CE AR

**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
AGAINST
RADICALISATION**

TOOLKIT
MUSLIM

This toolkit is aimed at practitioners designing or preparing for interventions to counter Islamist extremism involving Muslims, with a special focus on Muslim youth. It serves a three-fold purpose. The first is to educate the practitioner on the origins of modern day Islamism and on the differences between sectarian thought. The second is on applying this knowledge in differentiating fundamentalist, violent extremist Islamism from wider political context and identifying the presence of this fundamentalism in its adherents. The third is on how to design and implement an effective intervention, focusing on the different stages of intervention.

The role of the intervening practitioner is primarily to tackle the vulnerabilities that led to the individual being radicalised in the first place. Often they have to be the ones shaping a new worldview, building trust and a relationship with the individual and helping them reintegrate back into the community.

It's important, therefore, that practitioners are not only equipped with adequate tools and resources to undertake effective programming, but also understand Islam and Islamism and the context of the ideologies they are facing amongst radicalised Muslims.

The toolkit concludes with a set of resources that can further aid the practitioner in their work. It should be seen as a first step out of a series that a practitioner should take to approach their practice with more nuance and skill.

PROJECT DETAILS

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Uppsala Universitet (UU) - Sweden

Editors:
Anastasiya Maksimchuk, Margarida Oliveira, Phaidon Vassiliou

Contributors:
Afxentis Afxentiou, Athanasia Defingou, Bianca Rusu, Célia Quico, David Ruah, Dominique Bons, Dulmaa Ochir, Francesco Perconti, George Bekiaridis, Guido Savasta, Idalina Oliveira, Jonathan Hall, Kate Strezishar, Katerina Theodoridou, Laura Arrijuria, Mário Alcântara, Miguel Real Mendes, Noemi de Luca, Omer Duzgun, Ovagem Agaidyan, Paulo Mendes Pinto, Sarah Bowman, Sotiris Themistokleous, Wassef Lemouchi, Xabisa Xala

Graphic Designer:
Rute Muchacho

Supervisor:
José Paulo Oliveira

UNIVERSIDADE LUSÓFONA

cesie · UPPSALA UNIVERSITET · PATRIR · szubjektiv értékek alapítvány · Center for Social Innovation

techsoup POLSKA · VEREIN MULTIKULTURELL · Συνεργασία Ενεργών Πολιτών · SYRIEN NE BOUGE AGISSONS · CAPRI

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CHAPTER I
ISLAM AND 'ISLAMISM'

A HISTORY OF THE PO-LITICIZATION OF ISLAM

In order to discuss the history of 'Islamism' and key motifs, it is necessary to first provide a clear definition of the term itself. Broadly, it refers to an ideological position on the spectrum between politics that follow Islamic principles and fully politicized Islamic doctrine. What must be noted and will become clear is that Islamism is not the same as Islam.

Islamism, also called political Islam, is a movement with no particular centre, leader, structure or hierarchy. As Guilian Denoeux denotes, it is a form of instrumentalisation of Islam by individuals, groups and organizations that pursue political objective. According to William Shepard, it has a power over politics, economy and way of life . It projects the image of the future relying on re-appropriated and reinvented concepts from Islam.

The word Islamism was first used in French literature of the 17th century. However, back then, it was a synonymous with Islam. Islamism as 'political Islam' as we refer to it nowadays emerged as a concept in the 19th and 20th centuries. It was fundamentally an anti-colonial, anti-imperialist movement that relied on Quranic scripture and core principles of Islam to guide its policy ambitions.

But different groups, in different contexts, with different interpretations of the Quran, meant different policy ambitions.

Just like all theological scripture, the Quran is multidimensional, and at times ambiguous: with principles of peace and justified violence intertwined together, taking precedent over each other in contradictory fashion. For a religion whose foundational principle is the submission to Allah, it also preaches the respect for all religions.

'Islamism', therefore, is defined as much by what an individual or group wants to take from Islam as it is by Islam itself.

In the 1928 Islamism as a broad political movement was mainstreamed in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood, which established itself in Egypt. Contemporary Islamist movements emerged in the 1950-1970s, with the most success in Pakistan and Iran - which both declared themselves Islamic Republics - and Islam as the state religion, or policies shaped by Sharia law, in over 20 countries globally.

Many of the postcolonial regimes in various Muslim countries were authoritarian, which relied on Islamism as a mechanism of state control, solidifying some forms of Islamism as undemocratic. Furthermore, they gained popular legitimacy through anti-Western stances, riding waves of post-colonial anger and resentment of US and European foreign policy in the Middle East. Islamist movements, at popular and policy levels, were therefore increasingly antagonistic of the West and liberal democracy.

In 1987, Hamas was founded as an offshoot of the Palestinian political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine. They formed in response to a series of incidents involving Israeli Defense Force soldiers killing Palestinian civilians. While largely politically focused for two years, Hamas launched the First Palestinian Intifada in 1988, which escalated from protests and riots to rocket attacks, stabbings and bombings over a period of five years.

During this same period, various Islamist movements around the world had been increasingly adopting terrorist tactics and

becoming more fundamentalist. Examples include Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Al Qaeda - the group later responsible for 9/11 - which was founded in Pakistan in 1988. Between 1992 and 1998 the latter were responsible for terrorist attacks in Aden (1992), New York's World Trade Center (1993), Riyadh (1995) and Nairobi (1998), all targeting US troops or civilians. From 2000 onward, in addition to the 9/11 attacks, they were responsible for tens of thousands of deaths globally in the advancement of their Islamist agenda.

These radical, terrorist Islamist groups often adopted a strategy of gaining popular support from Muslim societies that held grievances against the West, appealing to theological conservatives. Disillusioned, disempowered and idealistic youth were particularly vulnerable to terrorist recruitment strategies during this period and going forward.

BROAD POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL AMBITIONS OF ISLAMISM

One of the most important questions at stake when talking about Islamist groups is their intentions and political agenda towards the 'West'. Mozaffari (2007), for example, argues that one of the motifs that unites Islamist groups is a notion of establishing Islam as the predominant religion globally, and having policies that are at least shaped by Islamic doctrine if not actually based on Sharia law. Here Ayoob (2004) has a slightly different perspective. He emphasizes that the goal of a global, Islamic hegemony is not common to all Islamist groups.

In order to understand Islamism, there are three assumptions that need to be dispelled.

Firstly, Islamism is not monolithic. Islam is characterised by a complicated structure of sectarian divisions, sub-divisions, internal hierarchies and historical relationships. Islamism, the broad term for political movements that draw upon Islam, therefore shares the same complicated characteristic. Different groups have different goals, ambitions, histories and methods. There is no one centre to Islamism, and local context is an essential factor to always consider.

The second assumption is that Islamism, even forms that advocate for the predominance of Islam as a global religion, is always violent. The history of the movement's different manifestations in the 20th century shows the variety of approaches and characteristics Islamist members used and followed. Some of them were indeed violent; others were peaceful.

Third is the assumption that the close relationship between politics and religion is unique to Islamist ideology. Various politico-theological movements have emerged in the 20th Century, including Zionism, Hindu nationalism, Buddhist movements and others. Colonial movements were previously driven by Christian religio-political expansionism.

When it comes to Islamism, it is more characteristic of a broad political ideology than it is a theological system. This is because rather than be prescriptive of faith doctrines, its ambitions are fundamentally reactive and political. It's a policy framework that positions itself against 'Western' hegemony and power structures.

Islamist movements tend to have both global and local dimensions. At the global level, they can advocate for Islamic predomination, hegemonic shift, the institutionalisation of Sharia law or other policies. But locally their issues are more practical and driven by the needs of their support base: liberation or secession, resource access, the redress of past grievances,

improved infrastructure, resource access, education, the redistribution of wealth and others.

Islamism can therefore be divided into national and international categories. National Islamist movements include those in Kashmir, Palestine, Lebanon and Chechnya. However, all of them have policies related to the international context even if there is no practical method of implementing them.

International movements include Al-Qaeda, the Muslim Brotherhood, Iranian Khomeinism, and Pakistani Mawdudi movements (which include the Jamaat-e-Islami affiliates in Pakistan and Afghanistan). These groups not only aim to liberate Muslim populations and territory claims in neighbouring states, but also seek to spread Islam and their version of Islamism to other states. International ambitions include establishing an Islamic global hegemony.

It is hard to overemphasize the danger of the most radical of some of these Islamist groups. The acceptance and advocacy of brutal methods by some to advance their political aims has been the cause of much suffering. Terrorism, assassination, hostage-taking, guerrilla actions, enslavement, genocides, forced rape, child indoctrination are among those methods employed by certain Islamist groups in the past. The most infamous and brutal being the

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant/Syria (ISIL/ISIS).

That being said, Ayoob (2004) emphasizes that the majority of Islamic groups prefer peaceful methods and are able to find agreements with the other organizations and even governments without appealing to these types of methods. Violent action is still rather the exception then the rule for the Islamic groups.

CHAPTER II
SECTARIANISM IN ISLAM AND ISLAMISM

SUNNI AND SHIA ISLAM

The two oldest confessional branches of Islam are Sunni and Shi`a. The division between the two dates back to the 7th century, after the death of the Prophet Muhammad [PBUH]. Disagreements surrounding the successorship to the Prophet caused a fracture among the nascent religion's adherents.

The faction that would give rise to Sunni notions of Islam claimed there was no rightful heir to Muhammad, and so insisted on an elected individual named Abu Bakr, a close friend and advisor of Muhammad, to take the place. The other group, which would eventually lead to Shi`a Islam, believed that Allah had designated Ali, the Prophet`s cousin and son-in-law, to continue to lead Muhammed's people and spread the message of Islam.

The question of who should take his place as the leader of the Muslim community known as the Ummah is an important contributing factor to the divisions we see today, because fundamentally it was a question on the nature of Islam as a political entity, rather than merely religious one.

Centuries of division, mistrust, grievances, politics and wars have caused the two sects to be further divided along ethnic, political, class and national lines in various contexts. For example, Iran, a Shi'a nation is in a series of proxy conflicts with its regional rival, Saudi Arabia, a predominantly Sunni nation. Shi'as in Saudi Arabia are notoriously marginalised, as they are in some other Sunni-dominant nations such as Pakistan.

Islamism exists within the both Sunni and Shi`a branches. Their conflicting positions on contemporary global, regional and local issues, fuel the tensions between Islamist movements and escalate violence.

This is despite the fact that when Islamism was born, it was fundamentally "pan-Islamist". That is, the anti-colonial nature of the struggle was such that it sought to unite Shi'a and Sunni sects of Islam under the banner of liberation from empires, Christian global dominance and capitalist hegemony. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is one example of a pan-Islamist movement, despite being predominantly Sunni.

Sectarian division and Islamism steadily became more and more potent in the years leading up to 2000. The two major escalations occurred in 2001-2005 during the US and coalition invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and after the 2011 Arab Springs, in which time ISIS emerged. Since then, proxy wars in Yemen, Syria, Libya and Afghanistan have been fuelled by sectarian, international interference among other factors.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WAHHABISM AND SALAFISM

Like all religions across history, Sunni Islam grew in complexity over time, undergoing sectarian splits, adaptations, and contentions over the proper understanding of the Quran and the 'Sunnah' - the body of legal, traditional, social and religious norms that draw upon the Quran and the words and deeds of Mohammad (the 'hadith').

Within this milieu, Salafism emerged. One of Salafism's core tenets - from which it draws its name - is the belief that society should be restructured to emulate a highly mythologized 'golden era' of Islam as it existed during the rule

of the 'Rightly Guided, also known as Rashidun or Salaf. This was the period of the first four successors of Mohammed, who ruled the Islamic Ummah during the first 30 years after the prophet's death.

As Ceylan and Kiefer (2013) noted, the period in question became a central theme of Islam's "cultural memory," serving as a pivot of collective identity, reinforced through rituals and idealizing narratives that create a sense of stability and coherence. Rooted in its strong reference to the era of the Rashidun, the modern version of Salafism as an ideology originates in the late 19th century, but it has its roots in the writings of Medieval Muslim scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya (1262-1328), and later of the influential theologian Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792).

Ibn Taymiyya lived during the time of the Mongol invasion of the Eastern parts of the Islamic empire. For the first time, large parts of the Islamic world lived under non-Islamic rule. Ibn Taymiyya's teachings fundamentally revolved around the need to resist the perceived threat on the Islamic way of life as governed by religious law, or sharia. Hence he advocated for a renovation of Islam based on a return to its core tenets—its fundamentals, as he understood them.

Importantly, and influential to the future of salafi ideology, Ibn Taymiyya released a legal edict (fatwa) proclaiming that rulers who claimed to be Muslims but failed to apply sharia law (as was the case with the Mongols) were to be considered as kaffir, and thus fought against (Berger, 2010).

He furthermore advocated for Islamic theology, which guided policies and social norms, should be based exclusively on the revelations contained in the Quran and the Sunnah, while

refraining from questioning any matters falling beyond their scope. In other words, Ibn Taymiyya believed that governance and social organization should strictly reflect those of the earliest era of Islam when its prophet was alive. Because of this inflexible attitude towards religion and society, Ibn Taymiyya is generally considered the precursor of modern Islamic fundamentalism.

Living in the Arab peninsula in the 18th century, Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab perceived a threat similar to the one experienced by Ibn Taymiyya five centuries earlier. Rather than the rule of the conquering Mongols, however, the threat to the Islam's sacred way of life came from trends stemming from Europe. Colonialism and the emergence of 'globalisation' meant culture and societal norms began to homogenize, around what would become known as modernity.

Al-Wahhab (from where get the term 'Wahhabism') began to express a deep concern and opposition to practices that he considered to be manifestations of paganism at odds with Islam's monotheistic doctrine, such as the worship of tombs, rocks, and trees, as well as the anthropomorphization of the idea of God. As a reaction to what he saw as the corruption of the Islamic faith, al-Wahhab advocated a return to literalist puritanism—not a reformation of the faith, but a needed effort to cleanse the faith from ever-multiplying strands of thought that were leading his contemporaries astray.

In practice, this meant chiefly that 'true' Muslims were to reject all legal edicts developed in the preceding ten centuries, while sticking only to those who most closely reflected the social relationships as they existed during the time of Mohammed. Central to Wahhabist thought are three different conceptions of the Unity of God (tawhid):

he first one is the absolutist claim of the one and only God, who as such is the only legitimate source of spiritual, social and legal authority. Hence no state, hegemonic system nor person has the right to mandate laws that go counter to sharia.

Secondly, the Unity of God demands that only He ought to be worshipped. Consequently, those worshipping anything else are infidels and may be put to death for attacking the Unity of God.

And lastly, the third Wahhabist understanding of tawhid implies that the unity of God must be reflected in the unity of Muslims among each-other, and hence as a divine incentive for Muslims to overcome the differences between them.

While initially opposed by considerable swaths of the general population and by most other Islamic theologians, al-Wahhab eventually garnered the support of the local emir Ibn Sa'ud (d. 1765), succeeding in spreading his teachings to large parts of the Arab peninsula. Although not adopted into the mainstream of Sunni theological and political thought, the fact that the Sa'ud family ruled over Islam's holiest cities, Mecca and Medina, substantially contributed to the persistence and establishment of al-Wahhab's thought, as well as to the fact that to-date it maintains its stronghold in Saudi Arabia, where it is the state's official religion. Not lastly because of the extraordinary economic backing it receives from oil money, however, Wahhabism is influential well beyond Saudi Arabia, having taken hold in many mosques and universities across the globe, and exerting covert and overt influence on Western countries' internal affairs (Wilson, 2017).

CHAPTER III
SECTARIANISM IN ISLAM AND ISLAMISM

FUNDAMENTALISM

Among these, salafi trends advocating for the legitimacy and necessity of a sustained holy war (jihad) against unbelievers (kuffar) became prevalent in their association with Sunni Islamic fundamentalism.

Rather than describing specific belief systems in themselves, 'fundamentalism' refers to "a particular way of being religious" (Jones, 2010, p. 216). As a term, it was coined in the early 1920s by Protestant Evangelicals in the USA, committed to return to the fundamentals of their Christian faith as a way to counter what they saw as the decadence brought about by the materialism and rationalism of modernity. Associated to a particularly inflexible mind-set and literalist attitude to scripture, the term 'fundamentalism' progressively gained in popularity to describe the dogmatic and reactionary nature of intransigent religious movements across the world. Although it has gained particular prominence with regards to Islamic radicalism since the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, the features of fundamentalism are not specific to a certain religion, but rather reflect a religiously-grounded, reactionary political outlook intertwined with a particular mind-set. As Euben explains:

Fundamentalism refers to contemporary religio-political movements that aim to establish the primacy of scriptural authority as a defence against the moral, political, and social decay that supposedly define the modern world. It is also often used in everyday language to designate inflexible and dogmatic beliefs of any kind, religious or otherwise. (Euben, 2015, p. 48)

Similarly, Schmid (2011, p. 636) defines fundamentalism as "[a]n ideology or movement of religious-political 'true believers' who claim to be in possession of unchallengeable truths derived from revealed divine and/or sacred texts and consider themselves superior to others, who, in turn, are often characterized as infidels or heretics." As a consequence of their conviction in the absolute truths of their religion as found in its sacred scriptures, fundamentalists tend to view the world in Manichean terms, starkly differentiating between those who uphold God's 'true' way, and those who, by rejecting His message, are inimical to God's will, and thus must be either converted or destroyed.

In conjunction with other scholars, Strozier and Boyd studied the underlying psychology of fundamentalism, elaborating a model of what they call "the fundamentalist mind-set." As they explain, the fundamentalist mind-set possesses a number of distinct characteristics that form a cohesive construct. Such characteristics include "dualistic thinking; paranoia and rage in a group context; an apocalyptic orientation that incorporates distinct perspectives on time, death, and violence; a relationship to charismatic leadership; and a totalized conversion experience" (Strozier & Boyd, 2010, p. 11). Those elements overlap and interact closely with one-another: dogmatic black-and-white thinking splits the world into good and bad elements, the latter of which are blamed for the failure of the nostalgic idea of primordial Unity to materialize.

How the specific version of Paradise ought to be brought about is contingent on an apocalyptic event that shall purify this world in order to make space for the next—Armaged-

don, a plague, or some other divinely mandated catastrophe. Time is both compressed and stretched out: while the mythologized past that fundamentalists long for is treated as a proximate reality, the strategic time plan involved often points to a future horizon that is left undefined and pushed ever forward. In this context, death is treated as a pathway from mortal finitude to eternity, and violence at great personal cost as a way to prove one's commitment to the faith, and thus one's worthiness in the eyes of God. Charismatic leaders serve as authoritative relays of God's word, interpreting His message so as to make it applicable to day-to-day demands. And finally, the adoption of a fundamentalist mindset is commonly associated with having undergone profound, emotionally intense religious experiences, often in the context of group-related rituals that convey the fundamentalist worldview.

SALAFI AND WAHHABI ISLAMISM

The resurgence of Salafist, fundamentalist Islamism came about after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War. For the first time, Islam was without a consistent, centralised political entity. Influenced by the emergence of competing secular ideologies such as fascism and communism, and in the context of failing colonial projects in the Middle East, purist strands of Sunni Islamic thought acquired a more ideological bent.

The Pakistani scholar Abul A'la Maududi (1903-1979) is largely credited with contributing substantially to the development of 20th-century Islamist thought, especially with regards to his reinterpretation of jahiliyya, which refers to "a period of ignorance, heathendom and polytheism (shirk) before man

came to know about the conclusive revelation of God's fundamental oneness and His commandments" (Hartung, 2014, p. 62). As such, jahiliyya is seen as in opposition to Islam, and associated with the unbelievers' refusal to adopt the moral principles of Islam. Living under British colonial rule, Mawdudi saw the waging of jihad against jahiliyya as a legitimate means to ensure the re-establishment of life under Islamic law.

The birth of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt is contemporary to Mawdudi, and its most notable founding fathers, namely Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949) and Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), were influenced by Mawdudi's ideas. Qutb's Milestones (2002 [1964]) is widely considered to be seminal in morphing "classical" Salafism into modern jihadi-Salafism (Baehr, 2009).

Qutb sought to counteract the perceived disruption of Islam's purity by the dominance of the West in science, the economy, and warfare. Correspondingly, he argued for a return to scripture as a way to reinstate the ideal community as it existed in Medina during the time of Mohammed and his earliest successors.

Importantly, and unlike the Wahhabi-oriented strands linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, the brand of jihadi Salafism associated with the Muslim Brotherhood takes issue predominantly with the perceived corruption and misguidedness of Arab leaders who fail to implement sharia law, and prefers reformist means over violent ones.

This doesn't mean that the Muslim Brotherhood rejected violence outright, as attested by Qutb's creation in 1965 of a militant wing that engaged in jihad against the Egyptian ruling class. Rather, it believes that the path towards the radical restoration of society leads

through the existing institutions, rather than in overt opposition to them.

The short-lived term of Mohamed Morsi as democratically elected president of Egypt illustrated this strategy. Another prominent example of the political strategy of the Muslim Brotherhood to progressively mould society in accordance with ultra-conservative Islamic doctrine is the rule of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who backtracked on many of the Western-friendly transformations propelled in his time by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938), and currently has financial links to Hamas in the Palestinian Territories, as well as to a variety of jihadi groups in Syria and Iraq.

While Qutb and the Muslim Brotherhood focused on the 'near enemy' of 'hypocritical' Arab leaders who endorsed Islam only nominally but failed to live up to the demands of sharia, the interpretation of jihad put forward by Abdullah Azzam (1941-1989) broadened its scope, shifting the priority from the 'near enemy' to the 'faraway enemy', understood as the military and economic influence of non-Muslim countries in Muslim affairs. One of the mentors of Osama bin Laden (1957-2011), Azzam created the first international jihadist movement in Afghanistan to fight against the Russians, which eventually became known as al-Qaeda.

In his most influential fatwa, called "The Defense of Muslim Lands–the Most Important of Individual Obligations" (1987), Azzam asserted that jihad against foreign invaders is a personal duty for every Muslim. Russia, the USA, and Israel were specially to blame for the dire state of Muslim nations around the world, and had thus to be fought head-on, mostly through the use of guerrilla tactics wherever they infringed into Islamic territory.

Taking up the strategic developments of Abu Musab al-Suri (b. 1958), the "architect of modern jihad" (Lia, 2014), Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri (b. 1951) further extended the scope of jihad, seeking not the establishment of an Islamic proto-community in Afghanistan from where to establish a global Caliphate, as Azzam intended, but instead calling upon Muslims to seek out Islam's enemies and fight them in their own countries. Bin Laden's rhetoric draws heavily on a narrative that represents Muslims as victims of a worldwide Western-Jewish conspiracy spearheaded by the USA and Israel, referred to as 'crusaders', whose goal it is to dismember the Muslim Ummah by fragmenting it into innumerable pieces, thereby making it easier to control by foreign powers.

Based on the notion of tawhid, he justified offensive jihad as a means to counter the threat posed to the Unity of God by the influence of democratic and secular systems, which are seen as illegitimate since they are based on laws made by men rather than by God (bin Laden, 2005). What is important to note at this stage is the rationale upon which offensive jihad is justified not merely as a reaction to military aggression, but as a response to challenges to the idea of tawhid itself. In other words, it is the existence of unbelievers and of systems of government and social organization other than sharia in and of themselves that is interpreted as an aggressive act against which a violent reaction is warranted.

By engaging in terrorist attacks on foreign soil, the strategy devised by bin Laden and al-Suri sought to provoke a retaliation whose ultimate aim was the pouring of vast resources by the target countries, leading to protracted foreign wars and the ensuing demoralization, coupled with an economic "bleeding out" of the West. The attacks of Sep-

tember 11th, 2001 are a case in point: employing modest resources and causing a number of casualties that, albeit tragic, bore no comparison with those of a full-out armed conflict, the USA and its allies were drawn into an ill-named and ill informed "war on terror" that cost trillions of US dollars and caused no shortage of political and social tensions within and between Western countries.

After the military crackdown on al-Qaeda in the aftermath of 9/11, the organization dissolved much of its hierarchical structures, choosing instead to function mainly as a decentralised "base" for the dissemination of its brand of jihadi-salafism. The new geopolitical context elicited a number of strategic adaptations, chief among them those devised by an author under the pseudonym Abu Bakr Naji.

In his tellingly titled "The Management of Savagery" (2006 [2004]), Naji elaborated on bin Laden's call to "bleed out the enemy," devising new strategies to establish territories of Islamic sharia rule. Among them, he points to the importance of expanding the internet propaganda effort in order to win over the hearts and minds of Muslims worldwide for the jihadi-salafist cause. By undermining the stability of Muslim countries, Naji sought to bring about chaos and disorder, so that jihadi-salafist movements could attain power.

Furthermore, by perpetrating multiple and unpredictable attacks, Naji sought to elicit a reaction of the USA and its allies, pushing them to overextend their security policy in such a way that it will eventually drain them economically and exhaust them morally.

As mentioned, the propaganda aspect of terrorist attacks is of chief importance for Naji's strategy: while strikes against the enemy must consist of small and medium attacks, more

spectacular attacks have the goal of drawing the attention of potential recruits, as well as that of deepening the rift between Muslims and non-Muslims.

The Islamic State (ISIS/ISIL) was a prime example of the application of Naji's principles: by taking advantage of the instability caused by US intervention and by the sectarian tensions within Iraq and Syria, the jihadi-salafist group filled the power vacuum and used it to introduce strict sharia rule. The carefully produced, gory videos of executions and suicide attacks capitalized on their shock value, making sure that they would be widely circulated online, sparking the interest of impressionable recruits drawn to the idea of unbridled violence for the sake of a higher good (Stern & Berger, 2015).

Updating strategic concerns to the world of internet and social media, Naji, drawing on al-Suri, also puts forward the notion that terrorist attacks ought to be carried out preferably by "lone wolves"—either isolated individuals radicalized through internet propaganda, or independent terrorist cells with no direct superiors or material support, who autonomously plan and carry out terrorist acts based on free-floating information available in the internet.

Whether online or offline, privileging chaos or radical institutional reform in combination with militant wings, targeting the 'close enemy' at home or the 'faraway enemy' abroad, however, the ultimate aim of jihadi Salafism remains very much the same, i.e. the ultimate establishment of a worldwide caliphate governed by sharia law. And as detailed above, the blueprint for this ideal state is a retrospective Utopia in the shape of the idealized original Islamic community as it is thought to have existed in Medina between 622 and about 661 CE.

The driving narratives of Salafism in general, and of jihadi-salafism in particular, revolve heavily around a worldview that portrays Muslims as the victims of a global "crusade" spearheaded by US-American and Jewish interests, which corrupts the ideal integrity of the Muslim Ummah. Aided by hypocritical and corrupt Arab leaders who embrace democratic and secular values—and hence, the law of men—over the God-mandated sharia, this conceited effort to undermine the purity of the Islamic faith ought to be countered by forceful means.

Central to this view lies the notion of tawhid, which holds up the Unity of God as the lens through which to interpret society and the actions of the people within it. Taken as the supreme and only legitimate authority over human affairs, the Word of God as dictated to Mohammed between 610-632 CE, together with the actions and sayings of the Prophet as collected in the corpus of authoritative traditions (hadith) constitutes the one and only criterion to evaluate people's moral character and the legitimacy of the state. Any deviation from the literal guidance provided by the Quran and the Sunnah is interpreted as a challenge to God's authority, and thus as a hostile act that demands retaliation.

CHAPTER IV
IDENTIFYING ISLAMIST EXTREMISM: SYMBOLS AND NARRATIVES

FUNDAMENTALISM

Identifying Islamist extremism can be a challenging task, since fundamentalist religiosity can be confused and overlap with religious zealotry or rigour. A key difference in this regard is that fundamentalism opposes religion as it has become, advocating a return to its original, pure state; while religious rigour endorses the coexistence of the religious faith and the church (Berger, 2010). This clarification aside, jihadi Salafism draws on distinctive understandings of theological principles and other terms that permeate its narrative.

The term Ummah refers to the supra-national Muslim community, or the "universal tribe" which unites all Muslims (Jackson, 2015) established by Mohammed when he unified the different tribes of Medina under his lead.

In Jihadi-Salafist discourse the Ummah is portrayed as fragmented, victimized, humiliated, and purged of its cohesive religious spirit.

Great emphasis is made on determining whether someone is a 'true' Muslim or an unbeliever (kafir). While adherents of different faiths are in the latter category by definition, a common practice of Salafists is the excommunication of people who identify as Muslims for not practicing their faith correctly, or doing so only in appearance but without underlying conviction.

Salafist thinkers including bin Laden of al-Qaeda, and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of the Islamic State, were proponents of "takfiri Islam"

because of their propensity to relinquish the status of Muslim from anyone not subscribing to their particular doctrine.

As a rule, the insistence on meticulously referring to the Sunnah in order to assess situations, moral judgments, and practical courses of action is a consistent feature of the fundamentalist mind-set of Jihadi-Salafism. It is an ideology committed on translating literal interpretations of scripture into reality.

The concept of jihad is controversial and debated both within Islamic circles and among non-Muslims. In its broad interpretation, jihad is taken to mean "struggle" and applies to almost all efforts made by a Muslim to organize his or her social life in accordance with God's guidance (Kelsay, 2015). However, Berger (2010) notes that up until the late 19th century it was a rather uncontroversial understanding that jihad referred to military engagement for the sake of Islam.

Jihadi-Salafism not only went back to its original meaning, but elevated it to a status akin to that of Islam's "five pillars": waging armed jihad is a crucial tenet of faith. While more moderate forms of Islam relativize the applicability of armed jihad with a number of caveats and specifications about necessary conditions and potential restrictions, modern-day Jihadi-Salafism has largely adopted it as a persistent and uncompromising obligation.

Jihad for these groups is the utmost demonstration of faith and self-sacrifice (in its most extreme form, as suicide bombing). There is a low threshold for its legitimate implemen-

tation against broad groups of targets that may include civilians or even - as demonstrated by IS's suicide-bombing of three hotels in Amman - other Sunni Muslims, if a rationale that benefits the greater cause can be found.

Common narratives we can therefore identify among radicalised Muslims, who advocate for a Jihadi-Salafist notion of Islamism include:

• *The split of humanity between believers and infidels;*
• *The absolutist rule of a divine law that actively rejects man-made legal systems and modes of social organization;*
• *The expression of humiliation experienced by the Muslim Ummah;*
• *Blame laid on a Jewish-US-American-led conspiracy to corrupt and fragment the Muslim world;*
• *A sacred duty associated with violent jihad;*
• *A wish to return to the mythologized Golden Age of early Islam*

Keeping in mind the elements of this worldview is necessary to identify Jihadi-Salafist narratives, both online and in the course of day-to-day interactions.

IS propaganda draws upon these same narratives, promoting a sense of shared identity among those who understand the jargon, as well as providing the text with a sense of religious legitimacy and authenticity—an aura of sacredness.

The words employed often carry a strong positive or negative emotional connotation that seek to convey the group's Manichean worldview: frequent references to the Ummah insist on a positive sense of belonging and identity, while juxtaposing it with references to inimical 'others', deemed apostates or infidels, whose representation is charged with negative emotion.

Words that may indicate or help in identification both online and offline include:

Al-Dawlah al-Islamiyah	Islamic State	*Bay'ah / Bayat*	Loyalty Pledge
Dar al-Harb	Islam's enemies	*Jahiliyya*	Ignorance
Jihad	(Armed) Struggle	*Jinnah*	Paradise
Kafir / kuffar	Infidels	*Khalifah*	Caliphate
Munafiq	Half-believers	*Murtad*	Apostates
Mushrik	Idol worshipper	*Salabiya*	Christian Crusade
Shaheed	Martyr	*Takfir*	Ex-communication

In terms of symbols, the black flag of ISIS is easily the most recognisable. Another is the hand gesture involving a raised index finger, signifying tawhid (the oneness of God) and the rejection of governments not ruling by sharia law. Weapons and the glorification of martyrdom are also meant to entice prospective recruits, arguably by offering a way to live out ideas of fearless and ruthless masculinity. This latter aspect is also represented through the depiction of animals considered strong and powerful, such as lions or horses. In line with the core belief structure of Jihadi-Salafism, however, it is interesting that, while war, brutality and victimhood all figure prominently in IS's propaganda narrative, ideas relating to Utopia receive most of the attention. In the shape of the attainment of a once-lost ideal Muslim community, the feelings of care and community associated with the tenet that gives Salafism its name also seem to constitute the bulk of its propaganda appeal.

CHAPTER V
PRACTITIONERS: STAGES OF INTERVENTION

STAGE 1: PRE-INTERVENTION

• Learn about Islam, Islamism, its histories and the rationale that drives Muslim radicalisation: challenge assumptions and stereotypes.

When working within vulnerable communities which may have victims of religious and ethnic discrimination, civil society organisations must ensure that behaviours and attitudes related to discrimination are neither amplified, nor encouraged. For this reason, there is a need to avoid hasty generalizations or scapegoating that negatively represent the religious communities with whom we work.

Practitioners at all levels should have at least a nominal understanding of Islam and Islamism, which should include not only theological foundations but also historical and geo-political ones. It is important that those involved in the intervention are trained to recognise stereotypes and biases they and others hold around Islam, Islamism and Muslims – as well as of the diverse cultures, ethnicities, sects and complex societal structures within the Muslim world.

Assumptions and stereotypes are dangerous when intervening at the individual level. How various cultural influences, such as the media or political discourse, may have already shaped an individual's belief should not be reinforced by the intervening practitioner. There is significant risk that bringing these stereotypes or assumptions into conversation could lead to further radicalisation or the individual withdrawing from participation.

The biggest stereotype that should be challenged is the idea that Muslims, Islam or Islamism have a proclivity or tend toward violence. A major assumption is that the individuals who you are engaging are automatically perpetrators or should bear moral guilt, instead of looking at them as victims/survivors with complex relationships to mainstream society, religious doctrine and cultural heritage.

• Understanding and Drawing upon Islamist doctrine:

Former Islamist extremists, who have a wealth of knowledge about Islamism and ideological motivators of extremism should inform practitioners on how to approach interventions.

Without a background understanding of Islamism and its ideologies, practitioners will be lost. But even with that understanding, without guidance from those that have been through the process of Islamic radicalisation, much of the nuance of messaging and counselling will be lost.

Either bringing in former extremists as credible messengers or relying on their counsel can greatly improve intervention programming. If these aren't available, at the very least practitioners should proactively consume the wealth of literature and shared first hand experiences that are online.

When designing these programmes, build in support and partnership mechanisms between formers and practitioners through mentorship and training.

Former extremists, some of whom are intervention providers themselves, combined with experts in intervention programmes, to-

gether enable a far greater opportunity for navigating the complex dynamics of Islamist radicalisation.

• Mapping key relationships and influences:

Islamist extremist networks, given the much greater need for covertness and subterfuge, as well as because of the single-minded nature of their ideological fundamentalism, are concentrated and closed.

However, they exist in wider community networks involving their families, authority figures and community leaders, peers and religious teachers. These individuals and this wider network may be sympathetic to helping that individual exit the radicalisation process, and can therefore help practitioners.

It is therefore important to first map the complex relationships and dynamics that surround an individual and their community: identifying all the social, environmental and systems at play in an individual's life. By understanding the community context in which an individual finds themselves, it can also be additionally informative of from where they have developed their perceptions and who has influenced them positively and negatively.

• Design a multifaceted intervention programme that deals with the drivers of Islamist radicalisation:

Any interventions should draw upon different disciplines and expertise. That is, they should be as holistic as possible: tackling multiple push and pull factors simultaneously, rather than rely on a single area. This way they can address more vulnerabilities, better ensuring they get as much support as possible.

Examples could be providing theological education, mentorship, peer support or youth activities, social care and counselling. Plenty of intervention programmes draw upon this principle, including the Channel programme in the UK, which itself draws upon lessons from gang disengagement and public health approaches to violence.

A further benefit is that different disciplines and practitioners will look at the issue from different perspectives, thus enabling the challenging of each other's implicit biases and stereotypes.

STAGE 2: INTERVENTION

•Rebuilding lost trust:

When conducting interventions, these should be focused on building relationships between the practitioner and the individual, with trust and respect at the centre.

Approaches could include:

• *Background Research*

Perhaps by mapping the community (see above) and speaking to the most influential figures (family, friends, community leaders, religious teachers) in the individual's life. If there is already a case involving the individual, then social workers' and police reports could be invaluable. It is important, however, not to let research, others' perceptions or an individual's history shape the intervention. At most, they should help guide discussion and provide useful insight.

• *Encourage openness and guarantee discretion*

Reasons for radicalisation may include grievances, instances of grooming, experiences of discrimination or abuse, histories of domestic violence, radicalising family members and others. These experiences and reasons should be shared in good faith, knowing that

they will not (a) implicate the person or those being mentioned, or (b) be dismissed as irrelevant. If the individual feels like they are not respected or the information may leave the room, they may withdraw from engagement. Genuine curiosity, patience and inclusive language are important.

• *Choosing a safe and neutral space*

The space chosen for the intervention is incredibly important. If the individual feels threatened or insecure in a space, they may not share information fully or engage in constructive dialogue. Think about, for example, how the following spaces might influence the quality of a discussion: police interview room, masjid, youth centre, family home, NGO headquarters, social services office.

• *Person-centred intervention*

Encourage the individual to lead the conversation in order to empower them and give them agency. Non-verbal language that lets them know that they are being listened-to and important is critical. This includes opening up the body without taking up space and facing the individual in a non-dominant and non-threatening way. Reflect the verbal cues used by them too, to know that the practitioner is relating to them. Academic language or theorizing can seem superior or irrelevant

• *Actively listen*

Related to the above is the need to actively listen, which not only means actually engaging with what the individual is communicating but letting them know that they are being listened to.

• *Patience and long-term thinking*

The process of intervention spans multiple meetings, regressions and progressions. Building relationships – the first crucial step – takes time, and then helping an individual see another worldview itself is a difficult process. It's important that the intervention is not framed as being a one-off process, and that the individual knows the practitioner is not going anywhere otherwise they may feel used, abandoned or not cared-for.

• **Provide the individual with a purpose and belonging:**

One key driver of Islamist extremism, or rather extremism in general, is the fulfilment of our universal human need for belonging and a sense of purpose. Extremist groups thrive on youth whose needs for belonging and purpose are unmet, because they can provide them a fraternity or sorority, an ideological goal, resonate with them on a cultural level and answer their questions. Practitioners should aim to do the same when implementing intervention programming.

Solutions should focus on the needs that the individual brings up, such as helping them seek employment if that's a major concern for them, or taking them away from toxic relationships.

STAGE 3: POST-INTERVENTION

• **Sustaining progress made in interventions:**

When looking to draw down from an intervention, it's important to know whether and what impact has been had, and whether it's time to draw down. Prematurely withdrawing support for an individual could be more damaging and undermine the entire process, if they feel abandoned or used. An evaluation framework with success indicators should be used as a benchmarking when disengaging. Furthermore, a series of criteria should be drawn up on when intervention should start up again.

Maintaining contact can be an appropriate and recommended strategy but shouldn't be seen as obligatory. Keeping touch with the individual may help them feel like they have a safety net and are cared-for, but could also send mixed signals about the practitioners' role in the individual's life – they are not supposed to be there as permanent mentors or guardians, and other figures such as family members, youth or social workers and others should step in to fulfil those roles.

The dangers and risks of informal contact with potentially radicalised or vulnerable youth are great. An additional danger of maintaining contact is the perception by the wider community of surveillance.

As far as possible, this type of aftercare support should be built into the programming so it has formal oversight, and professional boundaries should be maintained at all times. The best intervention programmes will have follow-up frameworks and action plans integrated.

• Applying lessons in future interventions:
here is a wealth of resources available online developed by other practitioners and shared. It is important that when implementing interventions that lessons are collected, formalised and contribute internally to future programming. Furthermore, they should be published and available for others to learn from, in order to facilitate continuously evolving and improving practice.

It is important on a wider level that practitioners from different backgrounds and contexts are feeding into best practice on an on-going basis, so that key lessons and contexts are understood.

CHAPTER VI
RESOURCES FOR INTER-VENTION PROGRAMMING

The Terra Toolkit

https://terratoolkit.eu/

A manual for first line practitioners working with youth, replete with tips and strategies to understand radicalisation amongst different groups of individuals.

The VEO Compendium

https://veocompendium.org/

The compendium provides guidance to interventions in the context of prisons and probation service provision. It examines risk assessment, rehabilitation, reintegration and recidivism.

RAN Exit Academy

https://cutt.ly/phVPgaZ

A guide on building relationships between practitioners and participants, using former extremists and establishing effective conversation strategies.

DARE Project

http://www.dare-h2020.org/

An H2020 project with resources and research that aims to explore the effects of radicalisation on society and why youth across religions and contexts may be vulnerable.

'De-radicalisation' Scientific insights for Policy (Report)

https://cutt.ly/RhVPkpe

An in-depth report mainly focused on communicating results of de-radicalisation efforts, but with lots of useful data for practitioners.

The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) Tool Database

https://cutt.ly/5hVPzeq

A series of excellent resources ranging from highlighting the role of families in CVE to good practices of de-radicalisation and reintegration.

The UNODC University Module Series on Counter Terrorism

https://cutt.ly/dhVPEaJ

While not specifically actionable for practitioners, the series is useful because it provides a more overarching snapshot of legal and political frameworks of Counter terrorism which can help to contextualise radicalisation and de-radicalisation efforts.

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