leaders, including elders and teachers, to build counter-narratives and ideological and theological responses. Given the need for social cohesion, harmony programmes, clubs and centres can be created to strengthen bonds between communities. By constantly investing in communal relations, the flow of counter terrorism information can be improved and the potential for communal tension mitigated.

Universities and other institutes of higher education should host expertise and learning needed to promote moderation and toleration, develop greater understanding between faith and ethnic communities, and develop counter-messaging. At a time when there are such perverse interpretations of Islam that can misrepresent it in public opinion, it is paramount to create programmes and centres that can disseminate information about mainstream and nuanced understandings of Islam. Governments should work with universities and centres of learning to establish them as authoritative voices on Islam. Such institutions should work closely with the community, grassroots leaders, civil society and madrassas. To this end, the study and research of comparative religion should be increased to enhance popular understanding of common religious principles and to undermine conspiracy theories about different religions.

Third, to build resilience and capacity within communities it will be important to involve the business community for funding and services. Corporate Social Responsibility means that businesses should invest a percentage of their revenue to promoting harmony in communities, though carefully scrutinising the end users to ensure that the investment is appropriately used. Working with the business community will also enable greater interaction between government, society and industry, broadening funding pools and creating a whole of society approach. By working with service providers, for instance, governments and their partners can deny terrorists and extremists the opportunities to exploit global communication systems, and can improve early identification of radicalisation by health and education providers. Better, more trusting relationships can also be developed between communities and service providers. Similarly, by working with the banking and financial industry, terrorists' funding streams can be shut down.

Finally, collaboration between government and civil society should also help teachers and community leaders to build, operate and maintain strategic communication platforms to influence the population. It is imperative to engage the mass media to build positive public opinion. As the human terrain is key to security and stability, the media should develop a zero tolerance approach to terrorism and extremism, while being careful not to stigmatise whole communities at the risk of harming social cohesion. To prevent sensational reporting, the media needs to be trained and retrained both on how terrorist organisations manipulate news and on how to ensure nuance and understanding in their reporting. Governments and their partners should engage traditional, new media and other platforms, to remove harmful content and promote messages of harmony.

Success will be found in developing

partnerships that deliver a full spectrum response. Singapore has served as a global model and also shared its expertise with countries in East Asia and beyond. Following the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism in February 2015, Singapore hosted the East Asia Summit Symposium on Religious Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration in April. Convened by the ICPVTR at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, a collaborative platform to move from co-operation to collaboration between government and civil society was launched. Strategies on Aftercare and Reintegration (SOAR) is a global repository of information and resources for counter extremism and de-radicalisation strategies managed by ICPVTR. Singapore's Religious Rehabilitation Group and the Aftercare Group are already models used by many other countries in the region.

The fight against terrorism and extremism can be won. Its success depends not only on government capabilities but community commitment to defeat terror and extremist ideas. Strong and trusting state-society partnerships are vital to building capacity and resilience in communities so that they can play their part in the fight. Communities need to be supported to recognise their role and feel that they can undertake it. They can then foster the dialogue and interaction needed between their members to identify those at risk and intervene to build their resilience and prevent the growth of extremism.

Endnotes

1. For more on Singapore's experience, see R. Gunaratna and M.F.B.M. Hassan, 'Terrorist Rehabilitation: The Singapore Experience', in R. Gunaratna and M. Bin Ali (eds.), *Terrorist Rehabilitation: A New Frontier in Counter-Terrorism*, London, Imperial College Press, 2015, pp. 41-70.

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MOBILISING RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO EFFECTIVELY PREVENT EXTREMISM

Engaging communities in preventing extremism often relies on fostering relationships that allow access to both community leaders and the grassroots. The attributes of religious leaders place them in a unique position to influence and effectively engage communities and build their resilience. Whilst growing recognition of these attributes by international actors has boosted the involvement of religious leaders in development and counter extremism strategies, more must be done to increase their capacity and capability to better recognise and respond to their communities' needs in a more sustainable way, argues Banke Adetayo.

With a rapidly changing global threat landscape, and with diverse pathways to radicalisation, engaging with communities to prevent extremism has new and equally diverse challenges, as Özerdem, Grim and Gunaratna relate. The success of community-based strategies increasingly depends on leveraging the right partnerships and influential actors. Often overlooked, the authority of, and trust put in, religious leaders amongst and by their communities and wider networks, allied with their reach, particularly to marginalised and hard to reach populations, can provide this crucial element. Furthermore, in our experience, it leads to community engagement strategies that yield lasting change, are cost effective and sustainable.

With such longstanding influence, up-skilling religious leaders to respond adequately to these challenges will play a significant role in the wider society's holistic response. Fostering smarter partnerships, investments and support ensures religious leaders can properly employ these skills to build better-sustained resilience and cohesion within their communities.

The contributions that religious leaders have made in building their communities' resilience against internal and external threats are real, and predate the current global crisis. Their ability to engage in discourse around security, health, education, politics and the economy, and to foster receptiveness to, and support for, interventions, has shown them to be critical agents for transformative change – often with remarkable results.[1]

Critics may point to the dichotomous role religious leaders can play at the opposite end of the spectrum. The reality that some leaders support and propagate extremist ideologies raises questions about the reliability of religious leaders to drive positive change, and not simply take advantage of provided resources to fuel their own agendas. However, the danger of excluding religious actors on this account is that it misses the opportunity to rebalance the scale with significant consequences. Religious leaders that support extremism often have a wide following and are well resourced. When pitted against less savvy moderate religious leaders, the allure of security and power offered by radical preachers will result in further dividing communities with underlying social and economic grievances.

There is, therefore, a strong argument

to provide practical support to religious leaders, and, as Tony Blair recently remarked, to "maximise the reach of those prepared and capable of offering an alternative interpretation of the theology… [who] can rebut propaganda of the extremists on religious and scriptural grounds."[2]

Policy makers can empower religious leaders to drive and sustain change within their communities in several ways. First, religious leaders and their communities can provide insight to understand the underlying causes of division and susceptibility to radicalisation. National and international actors seeking to follow Özerdem or Gunaratna's advice to achieve transformative change should foster meaningful dialogue with religious communities as they will often provide lived realities to complement the political interpretations given by political leaders.

These lived realities can shed light on the nuances that characterise the identities and relations between and inside groups within communities transformed by tension and conflict. These need to be understood and treated respectfully in order to identify and develop community intervention pathways that speak to the needs of that particular community. Özerdem's warning of the dangers in treating groups as homogenous entities should not be treated lightly.

This process of dialogue also serves to facilitate a reciprocal learning process between external actors and religious leaders to identify the necessary skills required to bridge the gap between communities, and to inform on how to build the critical skills that enable communities to learn more about one another. This may take form as initiating dialogue between different groups

separately to ensure members can participate and engage in a safe space. In conflict-affected environments, this level of cultural fluency and sensitivity is necessary to ensure we "first, do no harm".[3]

Second, it is imperative to develop skills in cultural and religious leaders required to challenge and supplant extremist ideologies with a clear and credible alternative narrative with theological justification. Capacity building of this kind provides a strong foundation to break down deep-seated misunderstandings. Through our programme of training and support in Nigeria, we have witnessed empowered religious leaders effectively using media platforms to counter faith-based hate speech and narratives which lead to prejudice, extremism and conflict in states affected by the Boko Haram insurgency. In these states, tensions can be particularly high around elections, and the confidence exhibited by these religious leaders in targeting thousands of students with faith-based appeals for peaceful elections in 2015 demonstrates the value of this training.

The training of religious leaders alone however will not magically transform communities into cohesive units relegating tensions and grievances to dark corners of history. The ability to successfully sustain community-based approaches and to build resilience needs to be tested through practical action. Prepared and up-skilled religious leaders should be equipped with the tools and resources required to provide opportunities for members of different communities to interact, challenging stereotypes to remove misunderstanding that could lead to prejudice, hatred and, possibly, extremism.

This view is core to our work in Sierra Leone and Nigeria, where religious leaders who have been equipped with knowledge and skills through workshops cascade the training they receive to their congregants and community members. This training is then reinforced by collaboration across communities around causes that motivate them to seek collective benefits. In Sierra Leone, for example, our Faiths Act programme facilitates this around the prevention of malaria. Continuous positive interaction that takes place in an environment where all actors are equal improves understanding and appreciation of the 'Other' and reinforces the benefits of co-operation and peace over division and conflict.

Finally, to enable religious communities as actors, robust partnerships will need to be developed with input from multiple actors in the national and international community. Gunaratna's case study of Singapore's 'whole of society' approach highlights how governments need to work with civil society, community, and business partners to offer a 'full spectrum response' to tackle extremism. Together they can provide adequate security services to communities, drive strategic learning through empirical research, channel funding to the right initiatives, and operate on communications platforms such as the media, to influence the population.

Grim highlights the benefits of such an approach in his discussion of the role of business partnerships. Here, the policy implications of transforming the lives of people at risk of radicalisation through better business are significant. The importance of government support to incubate innovative projects that not only serve to tackle radicalisation but

prevent it, aligns with our experience in Sierra Leone, where approaches similar to our Faiths Act model of faith leader engagement have been used by the government to tackle health issues such as cholera and ebola.

As Gunaratna and Grim suggest, strategic partnerships should also develop the training and capacity of religious leaders and their communities. For this, training institutions and previously trained leaders need to be brought into partnerships. Policy makers should seek partnerships with religious training colleges and seminaries so that, through appropriate skills based training and support, future religious leaders can strengthen resilience to extremist narratives in the congregations and communities they serve. This training needs to develop understanding of global politics, strategic planning, dialogue and the use of technology.

These steps are important, as interventions need to be driven by religious leaders and their communities if they are to ensure their support and participation. This requires understanding, capacity building and effective partnerships for implementation. As Özerdem argues, external, top down intervention gives the impression of foreign imposition, affecting buy-in from communities. However, if leaders feel integral to the decision making process through the promotion of local ownership, interventions are likely to yield better results in dealing with local priorities.

Moreover, the involvement of faith communities who often have a strong sense of a duty of care to their neighbourhoods can ensure sustainable and on-going impact. Following the policy pathways outlined above builds a

supportive system of trained religious leaders. Benefits will continue to manifest in the transference of the skills, knowledge and networks they have acquired to future social and professional opportunities; an impact that will long outlive any intervention itself. This is evident from our experience in Sierra Leone, where, following their public health intervention on malaria, religious leaders, empowered through our programme, continued to engage their congregants to address other health and social inequalities in their neighbouring communities, including during the recent outbreak of ebola.

Engaging and enabling religious leaders to drive change towards moderation and cohesion has wider implications both nationally and internationally. Sustained peace within communities resilient to extremist narratives and violent activity serves as motivation to those within, who enjoy the benefits that cohesion brings and wish to keep it that way. It also serves as an inspiration to outsiders who may seek to emulate the benefits which adhering to moderation and tolerance would bring them. Up-skilling religious leaders ensures they are able to both reinforce this transformation to reconciliation and trust through practical engagement, and foster resolute determination within their communities. Ultimately, while it is important to focus on building resilient and cohesive societies, the critical part is to invest in strategies and to support actors that ensure the prevention of extremism is sustained in the long-term.

Endnotes

1. In pre-war Sierra Leone for instance, Christian and Muslim leaders were successfully mobilised by the Government and international NGOs to significantly decrease the prevalence of polio, whilst other health and social interventions have been enhanced through advocacy for behaviour and attitudinal change messaging from the pulpit.

2. T. Blair, *Religion and Geopolitics: Why it Matters,* Speech delivered at the 9/11 Memorial Museum, 6 October 2015, [http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/religion-geopolitics/commentaries/opinion/religion-and-geopolitics-why-it-matters].

3. J. Campbell, 'Nigeria: An Opportunity for Faith-Based Conflict Resolution', in D. Cere and T. Thorp, *Religion and Conflict: Responding to the Challenges*, London, Tony Blair Faith Foundation, 2014, pp. 52-57.

CONCLUSION
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PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM:
FROM DIALOGUE TO DELIVERY

*There has been great progress in the fight against extremism
in 2015. Prevention has been regularly discussed with
increasing urgency. This discussion now needs to turn into
action, write Khalid Koser and Amy E. Cunningham.*

There has been a more concerted effort towards a comprehensive response to the rising challenge of violent extremism in 2015 than previously. The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) has proliferated its activities worldwide, and the three institutions it inspired – the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), Hedayah and the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law – have taken root. President Obama hosted the White House Summit to Counter Violent Extremism, which launched a series of regional summits and concluded with the Leaders' Summit on Countering ISIL and Violent Extremism at the United Nations General Assembly. At the regional level, countering violent extremism (CVE) has been incorporated into existing and new initiatives on related issues such as peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction, for example by the African Union. At the country level, a number of states have developed national strategies on countering violent extremism, including the October 2015 release of the United Kingdom's (UK) revised counter-extremism strategy.

This second volume in the Tony Blair Faith Foundation's *Global Perspectives* series is therefore published at a critical juncture. Awareness has been raised, politicians and policy makers are mobilising, and a new sub-discipline

for research is emerging. What is now required is to translate this flurry of activity into action; to shift the needle from dialogue to delivery. For it is only through concrete results that momentum will be maintained and the cause that so many are now championing, will be achieved.

In this respect it is appropriate and important that this volume is action-oriented, in at least three ways. First, it emphasises the importance of prevention as part of a comprehensive response to violent extremism. Second, it focuses attention on three priority areas for action: the engagement of religion in the public and political sphere, education and community resilience. Of course there are other areas for action; but the existence of an evidence-base that demonstrates effectiveness and examples from around the world to learn from and build on make these obvious and immediate priorities. Third, without underestimating the challenges, the contributions to this volume chart a roadmap for policy interventions.

The importance of prevention is intuitive. During 2015 even the lexicon of policy on violent extremism has adapted, from countering violent extremism to preventing and countering violent extremism. Still, the concept of prevention has yet to be articulated in this context. There is a general consensus

that prevention lies at the opposite end of the response spectrum from military, security and intelligence approaches; that it must engage communities; and that development tools and principles are important. But there is still a lack of clarity for example about who should be the focus of preventive efforts, who is responsible for preventive efforts, and how they complement other policy responses to violent extremism.

This volume is the first substantive effort to try to answer some of these critical questions. By bringing together contributors from a range of backgrounds – combining academics, policy-makers, practitioners and religious leaders and applying a variety of disciplinary lenses – the volume begins to give meaning to the prevention concept.

For most of the contributors the priority for CVE prevention efforts is clear – it lies with young people. Prevention, by definition, requires a long-term investment, making it all the more important to work with and support future generations now. Women are also highlighted, not just because they can be victims (as well as perpetrators) of violent extremism, but also because they are often the best conduits to intercept and engage young people. Several contributors identify moderate religious leaders as important vectors for prevention: Banke Adetayo emphasises the "ability of religious leaders to engage in discourse" on sensitive topics, foster receptiveness to interventions, and act as "critical agents for transformative change."

In determining who is responsible for prevention, in different ways the contributors collectively arrive at the same conclusion: prevention is a two-way street. A top-down approach whereby preventive efforts are designed and delivered exclusively by the state or international community is unlikely to work; instead what is required is a genuine consultative process and local ownership. Examples from Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Singapore and the UK show how this can be achieved, but also how difficult it is. The model currently being applied by the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund in Bangladesh, Mali and Nigeria encourages grassroots organisations to identify preventive initiatives, and funds them to help build resilience.

Most contributors, when touching on how prevention aligns with other responses to violent extremism, acknowledge that prevention is one part of a comprehensive approach that cannot work in isolation any more than military responses can. On the other hand, several authors identify the tensions inherent in this acknowledgement, specifically that heavy-handed interventions can undermine the trust and confidence required for effective prevention.

Against the background of this substantive focus on prevention, this volume focuses our attention on three priority areas for action: engaging with religion, reforming education and strengthening community resilience.

One resounding message is that religion is part of the solution, and not just part of the problem. As Peter Welby points out, no matter how well-intentioned they might be, when civic leaders abstain from engaging theology in policy, education, and other public debate, there is a genuine concern that policies will fail to address the underlying religious ideology

that unite political, social, and economic grievances. For Usama Hasan, a deficit in public understanding of religion runs the risk of strengthening indoctrination or promoting xenophobia. For Francis Campbell it has left policy-makers unsure whether and how to engage religious actors and institutions "as vital partners and contributors to a healthy civic society." We need only to look to history for examples of how religions have mobilised for peaceful, just societies.

Education is another critical intervention, and here the authors echo the founding principles for the Tony Blair Faith Foundation. In particular Sara Savage identifies the need to increase critical thinking among pupils and build the capacity and confidence of educators. However, as Jo Malone warns, education is a powerful tool that can be used for wrong as well as right; it can just as easily be manipulated as a tool to radicalise individuals to violent extremism as to prevent radicalisation. There is a need to create safe spaces, especially in the classroom, to encourage dialogue, inquiry and exploration. For Hazel Blears, "the power of the ideology underpinning Islamist extremism must be confronted" and the best place to do so is in the safety of a classroom, under the stewardship of a confident and capable teacher. Feriha Peracha and her colleagues provide concrete examples of how systematic rote learning in Pakistan has often discouraged critical thinking and contributed towards indoctrination.

The third action area is strengthening community resilience. Alpaslan Özerdem highlights the fragility of conflict-affected societies to fall victim to extremists' agendas. The weak public institutions that remain in the wake of

conflict often create a space for violent extremists to enter and provide basic services. For prevention efforts to be successful, priority must be given to strengthening a community's capacity to resist the advances of violent extremists, as well as to survive, recover and adapt in the wake of direct shocks. To build resilience at the grassroots level and disrupt sympathy or support for violent extremism, as Rohan Gunaratna highlights, investment in the local community, especially through engagement and partnership with influential community leaders is critical. Stakeholders across all sectors of society, and at all levels, must be connected and engaged to build resilience. Brian Grim reinforces the point, noting that the business community can complement efforts by the religious community to build resilience and strengthen resolve.

The third main contribution of this volume in moving from dialogue to delivery is by posting direct policy challenges above and beyond specific policy recommendations in these three areas.

At the national level in particular, policies on violent extremism need to be more coherent – that is, to combine the various ministries and agencies that work in pertinent areas. Intra-governmental coherence is notoriously difficult to achieve, as Hazel Blears notes, but it is a challenge that needs to be overcome. Consultation with all relevant stakeholders outside government is also identified as paramount – in particular with communities, but also with civil society and religious institutions, the private sector, the media and academia. Resources and expertise needs to be mobilised across the board. Aware that unilateral responses are ineffective

against a transnational threat, the authors agree that co-ordination between states is also critical.

Policy also needs to match the pace at which violent extremists operate and adapt, as Fatima Akilu points out in her reflection on Nigeria. This is not easy given the importance of respecting human rights and the safeguards of democracy, budgetary constraints, bureaucracy and the need to balance priorities and manage trade-offs. Equally challenging for government is the need to adopt a long-term strategy. As Angela Salt notes in her Introduction,

"Prevention of extremism is not something we will achieve overnight, in a year or within an election cycle."

None of this is easy. As the contributors make clear, however, we are confronting a generational challenge. This volume raises the bar: we need to think the unthinkable, overcome the usual obstacles, and stop making excuses. It poses significant challenges: how to overcome suspicion and mistrust, balance rights and responsibilities, and ensure human rights. But it also provides a realistic roadmap for success that deserves to be taken seriously.

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