FULL-SCALE FRAMEWORK FOR COUNTERING ISLAMIC EXTREMISM IN LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES
1.1. EUROPEAN VALUES THINK-TANK

The European Values Think-Tank is a non-governmental policy institute defending liberal democracy. Our vision is that of a free, safe and prosperous Czech Republic within Central Europe that is an integral part of the West. We help to face aggressive regimes, radicalisation within the society, the spread of authoritarian tendencies and extremist ideologies including Islamism.

Our work is based on individual donors. Use the form at: http://www.europeanvalues.net/o-nas/support-us/, or send your donation directly to our transparent account: CZ69 2010 0000 0022 0125 8162.

www.europeanvalues.net info@evropskehodnoty.cz www.facebook.com/Evropskehodnoty

1.2. INTERNAL SECURITY PROGRAM

The Internal Security Program of the European Values Think-Tank was created in reaction to worrying phenomena, such as the proliferation of Islamic extremism, mass migration and problems with the integration of Muslim populations. The focus of the Internal Security Program is on counter-extremism and counter-terrorism, tougher migration policy and more effective integration policy.

Editor
• Jan Stehlík, Coordinator and Analyst of the Internal Security Program, European Values Think-Tank

Contributors
• Radko Hokovský, Founder and Chairman of the Executive Board, Head of the Internal Security Program, European Values Think-Tank
• Jiří Blažek, Analyst of the Internal Security Program, European Values Think-Tank
• Petr Jan Vinš, Analyst of the Internal Security Program, European Values Think-Tank
• Radka Famfulová, Contributor to the Internal Security Program, European Values Think-Tank
• Mario Nicolini, Advisor, Anton Tunega Foundation
• Aleksandra Rybinska, Warsaw Institute
• Bianka Speidl, Senior Researcher, Migration Research Institute
• Abdessamad Belhaj, Researcher, Migration Research Institute
• Rebecca Schönénbach, Chairwoman, Veto! Für den Rechtsstaat Foundation
• Jan Wójcik, Member of the Board, European Issues Institute

Reviewers
• Shmuel Bar, Founder and CEO, IntuView, Israel
• Roberta Bonazzi, Founder and President, European Foundation for Democracy, Belgium
• Olivier Guitta, Managing Director, GlobalStrat, United Kingdom
• Usama Hasan, Head of Islamic Studies, Quilliam Foundation, United Kingdom
• Arndt Künnecke, Professor, Federal University of Applied Administrative Sciences, Germany
• Miroslav Mareš, Professor in the Department of Political Science, Masaryk University; Member of the Editorial Board of the EU Radicalisation Awareness Network, Czech Republic
• Alexander Ritzmann, Fellow, Brandenburg Institute for Society and Security; Co-Chair of the Communication and Narratives Working Group of the EU Radicalisation Awareness Network, Germany
• Robin Simcox, Margaret Thatcher Fellow, Heritage Foundation, United States
• Lorenzo Vidino, Director, Program on Extremism, George Washington University, United States
• Members of security forces and public institutions

The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the Internal Security Program and do not necessarily reflect views and opinions of the contributors and reviewers.

Image copyright:
page 1 - By Jamie Kennedy [CC BY 2.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0)], via Wikimedia Commons; page 11 - By Gareth Davies from walthamstow, london, Uk [CC BY 2.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0)], via Wikimedia Commons; page 18 - By Collectorofinsignia [CC BY-SA 3.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0)], from Wikimedia Commons
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The challenge of countering Islamic extremism in liberal democracies continues to vex policy makers, the security community and the wider public. The purpose of this document is to offer policy makers in liberal democracies a comprehensive but triaged set of recommendations to build a full-scale response to Islamic extremism and minimise its influence.

The term ‘Islamic extremism’ (ISLEX) is defined as any set of ideas based on an interpretation of Islam and aimed at the removal of fundamental principles of the democratic rule of law and the suppression of basic human rights. This definition is consciously subjective from the point of view of the liberal democratic state.

Actors engaging in Islamic extremist behaviour are disaggregated by the type of activity into those who practice political violence, those who engage in non-violent political activism, and those who engage in non-political activities violating basic human rights of other individuals. This gives rise to three categories:

I. Jihadism: political violence (e.g. terrorist attacks, violent insurgencies)

II. Islamism: non-violent political activism (e.g. extremist political parties, parallel legal systems)

III. Islamic Fundamentalism: non-political extremist activities (e.g. domestic violence)

Each of the three categories has its circles of hard-liners, followers and sympathisers, with varying ratios from one actor to another.

While the exact process of advancement of Islamic extremism is always dependent on context and the particular group in question, common traits of the advancement in Western European countries are identified. These include activities which are already ongoing, and those activities which are only envisioned. The resulting model may be broken down into four broad stages:

I. Infiltration: Nascent efforts by Islamic extremists to penetrate a territory where they hitherto wielded little or no influence.

II. Expansion: Islamic extremists succeed in establishing permanent organisational structures and turn to maximising potential for further growth.

III. Aggression: Islamic extremist groups attain sufficient popularity to consolidate into broader networks or movements, reach financial self-sustainability and diversify their activities beyond proselytization to accomplish their strategic objectives.

IV. Domination: Islamic extremist movements conduct large-scale and protracted activities to replace the existing order with one based on the ideological tenets of Islamic extremism.

In response to the threat of Islamic extremism, and with a view to improving the existing measures against it, a comprehensive model of countering Islamic extremism is proposed. The model consists of three pillars, with each pillar serving a different purpose and containing different measures. Together, the three pillars target the entire dynamic of Islamic extremist proliferation and provide a comprehensive model for elimination of Islamic extremism in any EU state. The three pillars are:

I. Prevention and Remedy: measures to increase resilience against Islamic extremism and engage radicalised individuals (e.g. counter-narratives, exit programmes)

II. Law Enforcement: measures against hard-line Islamic extremists (e.g. arrests, kinetic operations)

III. Countering Extremist Ideology: measures to minimise the influence of the ideological tenets of Islamic extremism (e.g. training of imams, content management)

The definition and conceptualisation of the threat and the formulation of appropriate responses to it give rise to a set of policy recommendations. The core recommendations are primarily intended for governments, while measure-specific recommendations are intended for relevant institutions and stakeholders.

When combined, the recommendations stemming from the three pillars undercut the sources, proliferators and reception of Islamic extremism and hamper its long-term survival in the territory at hand.
INTRODUCTION

The challenge of countering Islamic extremism in liberal democracies continues to vex policy makers, the security community and the wider public. The purpose of this document is to offer policy makers in liberal democracies a comprehensive but triaged set of recommendations to build a full-scale response to Islamic extremism and minimise its influence.

The policy paper is not a contribution to the ongoing academic debate. Rather, it builds on the findings of this debate to offer specific, practical policy prescriptions with a view to improving the current situation regarding the advancement of Islamic extremism.

While the proposed framework may be adapted and applied in liberal democracies in other parts of the world, it is primarily designed for the institutional environment of EU Member States. As a result, the policy recommendations stemming from the document are tailored to fit into the ongoing work of policy makers engaged in countering Islamic extremism on the national and European levels within the EU. The framework may be used to improve existing national strategies against Islamic extremism in Western European countries or build such strategies in countries where they are absent.

The proposed full-scale framework consists of a definition and conceptualisation of Islamic extremism, an analysis of advancement of Islamic extremist actors in Western Europe and a categorisation of proposed counter-measures based on a model inspired by public health practice. The framework is complemented by background research of existing measures against Islamic extremism in select EU countries.

As a whole, the framework is designed to minimise the influence of Islamic extremist individuals and groups, both violent and non-violent, in the territory of any EU Member State. The intention lies strictly in the perimeter of counter-extremism and the document does not venture into wider discussions about the place of Islam in Europe, immigration from Muslim-majority countries and integration of European Muslim populations.

The need for constructing an effective system of countering Islamic extremism was identified after conducting a review of the existing expert debate and evaluating the existing policy measures against Islamic extremism in the EU. This led to the conclusion that the existing measures do not address the entirety of the threat and a comprehensive system of countering Islamic extremism is necessary. The dominant approaches typically respond to the issue as part of the ‘Countering Violent Extremism’ (CVE) rubric, which offers an expanded menu of options for dealing with those extremists who embraced violent means to achieve their strategic objectives. However, very little attention is paid to addressing non-violent forms of extremism and the inherent ideological roots of Islamic extremism in particular. ¹ This is contrary to the ever-growth expert view that the primary causal factor behind Islamic extremism is ideological, and that non-violent Islamic extremism is inherently linked to violent extremism and fosters a climate where violent Islamic extremism can flourish.

Viewing the issue through the prism of ‘radicalisation towards violent extremism’ is also limiting. This approach, particularly popular in the European debate, emphasises the processes which precede an individual’s embrace of extremism. However, the dominant focus is again on violent manifestations of extremism, while non-violent extremism is addressed only marginally. Moreover, the process of radicalisation is only one part of a wider problem of extremism, which also includes the activities of extremist groups as they strive to reach their objectives and the impact of such activities. A sole focus on radicalisation may limit the future growth of extremist groups, but does not adequately address their current activities.

The framework proposed in this publication rectifies this inadequacy by addressing Islamic extremism in its entirety, including in its non-violent manifestations. Action is proposed at three fronts simultaneously to increase the resilience of populations at risk of radicalisation, combat the activities of hard-line Islamic extremists and limit the influence of the Islamic extremist ideology.

This approach is unique when compared to existing models, which typically fall short of going beyond the narrow focus on counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation measures. These are part of the proposed system, but also included are other measures which are identified as necessary components of an effective and holistic system of countering Islamic extremism. The

proposed new system thus goes above and beyond existing approaches to tackle Islamic extremism.

The first chapter provides a definition and conceptualisation of Islamic extremism and an analysis of advancement of Islamic extremist actors in Western Europe. The chapter approaches Islamic extremism as a whole, including both its violent and non-violent manifestations. Subsequently, the second chapter describes the newly proposed counter-extremism model. The model is inspired by established public health practice of countering infectious diseases. This analogy is not original – it has already been used in previous research. However, the proposed model goes beyond preventive measures and so expands on existing links between public health practice and counter-extremism. Finally, the third chapter lists the recommendations which stem from the proposed model.
Jihadism centralises the idea of violent jihad and derives from the belief that armed struggle should precede any non-violent political attempts to establish Islamic rule.
THE THREAT OF ISLAMIC EXTREMISM

For the purpose of this publication, the term ‘extremism’ is defined as any set of ideas aimed at the removal of fundamental principles of the democratic rule of law and the suppression of basic human rights.

The term ‘Islamic extremism’ (ISLEX) is defined as any set of ideas based on an interpretation of Islam and aimed at the removal of fundamental principles of the democratic rule of law and the suppression of basic human rights.¹

The above definition of Islamic extremism is consciously subjective from the point of view of the liberal democratic state. Two key characteristics must be met for an individual or group to be considered Islamic extremist: 1) they seek to remove fundamental principles of the democratic rule of law or suppress basic human rights, and 2) this desire stems from a set of ideas based on an interpretation of Islam.

The definition leaves out specific ideological characteristics of contemporary Islamic extremist groups, such as the rejection of secular social and political order, belief in Muslim supremacy, rejection of subjection of Muslims to non-Islamic political and legal order and rejection of legal, social and political developments not grounded in the life and deeds of the Prophet Mohammad. These and other tenets are promoted by various Islamic extremist groups to varying degrees. However, what makes any group or individual ‘extremist’ in the liberal democratic legal tradition are not necessarily these specific characteristics but the desire to remove fundamental principles of the democratic rule of law or suppress basic human rights, as they are well defined in constitutional legal traditions of liberal democratic states. Where this desire is derived from an interpretation of Islam, the group or individual falls into the category of ‘Islamic extremism’.

Some researchers and practitioners prefer the use of the term ‘Islamist extremism’ to describe the entire spectrum of this form of extremism. However, the term ‘Islamic extremism’ does not attempt to avoid the admittedly difficult debate over the role of religion in sparking extremist movements. Rather, it merely describes those actors which are a) extremist and b) inspired by an interpretation of Islam, however erroneous this interpretation may be in the eyes of religious scholars. The term ‘Islamic extremism’ is thus deemed more accurate in describing the entire spectrum of movements under discussion.

It should be emphasised that acting against Islamic extremists does not equate to acting against Muslims merely because of their religion, much like acting against right-wing or left-wing extremists does not equate to acting against those in favour of right-wing or left-wing policies. The key determinant for action from the point of view of liberal democracies is whether a particular actor engages in extremist behaviour.

1.3. Conceptualisation of Islamic Extremism

Islamic extremism has a long history of development and appears in a variety of forms. It is difficult to ascertain specific ideological positions which would be shared by the entire spectrum of Islamic extremist individuals and actors. However, Islamic extremist actors may be disaggregated by the type of activity into those who practice political violence, those who engage in non-violent political activism, and those who engage in non-political activities violating basic human rights of other individuals.

¹ The definition of the term ‘extremism’ differs among states. The UK Counter-Extremism Strategy provides the following definition of extremism: ‘Extremism is the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremist.’ Home Office (2015): Counter-Extremism Strategy; London: Home Office. Germany has a working definition of ‘political extremism’ as “characterized by the fact that it rejects the democratic constitutional state and seeks to eliminate or restrict its democratic or constitutional component” (“Der politische Extremismus zeichnet sich dadurch aus, dass er den demokratischen Verfassungstaat ablehnt und beseitigen oder ihn einschränken will – die demokratische Komponente und/oder die konstitutionelle.”). Federal Agency for Civic Education: “Extremismus”; Accessed at http://www.bpb.de/nachschlagen/lexika/handwoerterbuch-politisches-system/202019/extremismus. For a more detailed discussion about the definition of ‘extremism’, see Schmid, Alex (2014): „Violent and Non-Violent Extremism: Two Sides of the Same Coin?“; ICCT – The Hague; Accessed at https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Violent-Non-Violent-Extremism-May-2014.pdf.
This gives rise to three categories:

I. Jihadism: political violence (e.g. terrorist attacks, violent insurgencies)

II. Islamism: non-violent political activism (e.g. extremist political parties, parallel legal systems)

III. Islamic Fundamentalism: non-political extremist activities (e.g. domestic violence)

Each of the three categories has its circles of hard-liners, followers and sympathisers, with varying ratios from one actor to another. At the same time, the objectives of specific actors differ considerably, particularly at the operational and tactical levels. However, actors in all three categories are classified as Islamic extremists because their ideas and practices are derived from an interpretation of Islam and aimed, wholly or in part, at the removal of fundamental principles of the democratic rule of law and the suppression of basic human rights. Let us examine each category in turn.

1.3.1. Jihadism: Political Violence

Jihadism, as the name suggests, centralises the idea of violent jihad and derives from the belief that armed struggle should precede any non-violent political attempts to establish Islamic rule. Typical in Jihadist literature is the idea that armed struggle is the most important duty of every Muslim but is neglected by both non-violent Islamists (who seek out the establishment of Islamic rule by non-violent political means) and non-political Islamic fundamentalists (who emphasise da'wa and the theological aspects of Islam). Jihadist ideologues motivate their followers to commit acts of violence against Muslims who are perceived as ‘apostates’ and against infidels; not only a means to a political end (the establishment of a Sharia-based political order), but as a personal duty justified by recourse to theology.

The contemporary Jihadist tradition was popularised by Muhammad Abdussalam Faraj in his pamphlet The Neglected Duty, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi in his This is Our Aqeedah, Abu Basir al-Tartusi, Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir, Abu Musab al-Suri and other theoreticians.

Their ideas were put into practice by a variety of individuals, such as the long-time spiritual leader of the Taliban Mullah Omar, the leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the American-Yemeni lecturer Anwar al-Awlaki and the Al-Qaeda leaders Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Most recently, the Jihadist tradition was continued and expanded under the banner of the Islamic State. It bears noting that some historical figures, such as the 15th century warrior and writer Abu Zakarraya al-Dimashiqi al-Dumyati (Ibn Nuhaas), could also be considered part of the Jihadist tradition.

A violent Islamic extremist tradition also exists in Shia Islam, most notably in connection to Iran and the Islamic revolution led by Ruhollah Khomeini. Khomeini’s approach is quite distinct compared to the above ideologues, but nevertheless satisfies the key definitional components of Islamic extremism. Both Khomeini’s movement and the Iranian regime make an extensive use of political violence in support of their goals.

The theories of Jihadism not only spawned numerous violent organisations over time, but also served as a violent catalyst for certain Islamic fundamentalists and Islamists, who adopted violent Jihad as one of the possible ways to impose their ideas and goals. Supporters of Jihadist doctrines thus present a significant risk to national security.

1.3.2. Islamism: Non-Violent Political Activism

Islamism includes theories and practices based on the desire to implant principles of Islamic religious law into common law or secular law and thus effectively turn the politics of a particular state into Islamic politics. Islamist actors typically perceive Islam not just as a religion, but as a practical guide for reordering and directing society in ways which de facto suppress individual rights and freedoms in the name of establishing divine rule. Typically, the ultimate goal of Islamism is to establish a political order based on Islamic principles and laws, without any secular or non-Islamic interferences.

The precise tenets and activities of Islamist movements vary across regions and nations. In the Arab world, prominent Islamist thinkers include the founder of the
Islamism presents a totalitarian ideology where Islam is the dominant element not only in politics, but also in every sphere and every aspect of human life. For this reason, Islamist individuals and organisations present a clear risk to public order. Where their teachings delve into undermining the security of the liberal democratic order, they also present a risk to national security.

1.3.3. Islamic Fundamentalism: Non-Political Activities

Islamic fundamentalists typically share many of the theological and ideological characteristics of their Islamist counter-parts, but do not engage in political activities to attain them. The Islamic fundamentalist interpretation of Islam is typically based on a literal understanding of Islamic sources, a rejection of other interpretations of the faith and a practical application of perceived Islamic prescriptions irrespective of their compatibility with the principles of individual liberty, human dignity and equality before the law as conceptualised in liberal democratic constitutional systems.

This leads some Islamic fundamentalist actors to engage in activities which fit the definition of extremism, albeit outside of the political arena. For example, domestic violence and abuse of women justified by recourse to Islamic scripture, or promotion of hatred of a group of people with recourse to Quranic verses. Also included in this category are groups which, while rejecting the use of violence and staying out of politics, nevertheless reject Western liberal democracy and engage in behaviour which has a detrimental effect on social cohesion in an open society.

Islamic fundamentalist individuals and organisations often reject the use of violence 23 and may prefer religious activities to political activism. However, through their propagation of anti-democratic and anti-pluralist tenets of Islamic extremism and their legitimisation in the public and religious discourse, Islamic fundamentalists undermine the legitimacy of liberal democracy and provide a fertile soil for the growth of Islamism and Jihadism. Islamic fundamentalism thus poses a risk to public order.

The relationship between the three categories is illustrated in a pyramidal scheme (see Fig. 1). Islamic

References:

16 For a more expansive overview of Islamism, see Akbarzadeh, Shahram ed. (2012): From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism; Westport, CT: Praeger.
17 Many of the above figures operated in illiberal and non-democratic contexts. Nevertheless, their teachings, which continue to be propagated by Islamic extremists, are in clear opposition to fundamental principles of liberal democracy.
18 Islamic fundamentalists undermine the legitimacy of liberal democracy and provide a fertile soil for the growth of Islamism and Jihadism. Islamic fundamentalism thus poses a risk to public order.
22 For example, the Muslim Brotherhood. See Vidino, Lorenzo (2010): The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West; New York: Columbia University Press.
23 For a discussion about such groups in Salafism, see Wiktorowicz, Quintan (2006): “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement”; Studies in Conflict & Terrorism; Vol. 29, pp. 207–239.
24 Although not always. Some Islamic fundamentalists may call for the use of non-political violence, e.g. domestic violence against children or women.
fundamentalism builds on Islamic discourse to present an interpretation of Islam that is incompatible with individual liberty, human dignity and equality before the law. Islamism applies the interpretation presented by Islamic fundamentalists in political activities. Jihadism applies Islamic extremist principles using political violence. Jihadism thus presents the most visible part of a wider threat. It should be noted that Fig. 1 presents a disaggregation of Islamic extremism by activity type, not the typical path of radicalisation.

Individuals and groups in all three of the above categories – Jihadism, Islamism and Islamic Fundamentalism – frame their activities as legitimate practices dictated by pious adherence to the religion of Islam. While Islamic extremists draw on the same religion as the wider Muslim population, they do not represent Islam as a whole, which is practiced by millions of non-extremist European citizens in agreement with liberal democratic principles.

The diversity of non-extremist expressions of Islam is illustrated here through the bottom category of tolerant Islam. This category includes any interpretation of Islam that tolerates the existence of alternative interpretations as well as other religions and world views and is practiced in line with the principles of individual liberty, human dignity and equality before the law as conceptualised in liberal democratic constitutional systems. Tolerant European Muslims require particular protection of their safety and freedom of conscience, as they often become the target of both Islamic extremists (who seek to recruit them to their cause or else attack them as heretics) and anti-Muslim extremists (who falsely view all Muslims as potential terrorists). This necessity is even more acute in the case of former Islamic extremists, who face threats from their former associates.

1.4. Advancement of Islamic Extremist Actors in Western Europe

Taken as a whole, Islamic extremism presents one of the most serious threats to liberal democracy. Its key ideological tenets are inherently opposed to fundamental liberal democratic principles and its adherents have demonstrated they possess the capacity to undermine – both directly and indirectly – the foundations of the democratic rule of law.

But how do Islamic extremists gain influence in any given territory? While the exact process of advancement of Islamic extremism is always dependent on context and the particular group in question, common traits of

---

**Figure 1: Conceptualisation of Islamic Extremism**

*Differentiation of Type of Extremism by Primary Actor Activity*
The term ‘Islamic extremism’ (ISLEX) is defined as any set of ideas based on an interpretation of Islam and aimed at the removal of fundamental principles of the democratic rule of law and the suppression of basic human rights.
the advancement in liberal democracies may be identified. These are illustrated in a model (See Fig. 2) and include those activities which are already ongoing, and those activities which are envisioned.

The envisioned activities of Islamic extremists are identified through a study of eminent theoretical and prescriptive writings underpinning Jihadism, Islamism and Islamic fundamentalism as described in the previous section, and by reflection of real-world activities of Islamic extremists in third countries. The resulting model covers the entire process of advancement of Islamic extremist actors, from the commencement of small initiatives to the formation of structured groups and the build-up of broad movements with considerable influence.

It should be noted that this model does not portray the process of individual radicalisation toward adopting Islamic extremism. This process has been described in detail elsewhere. For the same reason, the model does not deal with individual-level factors conducive to radicalisation, such as psychological problems or personal grievances. These factors are relevant in turning single individuals towards extremism and violence, but do not by themselves cause the growth and proliferation of massive, ideologically-driven movements. The model constructed here depicts common activities of Islamic extremist groups after they have been radicalised, irrespective of the individual factors which drove them to extremism.

At the same time, the model does not illustrate the application of counter-measures, which vary wildly in different contexts and limit the advancement of Islamic extremist actors. Instead, proliferation of Islamic extremism is presented here as it applies when insufficient counter-measures are adopted.

Finally, the model does not account for the activities of actors who legitimise and aid, directly or indirectly, the proliferation of Islamic extremism without themselves conducting Islamic extremist activities. The influence of such actors is strongly context-dependent and varies wildly.

The model may be broken down into four broad stages: infiltration, expansion, aggression and domination.

1.4.1. Infiltration

The first stage, infiltration, contains nascent efforts by Islamic extremists to penetrate a territory where they hitherto wielded little or no influence.

During the infiltration stage, the pool of supporters of Islamic extremism tends to be minimal, and the Islamic extremists themselves do not possess the power to affect the dominant religious or political direction of the country. Instead, they focus on setting up a permanent presence, attracting a small core of hard-line supporters to fulfill basic tasks and finding a sustainable source of financing. Such activities are often limited to the work of single individuals or small groups.

There are various ways in which outside sources of Islamic extremism may infiltrate into a new territory. Common tactics include the arrival of foreign religious authorities who subscribe to Islamic extremist tenets, the provision of outside financial support for nascent activities of domestic Islamic extremists or the dissemination of Islamic extremist propaganda, both online and offline.

Outside sources of Islamic extremism may originate with individuals, private organisations or even whole states. Saudi Arabia and Saudi-backed organisations are considered to be one of the most active supporters of Islamic fundamentalist organizations. While the

---


26 For example, financing from countries in the Middle East and North Africa proved crucial in setting up early activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, one of the world’s largest Islamist organisations, in Europe. See Johnson, Ian (2008): ‘The Brotherhood’s Westward Expansion’; Hudson Institute; Accessed at https://www.hudson.org/research/49853-the-brotherhood-s-westward-expansion.


contemporary Saudi position on the matter may undergo a transition spearheaded by Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, previous decades saw Saudi money reach a number of Islamic extremist groups. The Saudi-backed Muslim World League (MWL) 28 and World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) are considered to be global promoters of the Wahhabist branch of Sunni Islam. 29

Another country linked to Islamic extremism is Qatar, which has a long history of leniency towards Islamic fundamentalist, Islamist, and at times even Jihadist actors. 30 The country provides shelter to Egyptian preacher Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood who has a long history of spreading his ideas in the EU, both directly and using third parties. Al-Qaradawi has a long track record of Islamic extremist statements and regularly calls for violent jihad and suicide attacks against Israel and Western targets in the Middle East. 31 Also sheltered in Doha is Bilal Philips, a Jamaican-born Canadian preacher who espouses Islamic extremist views and has been accused of inspiring acts of terrorism in the West. 32

Meanwhile, the Shia populations are faced with a particular brand of Islamic extremism promoted by Iran. A well-known proxy arm of the Islamic Republic of Iran is Hezbollah. The movement is based in Lebanon but has been active in proliferating Islamic extremism internationally, including in Europe. 33 While many activities of Hezbollah may be classified as Islamist, the organisation also dabbles in jihadism. For example, it appears to have been involved in the 2017 attacks on Israeli tourists in Bulgaria. 34

as one of the main supporters of Islamic extremism in the United Kingdom. Similar claims were raised by Susanne Schröter of Frankfurter Research Center for Global Islam. See Deutsche Welle (2017): “Saudi Arabia exports extremism to many countries - including Germany, study says”; Accessed at http://www.dw.com/en/saudi-arabia-exports-extremism-to-many-countries-including-germany-study-says/a-39618920. According to a leaked intelligence report, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar were supporting extremist Islamic groups in Germany. These extremist Islamic groups were mostly involved in missionary activities (da’wa), funding mosques, schools and radical preachers. See Independent (2016): “Saudi Arabia and Gulf states ‘support Islamic extremism in Germany’, intelligence report finds”; Accessed at https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/saudi-arabia-gulf-states-fund-islamic-extremism-germany-


Bilal Philips has been banned or deported from a number of countries including Australia, Bangladesh, Denmark, Kenya, Germany, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, and the United States. For a profile, see Counter-Extremism Project: Bilal Philips; Accessed at https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/bilal-


13
1.4.2. Expansion

The expansion stage begins when Islamic extremists succeed in establishing permanent organisational structures and turn to maximising potential for further growth. This involves the proliferation of Islamic extremist content to attract new followers and supporters.

In the early stages of advancement in a given territory, Islamic extremists typically rely on outside support from third countries. Upon the establishment of permanent domestic networks and organisations, outside support becomes less crucial over time as the domestic cells tend towards self-sustainability.

In their efforts to attract new followers, Islamic extremists target a broad range of populations in any given area. However, some target audiences are key. These are:

- Muslim populations
- Youth
- Immigrant and refugee populations
- Prison populations
- Socially excluded populations

The wider public is also targeted, typically through broader propaganda strategies.

Islamic extremists also routinely attempt to introduce their voice in the mainstream political, religious and social debate. Misusing the religious freedoms of European societies, Islamic extremist groups typically portray their views of Islam and society as mainstream – and therefore acceptable and even respectable. When unchallenged, this leads to a legitimization of Islamic extremist norms, particularly within groups susceptible to radicalisation.

The potential for Islamic extremists to grow in number is amplified by several push factors which may complement the ideological appeal of Islamic extremism. First, some recipients of Islamic extremist propaganda may be drawn closer to extremism as a result of individual psychological or cognitive problems. Second, the presence of anti-system attitudes in society may drive large sectors of the general public to embrace extremist views, making them more susceptible to the anti-establishment messaging of Islamic extremism. Third, anti-Muslim extremism may increase the susceptibility of domestic Muslim populations to messaging which portrays Islamic extremist groups as righteous advocates for victimised Muslims. These complementary push factors contribute to the wider issue of susceptibility of target audiences to Islamic extremist propaganda. This dynamic is particularly acute when Islamic extremist groups are better funded and better organised than non-extremist Islamic groups and are thus able to position themselves as the dominant representatives for Islam as a whole.

Without effective counter-measures, the proselytization of Islamic extremist groups stimulates growth in the number of Islamic extremists and their sympathisers. Islamic extremist organisations tending towards Islamic fundamentalism typically enjoy relatively greater operational freedom than organisations tending towards Islamism, especially when the latter are open about their objective to create parallel legal systems based on strict adherence to Islamic religious law. The least common are organisations tending towards Jihadism, which prefer armed combat in the name of Islam to the laborious and often inconclusive political and religious struggle. However, it should be noted that even notable minority support for Islamic extremism enables operational efficiency and the preparation of large-scale campaigns in support of Islamic extremist objectives.

---

36 This is particularly noticeable in illiberal, non-democratic settings with low popular legitimacy. For example, Islamist groups in Turkey became primary anti-system actors following the military coup in 1980. See Altinordu, Ateş (2016), „The Political Incorporation of Anti-System Religious Parties: the Case of Turkish Political Islam (1994–2011)“; Qualitative Sociology, Vol. 39, No. 2, pp. 147–171. Similarly, the Muslim Brotherhood gained popularity in Egypt as a loud critic of the Mubarak regime. See Albrecht, Holger (2013): Raging Against the Machine: Political Opposition Under Authoritarianism in Egypt; New York: Syracuse University Press.
37 For a detailed discussion about reciprocal radicalisation, see Ebner, Julia (2017): The Rage; London: I.B. Tauris.
Figure 2: Advancement of Islamic Extremist Actors in Western Europe: Common Traits Across Specific Actors and Countries
1.4.3. Aggression

The aggression stage begins when Islamic extremist groups attain sufficient popularity to consolidate into broader networks or movements, reach financial self-sustainability and diversify their activities beyond proselytization to accomplish their strategic objectives. The specific activities of groups which began to consolidate and engage in aggression differ by the type of group in question.

Jihadist groups typically become more visible at this stage, as they now possess the influence and resources to engage in ever-larger violent campaigns – both in the given region and abroad. Hate crimes, violent crimes and terrorist attacks are perpetrated and raise the public profile of the Jihadist threat significantly.

Fortunately, the opportunities for Jihadist groups to consolidate and engage in aggression is severely limited in the EU through considerable counter-terrorism architectures of its Member States. While some cases exist of semi-organised groups, Jihadism is typically proliferated in Western liberal democracies through decentralised, horizontal networks which are more difficult to police but may be less effective in delivering strategic objectives. As a result of the significant constraints imposed on their activities, European Jihadists either resort to limited attacks against soft targets or leave EU territory to join established Jihadist organisations in third countries.

Islamic fundamentalist groups at this stage of advancement engage in normalising Islamic extremist norms among their target audiences. Such norms are typically enforced informally through social pressure, and eventually imposed through parallel legal structures. Without counter-measures, the Islamic fundamentalist interpretation of Islam threatens to become widely accepted – both by Muslims and non-Muslims – as the standard and correct interpretation. This aids the further growth of Islamic extremism, but also of anti-Muslim extremism, as non-Muslim populations begin to associate Islam with extremist narratives.

When multiple Islamic extremist groups enter the aggression stage, they may decide to cooperate or compete. There are cases of either scenario occurring.
If the aggressive activities of Islamic extremist movements are left to fester, they may escalate to the point where they begin to affect the rule of law and basic state functions. Skirmishes between the Islamic extremist movement and the anti-Muslim extremist scene become more common and inter-cultural violence becomes the norm rather than the exception.\textsuperscript{47}

1.4.4. Domination

The final stage of advancement is domination. This stage contains large-scale and protracted activities by Islamic extremist movements to replace the existing order with one based on the ideological tenets of Islamic extremism.

Experience from third countries offers ample examples of Islamic extremist movements gaining sufficient influence to destabilise the existing order, emerging victorious in the final power struggle and taking full control over the given society. The rise of the Islamic State in parts of Iraq and Syria exemplifies a Jihadist organisation reaching the domination stage.\textsuperscript{48}

An example of an Islamist takeover is the 1979 revolution in Iran. The Islamic fundamentalist movement led by Rudollah Khomeini developed Islamist tendencies during the 1970s, eclipsed other political factions and eventually assumed absolute control over both state and society.\textsuperscript{49} To this day, the Islamic Republic of Iran enforces Islamic extremist norms at home and proliferates them abroad.\textsuperscript{50}

In some countries, Islamist groups seek to affect the existing order through the democratic process. For example, the Muslim Brotherhood achieved an unprecedented victory in the 2012 presidential election in Egypt.\textsuperscript{51} Islamist parties also gained ground in recent years in Morocco\textsuperscript{52}, Indonesia\textsuperscript{53}, Malaysia\textsuperscript{54} and Bangladesh\textsuperscript{55}.

This stage has never been reached by any Islamic extremist group in the EU. However, Islamic extremist movements that reached the domination stage in third countries may conduct activities in the EU. For example, the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs, which delivers weekly sermons and religious advice to hundreds of mosques in the EU, adopted a number of Islamic fundamentalist norms since the Justice and Development Party came to power in Turkey in 2002.\textsuperscript{56}

The threat of foreign Islamic extremist influence is clearly visible in the case of Jihadist organisations such as the Islamic State, which poses a serious threat in the EU\textsuperscript{57} despite not having a permanent presence in any EU country. The Islamic State also inspired a number of terrorist attacks in Western Europe without the direct involvement of its operatives.\textsuperscript{58}

It is therefore necessary to institute sufficient counter-measures not only against the potential of domestic groups to grow, but also against the foreign influence of Islamic extremist actors in third countries. EU Member States have implemented a number of safeguards to prevent Islamic extremist groups from advancing their proliferation agendas. As a result, no Islamic extremist actor has yet advanced into the late aggression stage, let alone the domination stage. The existing measures against Islamic extremism in selected EU countries are discussed in the following chapter.
Efforts to prevent Islamic extremism must be complemented with proactive measures against **hard-line Islamic extremists** who proliferate the ideology behind Islamic extremism to advance their agenda and are not willing to cooperate with prevention practitioners.
APPLICATION OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH MODEL TO COUNTERING ISLAMIC EXTREMISM

In response to the threat of Islamic extremism described above, and with a view to improving the existing measures against it, a comprehensive model of countering Islamic extremism is proposed.

Some attempts were already made to connect the dots and build a counter-extremism model based on public health practices. However, the existing approaches are either limited in their scope (typically by only focusing on violent extremism), overly general in their application, or focused on non-EU countries. In contrast, the approach presented in this paper is a tightly integrated model of counter-extremism which includes not only preventive but also law enforcement measures aimed at eliminating Islamic extremism from EU Member States.

The proposed model is inspired by the public health practice of countering diseases on three fronts simultaneously: by increasing resilience of vulnerable populations and curing those who were infected, by controlling the spreading of the disease (in the case of vector-borne diseases by limiting the disease-spreading vector) and by reducing the severity of the disease pathogen itself.

A three-pillar model was constructed, with each pillar serving a different purpose and containing different measures. Together, the three pillars target the whole dynamic of Islamic extremist proliferation and provide a comprehensive model for elimination of Islamic extremism in any EU state. The three pillars are:

I. Prevention and Remedy: measures to increase resilience against Islamic extremism and engage radicalised individuals (e.g. counter-narratives, exit programmes)

II. Law Enforcement: measures against hard-line Islamic extremists (e.g. arrests, kinetic operations)

---

III. Countering Extremist Ideology: measures to minimise the influence of the ideological tenets of Islamic extremism (e.g. training of imams, content management)

The entire model is illustrated in fig. 3. Let us discuss each pillar in turn.

2.1.1. Prevention and Remedy

The Prevention and Remedy pillar is inspired by the public health practice of increasing resilience to disease among susceptible populations. The overall key distinguishing feature of the Prevention and Remedy pillar is that the measures contained in this pillar are used with the voluntary consent of the targeted group or individual. In cases where treatment is rejected or not applicable – for example, when the subject refuses to cooperate or engages in violent activity – tools contained in the Law Enforcement pillar must be utilised instead.

Prevention and Remedy work is tackled in three tiers: primary, secondary, and tertiary.

**Primary prevention** of Islamic extremism seeks to increase resilience against extremism before radicalisation occurs. Primary prevention strategies target entire communities of people to address social, political, economic and other group factors behind the proliferation of Islamic extremism. The end goal of primary prevention strategies is to ‘inoculate’ the wider public against extremism to the extent that the potential pool of new recruits is brought to a minimum.

**Secondary prevention** addresses on-setting radicalisation. It may involve practices such as engaging with youth deemed to be at risk of radicalisation, counter-messaging programs directed toward individuals and groups targeted by Islamic extremists and training of Muslim populations to recognise and reject the activities of Islamic extremists. The end goal of secondary prevention is to remove the identified risk of exposure to Islamic extremism and thus hinder radicalisation.

**Tertiary prevention** engages radicalised groups and individuals. It includes measures such as exit programmes for disillusioned extremists and de-radicalisation programmes for convinced extremists. The end goal is to minimise the number of Islamic extremists through de-radicalisation. Crucially, tertiary prevention is only directed at those who are willing to

---

**Figure 3: Prevention and Remedy of Islamic Extremism**

*Differentiation of Measures by Target Group*
cooperate. Those who are not willing to cooperate must be dealt with using law enforcement measures.

Secondary and tertiary prevention tiers address, among other things, the individual-level factors behind radicalisation towards Islamic extremism. This includes personal grievances resulting from socio-economic disaffection or experience with racism and anti-Muslim hatred which may drive some individuals to the hands of extremist recruiters.

There is a wide array of non-state actors who might take part in the prevention and remedy of Islamic extremism. Media and news outlets play a role in countering extremist narratives. Schools and universities are positioned to identify signs of radicalisation in their pupils and students. Civil society and community organisations can likewise aid in detecting ongoing radicalisation. Tolerant Muslim organisations play a similar role, in addition to their opportunity to directly counter the ideology of Islamic extremism with interpretations of Islam which are compatible with liberal democracy. Former Islamic extremists are particularly useful in countering attempts to proliferate the ideology of Islamic extremism and gain new recruits. The state should work with all of above sectors of society to effectively prevent and remedy radicalisation efforts.

The three-tiered distinction of Prevention and Remedy measures (illustrated in Fig. 4 together with Law Enforcement measures, which are to be used against non-cooperative groups and individuals) is useful because it conceptualises diverse prevention measures into an effective overall strategy of extremism prevention.

At the same time, the distinction illustrates the level of threat in any given state. Those states where Islamic extremism is relatively widespread must divert substantial resources to law enforcement and tertiary prevention, while states without substantial presence of Islamic extremists can focus on secondary and primary prevention strategies.

In general, states should aim to work downward in the pyramid, minimising cases in the upper levels as a priority. Of course, attention must be paid to all three prevention levels at the same time, but the end goal is to effectively counter and minimise the influence of Islamic extremism in a given territory and thus reduce the need for tertiary and secondary prevention.

2.1.2. Law Enforcement Pillar

The law enforcement pillar is inspired by the public health practice of controlling vectors which allow the disease to spread. Similarly, efforts to prevent Islamic extremism must be complemented with proactive measures against hard-line Islamic extremists who proliferate the ideology behind Islamic extremism to advance their agenda and are not willing to cooperate with prevention practitioners.

Hard-line Islamic extremists are persons who could have been approached with preventive tools earlier but are now so radicalised that prevention is no longer an option because it will be rejected by them, or because they engage in violent extremist activity.

This mandates a different approach (illustrated in Fig. 5), one based not on voluntary prevention and remedy but on involuntary control of the extremists’ reach of influence using law enforcement tools.

Figure 4: Law Enforcement Against Islamic Extremist Actors
Role of Domestic and International Actors

![Figure 4: Law Enforcement Against Islamic Extremist Actors](image-url)
In practice, as the name of the pillar suggests, measures contained within it are primarily carried out by law enforcement services and intelligence services. Other arms of the state, such as finance ministries, diplomatic services and defence forces are also involved in cooperation with other states and international bodies, as well as domestic actors who play a complementary role in identifying hard-line Islamic extremists.

2.1.3. Countering Extremist Ideology Pillar

The Countering Extremist Ideology pillar is inspired by the public health practice of controlling the disease pathogen. Unlike the Prevention and Remedy pillar, which contains measures targeting specific groups and individuals exposed or infected by the pathogen, this pillar seeks to minimise the influence of the ideological tenets of Islamic extremism in and of itself. Countering Islamic extremist ideology is neither voluntary nor involuntary, as it is not aimed against individuals and groups but against the sources, symbols and tenets behind Islamic extremism. Specific measures stemming from the pillar are carried out by a wide variety of actors, including civil society organisations, private sector organisations and law enforcement services.

Given the sensitive nature of combating a set of ideas, the role of the state is more limited than in the other two pillars. Outright censorship of ideas, no matter how radical, is unacceptable. In this vein, it bears noting the key judgment of the European Court of Human Rights regarding freedom of speech:

“The right to free expression “is applicable not only to “information” or “ideas” that are favourably received or regarded as inoffensive or as a matter of indifference, but also to those that offend, shock or disturb the State or any sector of the population.”

Furthermore, the type of measure to be used depends on the type of content that is being addressed. General religious content is a legitimate part of the public discussion and no specific counter-extremist measures are envisaged to limit or counter its propagation. Content which causes controversy or is deemed radical by some sectors of society may be subjected to social pressure from civil society organisations and even public bodies, but not obstructed as it remains protected by

Figure 5: Countering Islamic Extremist Ideology
Differentiation of Extremist Content by Severity

---

free speech laws. Social pressure may take a myriad of forms, with possible inspiration from campaigns against right-wing extremism, racism, anti-Semitism and even drug use.

In the case of obviously extremist content which contains clearly identified ideological attitudes that deviate from constitutional norms, carry elements of intolerance and attack constitutional democratic principles, an expert review should be conducted to assess its legality under existing legislation.

If the content under review is deemed legal, it cannot be removed using law enforcement means. Nevertheless, circulation of the content may still be limited by private actors involved in its dissemination if it breaks their terms and conditions of service. Publishing houses, online social media sites and other private actors should therefore be cognisant of the harm done by extremist content and remove it from their platforms.

Finally, if the content is deemed illegal, it should be removed. Various ways of removal are possible depending on the situation in question: for example, if the content is posted on online social media sites or published in book form. At the same time, removal methods will vary from one jurisdiction to another. The above distinctions may be aggregated into a four-level pyramid (Fig. 6).

Of course, the state cannot be expected to carry out an expert review for every piece of extremist content. This is why identification of key sources of Islamic extremism is so crucial, so as to allow for a separation of truly influential extremist sources from the sea of content.

It also should be noted that content review and content removal may be conducted in conjunction with law enforcement measures against the author or publisher of the content. Such measures fall into the Law Enforcement pillar.
POLICY MEASURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The three-pillar model gives rise to a number of policy recommendations that will set the groundwork for constructing a truly comprehensive system of measures against Islamic extremism. The recommendations are particularly suited to EU Member States, although they may also be useful for application in liberal democratic states outside of the EU.

Some of the key policy measures and recommendations can only be successfully implemented if the fundamental values of the state are made explicit by national governments. These are the fundamental values which all citizens are expected to assimilate, irrespective of their religion. In EU Member States, this framework would essentially consist of the values of individual liberty, human dignity and equality before the law.

While the recommendations are listed here as applicable to all EU Member States, there is strong variation in existing national counter-measures between individual Member States. Consequently, some of the following recommendations are already practiced in some Member States, but not others. Policy makers should therefore adopt those recommendations which have not yet been implemented in their national setting.

At the same time, the policy recommendations are not necessarily listed here in a chronological order. The specific timeline of adoption is expected to differ from one country to another according to its needs and national policy context. Nevertheless, all EU Member States should strive to eventually adopt, in whole or in part, all of the recommendations listed below.

3.1. Core recommendations

1. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES: Adopt a comprehensive conceptualisation of Islamic extremism.

Acknowledging the role of Islamic extremism as a key driver of extremist radicalisation and mobilisation does not strip other factors of their importance. Multiple push and pull factors play a role in radicalisation and mobilisation to extremism, and all should be addressed. However, particular attention should be paid to the ideology behind Islamic extremism, as it typically functions as an enabling force for other radicalising factors to take effect. Islamic extremism is conceptualised as encompassing Islamism, Jihadism as well as Islamic fundamentalism, and thus serves as a meta-descriptor of the wider threat.

2. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES: Reject attempts to constrain the political debate.

An effective fight against Islamic extremism necessitates the conduct of an honest debate about this threat and its causes. Avoiding this debate strengthens far-right populist movements, which exploit the inability of mainstream political parties to properly name and discuss Islamic extremism out of fear of breaking political correctness. Furthermore, legitimate voices against Islamic extremism are sometimes targeted by certain sections of the political spectrum and unjustly accused of racism and ‘Islamophobia’.[61] The term ‘Islamophobia’ is particularly damaging, as it confuses the difference between anti-Muslim extremism (a real issue which must be tackled) and criticism of Islam, which is a legitimate part of the public discussion. Mainstream political representatives must recapture the discussion from the radical fringes of the political spectrum and so regain lost support from the concerned public.

3. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES: Expand your focus to include non-violent Islamic extremism.

A system of prevention of Islamic extremism must account for the aforementioned diversity of the phenomenon. Failing to respond to any one of the three elements of Islamic extremism – Islamism, Islamic fundamentalism and Jihadism – would undermine the effectiveness of the entire strategy. This calls for an expansion of focus from what is often referred to as ‘violent extremism’ to include even non-violent political forms of Islamic extremism (Islamism) and non-political forms of Islamic extremism (Islamic fundamentalism), which often serve as a stepping stone and platform for the violent form (Jihadism). Violent extremism is only the tip of the iceberg, the most visible part of a wider threat which must be tackled in its entirety.

4. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES: Diligently monitor Islamic extremist actors and raise public knowledge about the extent of their advancement. Each state should be conscious of the activities of Islamic extremists on its territory. While intelligence services typically successfully identify active Islamic extremist networks, their findings must be followed by proactive measures aimed at increasing both covert and public knowledge about the type of Islamic extremism at hand, the symbols and other content characteristic of it, the populations which are at risk of exploitation by extremists and the network of sympathisers which may aid extremist activities.

5. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES: Establish the role of a national counter-extremism coordinator. This may take the form of a single person in a coordinating role, or the form of an inter-departmental task force depending on national requirements. The role of the coordinating institution would be to manage and carry out counter-extremism tasks as defined in the national strategy, as well as to coordinate strategic communications directed at various domestic and foreign audiences. It would also supervise other relevant and specific counter-extremism actors in their duties to fulfil their role. The coordinating institution should be supervised by the Ministry of the Interior or equivalent, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Justice or equivalent.

6. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES: Build a national strategy against Islamic extremism. Existing efforts in this field should take the form of a long-term, comprehensive strategy. This could take the form of a strategy specifically aimed at Islamic extremism, or one tackling the broader issue of extremism as such. Strategies for combating terrorism are aplenty, but national counter-extremism strategies are rare, with only a few EU Member States having adopted them. Governments do enact tactical responses against Islamic extremism, but these should contribute to a clearly defined strategic purpose. National strategies provide a foundation for a common understanding of the threat and a systematic approach to countering it. A national counter-extremism strategy should also make clear which areas are broadly relevant and which are specific for countering Islamic extremism and identify a clear leadership structure for counter-extremism matters. Counter-extremism roles and responsibilities of governmental departments and partners should be clearly defined.

3.2. Prevention and Remedy Recommendations

3.2.1. Primary Prevention Measures

7. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS: Tackle Islamic extremist propaganda targeting the wider public. Following the end of the Cold War, strategic communication was often wrongly portrayed as an outdated and unfit tool for the 21st century. Given the ongoing proliferation of extremism enabled by the internet, strategic communication is more important than ever. Both civil society and governmental efforts should play a role in directly countering the propaganda of Islamic extremists which targets the population at large.

8. EDUCATION SERVICES: Organise counter-extremism workshops in schools. Young people should be educated about the perils of Islamic extremism. This is analogous to teaching young people about minimum hygiene and disease transmission to prevent disease outbreaks. Analogous programmes exist in the case of far-right extremism and can be used for inspiration.

9. POLICE SERVICES: Implement best practices from ‘community policing’ models. Community policing approaches are useful in counter-extremism because they improve communication with the target group on suspected cases of radicalisation and thus facilitate timely referral of critical situations, enhance police understanding of the target group and thus open the door to better cooperation. Community policing also helps identify and address community safety issues and grievances and so improves relations between the police and groups which are otherwise difficult to reach. Community policing plays a preventive role in that it seeks to educate and mobilise people before a problem has festered. Effective community policing involves establishing and sustaining enduring relationships with the target group.
National governments should establish the role of a **national counter-extremism coordinator**. The role of the coordinating institution would be to manage and carry out counter-extremism tasks as defined in the national strategy.
3.2.2. Secondary Prevention Measures

10. POLICE SERVICES: Build expertise to recognise Islamic extremist influence. One of the avenues through which Islamic extremism is proliferated within Muslim populations are literature, school curricula, direct communication with Islamic extremists and other horizontal connections which are often overlooked. Attention should be paid to these less noticeable but influential facilitating methods.

11. POLICE/PROBATION AND MEDIATION SERVICES: Compile a national resource list of intervention-ready stakeholders. Especially when budgetary constraints hinder the establishment of a permanent counter-extremism body on the local level, a list of trained and vetted governmental and non-governmental entities, religious and community service organisations, psychologists, social workers, opinion makers and other stakeholders is useful to select the best resources for a potential intervention.

12. POLICE/EDUCATION/SOCIAL SERVICES: Establish clear communication channels between schools, social services and the police (SSP Channels). Schools, social services and the police must have a clear channel of communication at the ready to quickly exchange information about identified individuals or groups at risk of turning to Islamic extremism. Some states (e.g. Denmark) made headway through which Islamic extremism is proliferated within Islamic extremist influence.

13. POLICE SERVICES: Establish clear notification channels for all relevant actors. Ensure that channels are available for parents, teachers, youth, club workers, outreach workers, social workers and other radicalisation spotters to give notifications about suspected radicals within their scope. This may take the form of a single designated individual as a point of contact, or InfoHouses as used in Denmark. Upon notification, staff at the InfoHouse decide on a proper course of action which is most likely going to lead to a positive outcome. The professionals who run intervention programs need clear guidance on the legal threshold for a “duty to warn.”

14. EDUCATION/SOCIAL SERVICES: Ensure that radicalisation spotters are well trained and equipped. Train education and supervision staff to better understand radicalisation and be able to spot it in early stages of development. This substantially lowers the occurrence of false alarm notifications and ensures that actual cases of radicalisation are not ignored. Schools should have clear procedures on how to deal with potential cases of radicalisation.

15. SOCIAL SERVICES, CIVIL SOCIETY/RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS: Engage in counter-narratives targeting at-risk populations. In cases where the extremist speech is not criminal but may lead to further extremism, it should be actively contested by governmental and non-governmental organisations alike. Online counter-narratives should be complemented with offline support for vulnerable individuals and groups. The quality of counter-narrative campaigns may be increased through contests and grassroots funds. Traditional and social media companies may play an important role in this area by amplifying legitimate counter-narratives developed by grassroots initiatives.

16. PENITENTIARY SERVICES: Train prison staff to detect signs of radicalisation. As prison environments are one of the key places for Islamic extremists to proliferate their ideology, the prison staff should be well trained to recognise Islamic extremist symbols and literature, and to detect signs of radicalisation towards Islamic extremism.

17. ASYLUM/SOCIAL SERVICES: Implement reporting, intervention and support mechanisms for refugees. Asylum centres are often targeted by Islamic extremists, who seek to recruit refugees to their cause. As part of preventive efforts, clear mechanisms should be put in place to allow identification of refugees at risk of radicalisation.

3.2.3. Tertiary Prevention Measures

18. ASYLUM/PENITENTIARY/POLICE SERVICES: Monitor radicalised individuals in penitentiary institutions, refugee and detention centres and other at-risk areas. Upon identification of individuals who subscribe to Islamic extremism, measures should be taken to de-radicalise them, or use appropriate action to prevent further spreading of Islamic extremism in the given institution. Inaction in this area allows Islamic extremism to spread freely, leading to substantial problems in the long-term.

19. POLICE/PROBATION SERVICES: Establish a national extremism response team. Some Islamic extremists may be disillusioned or open to dialogue about their convictions. This presents an opportunity for de-radicalisation, which must be conducted by well-trained mentors with experience in psychology, rhetoric, theology and other relevant areas. Especially when budgetary and other constraints hinder the establishment of permanent counter-extremism structures on the local level, a national team of trained social workers, psychologists, religious leaders, opinion makers and law enforcement personnel can help local groups overcome outbreaks of extremism.
out targeted interventions, the national team may utilise the list of other intervention-ready stakeholders (see Primary Prevention recommendations).

20. POLICE/PROBATION SERVICES: Establish an exit programme. Exit programmes are designed for disillusioned extremists who did not break the law and do not pose a security risk. If an exit programme is approved as feasible, the case should be passed onto a task force to assess which specific services should be offered to the individual in question. A written exit-process cooperation agreement is made in collaboration with the individual, who will then be offered help as regards employment, education, housing, psychological counselling or medical care, with a view to a successful exit process and inclusion in society. Numerous countries already adopted exit programmes for various forms of extremism and their experience may be used for inspiration for others.

3.3. Law Enforcement Recommendations

21. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS: Expand the possibilities for criminalization of expressing public support for Islamic extremism. The activities of Islamic extremists are enabled by a wider pool of sympathisers. This pool must be drained as part of efforts to minimise the resources which are at the disposal of Islamic extremists. The approach to minimising the number of sympathisers should be based on effective value integration of local Muslim populations, in combination with direct discouragement of cooperation with Islamic extremists and efforts to inoculate European Muslims against the hateful propaganda with which they are targeted. Those who publicly sympathise with Islamic extremist groups, condone their illegal activities and recruit others to do the same should be prosecuted.

22. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS: Increase prison terms for crimes related to Islamic extremism. In many EU states, charges related to Islamic extremism are worryingly low. Particularly Jihadist operatives must face harsher sentences, including life in prison. Otherwise there will come a time when the perpetrators of contemporary terrorist attacks and foreign fighters who joined the Islamic State will be released and pose a renewed threat to society.

23. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS: Ensure tested counter-terrorism procedures for the event of an attack. It is unlikely that jihadist terrorist attacks will become a thing of the past following the fall of the Islamic State. For this reason, it is crucial to remain vigilant against terrorism and other unlawful violent actions stemming from the presence of Islamic extremism in Europe. All states must ensure that all relevant institutions have tested and effective contingency plans, crisis management and interoperability procedures for the event of a terrorist attack. This particularly applies to those states which have not yet experienced a massive terrorist attack and therefore have only limited experience with this kind of scenario.

24. POLICE/INTELLIGENCE/BORDER SERVICES: Deport foreign Islamic extremists residing in the EU. When a third-country citizen proliferates Islamic extremism within the EU, they should be deported to their country of origin. There is no reason to delay this process or fail to engage it at all. Deportations of foreign Islamic extremists should be stepped up as part of broader efforts to lower their number in the EU.

25. POLICE/INTELLIGENCE/BORDER SERVICES: Stop foreign Islamic extremists from entering the EU. Upon identification of a foreign Islamic extremist attempting to cross the external (Schengen) border, they should be detained by immigration authorities and returned to their country of origin as they present a risk to public order.

26. POLICE/INTELLIGENCE SERVICES: Compile a national list of domestic Islamic extremists and share it with other EU Member States. Even if all foreign Islamic extremists are deported from the EU, there will remain thousands of Islamic extremists with EU citizenship. These must be identified by national authorities and placed on a list of known Islamic extremists. The list should then be shared with national authorities of other Member States, so that all EU states are cognisant of the wider European Islamic extremist scene.

27. POLICE/INTELLIGENCE/BORDER SERVICES: Limit the freedom of movement of Islamic extremists from other EU Member States. Upon identification of Islamic extremists from another EU country, national authorities should refuse their entry across the internal border or deport them on the grounds of risk to public order. While this recommendation raises some legal and technical challenges that must be overcome, the measure would substantially limit the scope of operations of Islamic extremists in the EU.

28. POLICE/INTELLIGENCE SERVICES: Proscribe Islamic extremist organisations. Clearly extremist organisations should be proscribed proactively and before they manage to spread their hateful messaging to target audiences. More attention to the formation of such organisations is necessary across the board. The passive approach of only investigating those groups which advocate the use of violence is insufficient.
29. POLICE/INTELLIGENCE SERVICES: Minimise financing of Islamic extremism, particularly from outside the EU. Effective international structures have been set up to counter terrorist financing. However, the financing of non-violent Islamic extremism continues largely unabated. While some states have taken proactive measures to respond to this problem, others choose to ignore the financing of Islamic extremism at their peril. The transparency of religious organisations and NGOs which may have ties to Islamic extremists should be increased considerably, especially in the case of cross-border transactions. Foreign funding of mosques and Islamic associations should be better supervised and prohibited when there are grounds to believe that Islamic extremism is being sponsored.

30. POLICE/INTELLIGENCE SERVICES: Cut off cooperation with non-violent Islamic extremists. When attempting to communicate with local Muslim populations, some governments have resorted to working with self-appointed ‘community leaders’ irrespective of their views. The hard-learned lesson is that such cooperation is counter-productive in the long-term, as it allows Islamist and Islamic fundamentalist actors to easily influence the rest of the Muslim population and ingratiate themselves with public institutions. Any ties with such persons, beyond covert actions by the intelligence community, should be cut off. Islamist-affiliated organisations which offer insincere projects against radicalisation with the goal of establishing themselves in a given population should be ignored. A supplementary recommendation, which should be obvious but has been broken by a number of governments in the past, is not to make deals with individuals or groups that support Islamic extremism. This only aids their activities and buying lives in one situation endangers many more lives elsewhere.

31. POLICE SERVICES: Profile suspicious individuals for links to Islamic extremism. In a world of limited resources and real and substantial threats from Islamic extremism, police services must be able to conduct criminal profiling of suspicious individuals based on visible outward signs of allegiance to Islamic extremist groups. Full rights of the person under investigation must be respected at all times and the profiling must adhere to national and international regulations.

32. POLICE/INTELLIGENCE SERVICES: Identify and proscribe attempts to install parallel legal systems. One of the key strategic objectives of Islamism is to create parallel legal and judicial systems as a stepping stone to undermining the legitimacy of the state, disintegrating the liberal democratic order and replacing it with a regime based on Islamic extremist ideals. For this reason, attempts to split the monopoly of the state over legal and judicial matters must be stopped at the earliest opportunity.

33. POLICE/INTELLIGENCE/BORDER SERVICES: Detect Islamic extremists posing as asylum seekers. Multiple incidents of jihadists entering the EU as refugees were recorded in recent years, and in some cases led to terrorist attacks on European soil. This phenomenon is very damaging to the legitimacy of the European Union as a whole as it underlines its failure to resolve the migration crisis and guarantee security and stability on the continent. Diligent monitoring of refugees by the law enforcement and intelligence services is necessary. At the same time, staff working in asylum and detention centres should be trained to recognise Islamic extremist content or follower. Those migrants and refugees who are identified as law-abiding and willing to help in countering Islamic extremism should be enlisted in tracking possible fake asylum seekers.

34. POLICE/INTELLIGENCE/ASYLUM SERVICES: Prevent extremists from gaining access to asylum centres. Experience from abroad shows that large asylum and migrant detention centres can become key breeding grounds for Islamic extremism. Such a phenomenon must never appear on EU soil, lest it allow Islamic extremism to fester further. Identified Islamic extremists should not be allowed anywhere near asylum and migrant detention centres to prevent their spreading the pathogen among the refugees and migrants.

3.4. Countering Extremist Ideology Recommendations

35. INTELLIGENCE SERVICES: Identify popular sources of Islamic extremism. Islamic extremist movements rest their legitimacy on a specific set of sources. The precise makeup of the list of sources differs from one group to another, but some sources repeatedly appear in Islamic extremist literature. Besides Islamic scripture, this includes a specific set of publications which shaped the face of Islamic extremism in the past century. Such publications should be identified and their radicalising potential assessed.

36. JUSTICE SERVICES: Conduct expert reviews of identified sources of Islamic extremism. Clearly extremist content should be evaluated for its legality. This will enable further steps towards controlling for its distribution. The evaluation should be conducted by legal experts and respected scholars of Islamic extremist content.
37. JUSTICE/POLICE SERVICES: Remove illegal extremist content. This measure differs from counter-narratives in that its objective is not to increase resilience of a particular group of people, but to remove the source of radicalisation. When extremists call for acts of violence or produce content which is for any reason illegal, appropriate action should be taken by law enforcement authorities. A public discussion should be encouraged for European states to reach a common definition of ‘illegal content’ on the internet. In general, states should aspire towards applying a single standard both offline and online when encouraging or conducting content removal. At the same time, governments should be cautious not to censor legitimate speech or remove content which is better contested by counter-narratives.

38. POLICE SERVICES: Set up a national referral unit to cooperate with internet service providers. Irrespective of the current level of cooperation on the side of the internet giants, it must be recognised that their resources are not endless and they may not be capable of identifying and removing all illegal content on their domains in due time. For this reason, national referral units should be set up to help internet service providers discover extremist content and subsequently remove it if it breaks their content guidelines. National referral units may also cooperate with existing bodies at the international level (e.g. EU Internet Referral Unit at Europol).

39. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS: Regulate internet service providers to reduce the online presence of Islamic extremism. Facebook, Twitter, Google and other similar companies pledged to counter extremism on their domains, but the results of self-regulation are unconvincing. Islamic extremist groups continue to use online social media to grow in numbers. The internet giants are receptive to pressure from governments and should not be allowed to play even an indirect part in enabling the proliferation of Islamic extremism. National governments, ideally through EU-level institutions to ensure EU-wide compatibility, must urgently adopt such regulations as to enforce the rule of law on the internet.

40. CIVIL SOCIETY/RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS, PRIVATE SECTOR: Only distribute content with radicalising potential with explanatory notes. A large portion content promoted by Islamic extremists falls into the grey zone between legitimate religious discourse and clearly illegal content. Such content may be protected by laws governing freedom of speech but should only be distributed with explanatory notes from recognised scholars to remove their radicalising potential.

41. EDUCATION SERVICES, RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS: Do not use translations of the Quran distributed by Islamic extremists. Translations of the Quran vary wildly, both in their meaning and tone. Some translations of the Quran are used by Islamic extremists to support their narratives and should therefore be discouraged. In general, Islamic scripture should be accompanied with explanatory notes and other material from recognised scholars so as to minimise its potential utility for Islamic extremist propaganda.

42. EDUCATION SERVICES: Establish national courses to train domestic imams and Islamic scholars. In recent decades, becoming an imam has typically meant travelling to Egypt or Saudi Arabia to attain a degree and subsequently returning with the type of Islam approved in those countries. This has led to a dramatic increase in popularity of Salafism in Europe and elsewhere. EU Member States should encourage efforts to diversify interpretations of Islam and elevate those interpretations which are compatible with fundamental European values. One measure towards this objective is setting up national curricula to train domestic imams, as in Austria. The objective of this measure is not to increase the resilience of certain populations, but to decrease the popularity of Islamic extremist narratives within the wider Islamic discourse.

3.5. Complementary Recommendations

43. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS: Train all relevant actors about the basics and current threat of Islamic extremism. Effective detection and fight against Islamic extremism is impossible if it is not recognised. The state must take extra care to organise expert training sessions for the police forces, immigration services and other departments so they are quick to recognise instances of Islamic extremism. The judicial community must also be well-trained to recognise Islamic extremism in court and issue appropriate judgements.

44. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, INTELLIGENCE SERVICES: Enable and task intelligence services with increasing the knowledge about Islamic extremism among other key state actors. While the intelligence services typically possess comprehensive knowledge about the activities of Islamic extremist actors at home and abroad, very little of this knowledge is utilised to increase understanding of the threat in other departments. This is counter-productive, as it creates room for misinformation, error and passivity among otherwise key counter-extremism actors. The intelligence services should be
enabled to share their view of the bigger picture and inform key counter-extremism actors and the public about the developing situation.

45. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS: Acquire staff with appropriate language skills. Instances of Islamic extremism in the EU are often found in distinct minority populations which speak a different language (e.g. Arabic, Farsi, Turkish etc). Tackling Islamic extremism is impossible without understanding it. National governments should therefore provide resources to relevant counter-extremism actors for staff with appropriate language skills.

46. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS: Ensure that your foreign and migration policy does not play into the hands of Islamic extremist actors. Some foreign policy activities may bolster Islamic extremist groups abroad and even increase their capacities and recruitment potential at home. At the same time, lax migration policy may be exploited by Islamic extremist groups for logistical or travel purposes. An unregulated influx of migrants may also inadvertently increase the pool of potential supporters of Islamic extremism. The necessity to evaluate the impact of migration policy and foreign policy on Islamic extremist actors is an additional reason for structured coordination of public bodies in the form of a national counter-extremism coordinator.

47. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS: Engage in bilateral and EU-level cooperation on countering Islamic extremism. Islamic extremism is not specific to a particular territory and groups often transcend national boundaries. States must cooperate to successfully counter joint threats to their national security. On a bilateral level, such cooperation may take the form of joint exercises, joint expert groups, informal and formal meetings between officials, permanent communication pathways between relevant departments, intelligence exchange and the like. On the European level, national counter-extremism coordinators should cooperate within existing multilateral formats on assessing EU-wide developments and improving existing counter-measures applicable to the EU as a whole. Governments should also utilise non-EU multilateral frameworks to include other regions affected by Islamic extremism.

48. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS: Establish clear counter-extremism evaluation processes. Counter-extremism metrics and evaluation are necessary in creating an effective, evidence-based approach to countering extremism. An evaluation strategy should be developed to track progress in accomplishing explicitly stated counter-extremism goals. Tracking narrow indicators of programme implementation may not provide sufficient understanding of effectiveness: good evaluation strategies will contain an element of contextual, qualitative measurement. In evaluating counter-extremism, there is a need for transparent and honest relationships between researchers, policy makers and practitioners.

49. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS: Increase funding for non-governmental counter-extremism initiatives. Efforts to prevent and counter non-violent extremism are often woefully underfunded. Funding streams need to be created so that the provision of resources is commensurate with the nature of the threat.

50. NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS: Increase funding for research of extremism and the possibilities for countering it. Expand cross-disciplinary research that leverages social scientists in academia, as well as government resources. Lessons can be drawn from across the spectrum of extremist ideologies to consider cross-application.
CONCLUSION

The above model, and the policy recommendations which stem from it, provides a clear path towards countering Islamic extremism. The threat must be tackled on all three fronts simultaneously through measures to increase the resilience of populations susceptible to Islamic extremism, measures against hard-line Islamic extremists and measures against the ideology of Islamic extremism itself. When combined, the three pillars undercut the sources, proliferators and reception of Islamic extremism and hamper its long-term survival in the territory at hand.

Of course, application of the model must be connected to national policy practice. Some EU Member States have already implemented some of the recommendations offered above, while others lag behind in terms of recognising the threat of Islamic extremism in the first place. State-specific recommendations are therefore necessary, which are not included in this paper but available on the side.

At the same time, effective elimination of Islamic extremism in one EU Member State is hardly going to last if the threat continues to fester in neighbouring EU Member States. For this reason, it is imperative that all affected EU Member States engage Islamic extremism at all three fronts and limit its possibility for further advancement.

Furthermore, fight against Islamic extremism must become an integral part of the EU Member States’ foreign policy, particularly in countries neighbouring the EU. The EU’s neighbourhood is increasingly destabilised, with Islamic extremist organisations exploiting the chaos to achieve their goals. It is imperative for EU Member States to find trustworthy partners in those regions and help build local counter-extremist architectures.

Even then, the fight against Islamic extremism may be expected to be a long-term, protracted effort spanning generations. However, the Islamic extremists have themselves demonstrated that they pose a serious threat that must not be ignored, lest it grow to unmanageable proportions. It is therefore imperative that Islamic extremism is countered on all fronts.
The Islamic extremists have themselves demonstrated that they pose a serious threat that must not be ignored, lest it grow to unmanageable proportions. **It is therefore imperative that Islamic extremism is countered on all fronts.**