

“Tackling home-grown
terrorism requires a
radical approach...”

THE EDGE OF VIOLENCE

Jamie Bartlett
Jonathan Birdwell
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In March 2010, we released a summary version of this pamphlet that was available electronically from the Demos website. We had been unable to publish the full version of the pamphlet due to an ongoing terrorism trial that involved individuals who were subjects of the research. With the conclusion of the trial, we are now able to publish the pamphlet in its entirety. This pamphlet presents two years of research examining the difference between violent and non-violent radicals across Europe and Canada. While Europe has been debating the problem of al-Qaeda inspired terrorism and the appropriate policy response for the past decade, the problem of 'home-grown' terrorism in Canada is more recent and growing in concern. This final version contains for the first time significant primary research around al-Qaeda inspired extremism and radicalism in Canada.

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Introduction

What is to be done with the millions of facts that bear witness that men, fully understanding their real interests, have left them in the background and rushed headlong to meet peril and danger... ?

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground*, 1862¹

The rise of ‘home-grown’ terrorism, inspired by al-Qaeda, is one of today’s most pressing security concerns. However, the journey to becoming a ‘home-grown’ terrorist is still difficult to explain and predict, despite dozens of theoretical models and profile studies. What is clear is that there is no such thing as a typical terrorist, and no such thing as a typical journey into terrorism.²

This journey into terrorism is often described as a process of ‘radicalisation’. However, to be a radical is to reject the status quo, but not necessarily in a violent or even problematic manner.³ Of course, the process of radicalisation is a problem when it does lead to violence, and the most obvious case of this is al-Qaeda inspired terrorism. But the last decade in particular has also seen a growth in many types of non-violent radicalisation. Therefore a successful counter-terrorism strategy must be based on a clear understanding of these distinct forms of radicalisation.

Separating different types of radicalisation is not an easy task. There is an overlap in the ideologies and goals of many radical groups and individuals including Islamist groups, religious conservative movements, and ultra-orthodox organisations and individuals.⁴ Differentiating between these types of radicalisations is extremely important because targeting the wrong people can breed resentment and alienation, and erode the freedoms Western governments want to preserve. Violent radicals are clearly enemies of liberal democracies but non-violent radicals might sometimes be powerful allies.

The method

This report seeks to cast light on how and why some types of radicalisation develop into violence and others do not, how the different types relate to each other, and what implications this has for social and security policy. To answer these questions, the report compares two phenomena:

- *Radicalisation that leads to violence* ('violent radicalisation'). This is a process by which individuals come to undertake terrorist activity, or directly aid or abet terrorist activity. To understand this process, 62 in-depth profiles of 'home-grown' terrorists were created. They were drawn from seven cells or plots across Canada and Europe. The appellation 'cell' is applied to a group of individuals, some of whom have been convicted of terrorism-related crimes but which might also include individuals who were ultimately found innocent of such charges. For the purposes of this research, terrorists are only those individuals who have been found guilty of various terrorism-related offences.⁵ Throughout the report, the latter individuals are referred to as 'terrorists'.
- *Radicalisation that does not lead to violence* ('non-violent radicalisation'). This refers to the process by which individuals come to hold radical views in relation to the status quo but do not undertake, or directly aid or abet, terrorist activity (see Annex 2 for a full definition of 'radical'). In order to understand this process, profiles of 28 radicals were created, including 20 who were interviewed in depth, in Canada and Europe. Throughout the report, these individuals are referred to as 'radicals'.

The report compares and contrasts these two types of radicalisation across a range of personal and social characteristics, attitudes to religion, society and violence, and examines the nature and extent of the relationships between them.⁶ To understand how far these findings apply within Muslim communities more generally, a reflective cross section of 70 young Muslims living in Canada were also interviewed (hereafter referred to as 'young Muslims'). In addition, 75 interviews were carried out with a range of local and

national experts to supplement the research (Imams, journalists, academics, community leaders and government officials).⁷

Most research in this area is based on publicly available information about known terrorists. One academic recently noted that most terrorism experts have never been anywhere near a terrorist or individuals with radical views.⁸ This project differs in two ways. First, terrorists are compared to a ‘control group’. By doing this, the research aims to isolate patterns and traits that might help distinguish between violent and non-violent radicalisation. Second, exploring the relationships between radicals and terrorists allows for a deeper understanding of the broader network of people, ideas and relationships within which they sit.

This research, like any in the social sciences, cannot perfectly predict human behaviour, which is inherently unpredictable. Indeed, the categories used here are permeable. A small number of individuals can and sometimes do pass from one category to another. Consequently, and considering the sample size used, this study is illustrative rather than predictive; the findings should not be used as the basis for profiling terrorists and radicals. Moreover, the research is not able to do justice to the complexities of Western Islam because of a relatively small sample size. However, the work does represent an empirical insight into a social phenomenon, and contributes towards a more nuanced understanding of behaviour across radicalised individuals, the nature and the cause of al-Qaeda inspired terrorism, how that threat relates to other social trends and the role of security and social policy in responding.

The focus of the research

The report covers five countries: the United Kingdom, Canada, Denmark, France and the Netherlands, focusing on the phenomenon of ‘home-grown’ al-Qaeda inspired terrorism in these countries.

Canada was included in this group of otherwise European nations and became the principal locus of a significant amount of the fieldwork for two reasons. First, immigration and

integration policies provide an important backdrop to the study of radicalisation to violence. The threat, particularly in Europe, has become indirectly intertwined with concerns over immigration and integration, an area where Canadian policy is often held up as a model for success. But this perception is changing. Recent data show that some immigrant populations in Canada today are worse off in terms of socioeconomic factors than their predecessors, despite a long established points-based immigration policy that encourages highly skilled migrants and an image of Canada as a multicultural beacon.⁹

Second, current Canadian society reflects the multicultural model of the late Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. First instituted in 1971, this policy aimed to support the cultural development of ethno-cultural groups, overcome barriers to full participation in Canadian society, promote creative interchange and assist all new Canadians in acquiring at least one official Canadian language.¹⁰ It sought to establish a space where English, French, Aboriginal and other minority groups could each pursue their own religious, cultural and linguistic practices free from undue interference from any other group.

However, there is debate over the extent to which continued high levels of immigration and increasing diversity – including in religion – are placing unsustainable pressure on the multicultural model. Some commentators, such as Neil Bissoondath and Richard Gwyn, argue that the Trudeau model is increasingly ‘anti-integrationist’ and point to ghettoisation of mono-cultural communities that are alienated from the mainstream, existing according to their own sets of norms with little meaningful interaction with others.¹¹ These questions are pertinent given that Canada needs 270,000 new immigrants a year to sustain economic growth. Although other commentators, such as Will Kymlicka, reject some of these criticisms, most do recognise that the Trudeau model at the very least does not take into account religious sensibilities that are increasingly visible in the country. According to Kymlicka, ‘we still do not have a good framework to decide which religious demands are legitimate’.¹²

These questions are relevant for every liberal democracy. Despite different political and social contexts in Europe, similar

debates are taking place: about immigration and integration policy and what role they play in radicalisation; about perceptions of relative disadvantage or frustrations of social mobility; about the possibilities and limits of inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue; about what ideas can enter the public space; about where the line is drawn between social and security policy. The focus on Canada allows for an exploration of these ideas from a unique vantage point and provides important lessons for all liberal democracies that are working to prevent radicalisation that leads to violence.

Terrorism is not associated with any single culture, religion or group identity. This holds true in Canada, with its experience of violence motivated by Québécois sovereignty during the 1960s, and Sikh extremism that led to the Air India bombing of 1985. This report focuses on al-Qaeda inspired terrorism: the radicalisation of people who are Muslim, and terrorism committed in the name of Islam. It does not of course imply that followers of Islam inherently turn to violence. Rather, as stated by the recent Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) public report, ‘the threat from Islamist extremism continues to be the priority concern of most of the international community, including Canada’. Indeed, in August 2010, as this report was going to print, three arrests were made through *Operation Samosa*, in relation to an alleged al-Qaeda inspired terrorist plot being prepared on Canadian soil. Although these arrests are not part of the analysis in this paper, they demonstrate the continued threat.

Summary of findings

Chapters 1 to 4 provide the background to the report.

Chapter 1: Muslim communities in the West

Across a range of socioeconomic, historical and cultural factors, Canadian Muslims fare better than European Muslims. This is the result of different migration patterns and social policy, although recent research suggests that this gap might be

narrowing, and there are indications of some Canadian Muslim groups doing badly compared to other Canadian citizens.

Chapter 2: Why do people radicalise?

There is a broad range of disciplines that examines why and how radicalisation can lead to violence. Although much of the literature is insightful, few studies are based on field research, and most neglect to make well-needed comparisons to control groups. Consequently, the process of radicalisation is often oversimplified, over-generalised and lacking in empirical grounding.

Chapter 3: The current threat of terrorism and radicalisation

In each country under study, it is difficult to define and quantify the radical community, as well as the social and security threat it poses. Some experts argue that radical but non-violent groups provide an important first step on the journey to terrorism – the so-called ‘escalator’ effect – whereby they provide potential recruits and tacit support. Other research suggests that they offer an important buttress against violence, and could act as valuable allies in the fight against terrorism.

Chapter 4: The policy response

Recent years have seen a growth of counter-radicalisation approaches, and lessons can be drawn from these experiences. Above all, ‘prevention’ work must come from independent voices and should not be seen as part of a securitisation of social policy issues.

Chapters 5 to 10 contain key research findings regarding the relationship between violent and non-violent radicals.

Chapter 5: Social and personal characteristics

Terrorists, radicals and young Muslims had all experienced some degree of societal exclusion, had a distrust of government and were angry at Western foreign policy. Many felt a disconnection from their local community and many had experienced an identity crisis of sorts. Of particular note was a high level of distrust among young Muslims towards policing and intelligence agencies, with obvious implications for counter-radicalisation efforts. However, young Muslims and radicals also felt genuine affection for Western values of tolerance and pluralism, the system of government and culture. Terrorists, on the other hand, were unique in their loathing of Western society and culture. Interestingly, radicals were more likely than terrorists to have been involved in political protest, to have studied at university (and studied humanities or arts subjects) and to have been employed.

Chapter 6: Religion and ideology

Terrorists (at least those in the sample) had a simpler, shallower conception of Islam than radicals, although terrorists themselves would certainly disagree with this analysis. Radicals were more likely to recognise their own ignorance and stress the importance of context, reflection and learning. They were as familiar with so-called ‘jihadist’ scholars as terrorists, but drew on a variety of other sources too. Certain ideas that are sometimes associated with terrorism were in fact held by large numbers of people who renounced terrorism. Many radicals, and indeed young Muslims, supported the application of Sharia and the caliphate – but usually in an aspirational or nostalgic sense. Terrorists were set apart less by their adherence to a particular school of thought than by their adoption of a specific set of ideas: an exclusionary ‘us versus them’ ideology, and a rejection of ‘the other’, which in many cases resulted in an unwillingness to engage with social or political elements of Western society. For the terrorists in our sample it is difficult to disentangle precisely how far religion inspires violence or legitimises/ obligates it: for different people it appears to serve slightly different purposes.

Chapter 7: Attitudes to terrorism

Radicals refused to defend violent jihad in the West as religiously obligatory, acceptable or permitted. The same was true of the young Muslim sample. Young Muslims rejected al-Qaeda's message and often used simple, catchy sayings from the Qur'an or Hadith to express that rejection. However, there was widespread support among radicals and young Muslims for Iraqi and Afghan people 'defending themselves' from 'invaders', framed in the language of self-defence, just war and state sovereignty. Furthermore, for Canadian Muslims, travelling abroad to fight was not seen as obligatory or something to be encouraged, but neither was it denounced outright: this is a difficult grey area for many. Muslims who support violent 'resistance' to forces in Afghanistan or Iraq cannot and should not be put in the same radical category as those who support the use of violence within Western borders. There are potential allies among radicals who denounce terrorism at home, but support the principle of violent jihad overseas as a natural extension of just war theory. Nonetheless, individuals who travel overseas to actually take part in military operations will, and should, remain of concern to security services because of the potential skills, training, contacts and credibility they could bring back with them.

It is possible to conclude that radicals do not see Islam as a religion of peace but as a religion based on justified violence, much like the other Abrahamic religions and the long tradition of just war theory. Crucially, this idea found resonance among the young Muslim sample, with implications for how to make communications with that group more effective.

Chapter 8: The journey of radicalisation into violence

The spread and acceptance of radical or violent ideas can helpfully be conceived as a social epidemic, because whether or not an individual comes to accept such ideas depends on how far their peers do and the extent to which they are seen as worthy of imitation. An increasingly important part of al-Qaeda's appeal in the West is its dangerous, romantic, counter-cultural

characteristics. This aspect is often overlooked, but has important – and difficult – implications for how to tackle violent radicalisation.

Becoming a terrorist is not always a natural or linear progression from being a radical. Those who turn to violence often follow a path of radicalisation characterised by a culture of violence, in-group peer pressure, an internal code of honour where violence can be a route to accruing status, and a limited, de-contextualised attitude to Islam and Western society. Certain signs of radicalisation to violence are visible from this vantage point, for example distribution of jihadi videos, clashes with existing mosque authorities, debates between ‘do-ers’ and ‘talkers’, deep engagement in literature that explains how to determine a kafir (unbeliever) and what is permissible once you know, and any criminal activity undertaken in this respect. These manifestations are potentially useful indicators for local policy agencies, community leaders and members, and public servants involved in working to prevent radicalisation to violence.

Chapter 9: Organisations

There are many Islamic organisations active in Canada, and a small number of them are sometimes labelled ‘radical’. Despite controversy raised over certain organisations, particularly in Europe, they do not appear to be significant in respect of radicalisation to violence. Radical groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir appear to have a small and insignificant presence in Canada, and face community level criticism (partly because of a concern that they will bring or cause trouble). There are a number of organisations that are inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood, but only by its philosophy of social activism. They do not appear to be linked to organisations in the Middle East. Young Muslims had limited knowledge about the various Islamic organisations operating in Canada, and the ideologies from which some of them are thought to have sprung.

Chapter 10: Terrorism and radicalism in the community

Unsurprisingly, individuals considering violence often exist on the fringes of the community, especially when they believe violence is religiously obliged, because of their unwillingness to participate in organised groups or institutions and the desire to avoid detection. However, for some people considering violence – either in a cell or not – the credibility and status attached to violent activity motivates them to vocalise their activities and beliefs. There is ‘talk’, and it is picked up and argued over at the community level. This puts a high premium on community intelligence. Indeed, there is a strong sense that Muslim communities are undertaking self-policing within their own communities. Some in the community, including radicals, have come into contact with individuals contemplating violent acts, and successfully dissuaded them. Nonetheless, there are limits to what self-policing can achieve, particularly given that future terrorist cells might be more closed following high-profile infiltrations.

Recommendations

This research both validates some existing theories and points to some new ways of understanding how the al-Qaeda inspired threat is changing in the West. For example, for some young people, it is becoming a combination of toxic ideology and youthful anti-establishment radicalism. This does not make the threat any less severe or any easier to defeat. But it does have specific implications for countering it.

The following recommendations are based on the research undertaken, and they are in no way intended as a definitive answer to tackle al-Qaeda inspired terrorism. Rather, it is hoped they will contribute to this task for a number of agencies, organisations and individuals that are concerned with preventing terrorism in the West. They are based on three underlying principles.

Principle 1: Encourage positive activism

Al-Qaeda inspired terrorism in the West shares much in common with other counter-cultural, subversive groups of predominantly angry young men. Being radical and rebelling against the received values of the status quo is an important part of being young. Ways must be found to ensure that young people can be radical, dissenting and make a difference, without resulting in violent consequences.

- Being radical is not always the first step on the path to violence. In fact, radicalisation that leads to violence can be distinguished by different indicators and signs from those that indicate purely ‘religious’, non-violent radicalisation. Assuming that radical views constitute the base of the terrorist pyramid can mean counter-radicalisation strategies are pitted against large numbers of people who object entirely to al-Qaeda’s methods.
- This does not mean that all radical ideas are positive – some may represent a social threat or even a long-term threat to the democratic order. But they should be tackled as social problems, not as a ‘subset’ of the al-Qaeda threat.
- Young people need space to be radical: bold, different, awkward and dissenting. This can be an important antidote to radicalisation that leads to violence. Engaging in political and social protest is a good – not a bad – sign and must be encouraged.
- Governments should create and encourage programmes that offer exciting alternatives to al-Qaeda. A significant proportion of young Muslims – like many young people – will want to dissent and rebel, and the idea of being part of an international jihadist movement can be exhilarating. Governments – and non-governmental organisations – must be more radical and daring in devising ways of engaging young people in non-violent alternatives that respond. For example, schemes that allow young Western Muslims to volunteer in those countries they are most concerned about, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, could be considered.

Principle 2: Demystify and de-glamourise al-Qaeda

Freedom of speech and open debate can be a weapon against violence, not a hindrance. This is because some young people find the idea of being part of an international Jihadist organisation exciting. It is important therefore to demystify and de-glamourise terrorism without alienating large numbers of people. However, a liberal approach towards literature or speech does depend on independent voices setting out forceful counter-arguments against extremist ideas.

- The al-Qaeda brand needs to be stripped of its glamour and mystique by emphasising the incompetent and theologically incompatible side of al-Qaeda inspired terrorists – including through the use of satire, although this cannot come from the government.
- The concepts of jihad, terrorism and radicalisation can be demystified through a series of open, local debates. People want and need to talk about them openly.
- Governments must keep their messaging about what constitutes ‘good’ or ‘bad’ Islam to a minimum. Official endorsement of ideas or initiatives can actually damage legitimacy. However, governments will, inevitably, talk about al-Qaeda inspired terrorism and Islam. Where they do, communications should emphasise the terrorists’ shallow and Manichean conception of religion. Although it has been used in a number of countries, the slogan ‘Islam is peace’ should not be the dominant theme of messages: ‘Islam is just’ more closely represents the position of Muslim communities we spoke to.
- Silencing radical views must be considered as a last option because banning radical voices will neither prove effective nor lessen their appeal in the long term. However, a liberal approach to debate and freedom of speech also requires strong counter-arguments. Preaching that incites violence or hatred against others on the basis of religion or race should be met with a judicial response. Radical ideas that do not break the law should be given air, but they should be debated and renounced. Government, but more importantly, independent voices – including those of Muslims – must set out counter-arguments as to why particular radical or extremist ideas are wrong.

- There should be a broader presumption in favour of transparency in security and intelligence services. Distrust of policing and intelligence services is spread through networks and cannot be countered through top-down information campaigns.

Principle 3: Important role for non-governmental actors

Human behaviour is, and always has been, unpredictable and non-linear. While there are some interesting differences between terrorists and radicals identified in this research, ultimately two people faced with the same situation react differently. Radicalisation to violence is no different. It can be managed but not 'solved' or reduced to nothing. That means that governments must focus on the things they realistically can change, while the lead role must be played by society – individuals, groups, organisations and communities – who can understand and respond to these complexities better. This theme – that government cannot do everything itself – is common to many of the recommendations proposed here, and underlines the importance of building strong government-community relationships.

- Prevention work is usually defined as interventions that aim to stop individuals from becoming involved in al-Qaeda inspired terrorism. It has become an increasingly important part of counter-terrorism work across Europe and must remain a priority. However, mission drift must be avoided. Prevention work should be limited to interventions where there is a clear, identified danger of groups or individuals undergoing radicalisation *to violence*. Broader social concerns within Muslim communities, such as discrimination, integration or socioeconomic disadvantage, should not be part of a counter-terrorism agenda, as this serves to isolate communities.
- Prevention work must import multi-agency approaches from successful counter-gang techniques, such as the stick and carrot approach employed in the United States by Boston's successful Operation Ceasefire. There is some common ground, at least for some individuals, with gangster lifestyles, both in the nature of group or gang recruitment, and also in inter- and intra-group dynamics.

- Governments and policing agencies should work with radicals in certain instances where there are specific tactical benefits, for example in local de-radicalisation programmes. In some cases – especially when working with an individual who believes violence is religiously obligated, or may be tempted by these ideas – non-violent radicals can sometimes have the credibility needed to convince them otherwise.
- Non-religious leaders may have a role to play. Radicalisation to violence is not purely a religious phenomenon. Therefore, religious leaders are not the only individuals that can be useful partners: social workers, teachers and sports coaches with local street credibility are also important. This is especially true in local partnership policing where it is important to work with people who know the scene and have a good local reputation.
- Muslim communities are already acting to counter the al-Qaeda ideology through mentoring, public and private denunciations, and excluding individuals from mosques. This community work should be further encouraged and facilitated. Police and security services should emphasise building trust and investing in relationships with a diverse range of individuals, but there are limits to what this can achieve. Community self-policing and partnerships between communities and intelligence or law enforcement agencies must run alongside, not instead of, existing forms of intelligence and security work.

1 Muslim communities in the West

In the past two decades there has been a growing identification among Muslims in Western democracies along religious lines, both within the media and by Muslims themselves. This trend sometimes obscures the fact that Islam lies across many different cultures and ethnicities, and spans myriad beliefs and traditions. This is particularly true in Canada, as a result of the wide diversity of origins among Canadian Muslims and the relative newness to Canada of many Canadians of Muslim faith.

The emergence of al-Qaeda inspired terrorism has coincided with this broader identification among Muslims *as Muslims* and has become intertwined with it. As a result, issues facing Muslims in the West as new immigrants are sometimes seen as possible ‘permissive factors’ that may contribute to radicalisation.

This chapter presents a picture of Muslims in the West in terms of demographics, socioeconomic status and political or community organisation. The countries chosen for this report – Canada, the UK, France, Denmark and the Netherlands – present a variety of national contexts to enable comparisons.

Demographics

Many countries are restricted from including religion-based questions in their population census so determining the precise number of Muslims in Europe is difficult. Estimates are often based on national heritage, which inevitably fails to capture converts to Islam and may include individuals who would not consider themselves religious.

According to the latest research, France’s Muslim population is the largest in Western Europe, both in absolute terms (3.5–5 million) and as a percentage of the overall population

(with estimates ranging from 8.5 to 12 per cent).¹³ In the UK, a 2009 survey put the number of Muslim residents at approximately 2.4 million, representing almost 4 per cent of the total population.¹⁴ In the Netherlands, there are approximately 1 million Muslims (6 per cent of the total population),¹⁵ while in Denmark, between 175,000 and 200,000 – around 3 per cent.¹⁶ Canada has a lower proportion of Muslims compared with these countries, representing 2 per cent (approximately 580,000) of the total population, according to the 2001 census, although the figure is now considered to be around 800,000.¹⁷ However, the rise of Islam to become the largest non-Christian religion has occurred more recently in Canada than in Europe. The number of individuals identifying Islam as their religion rose 129 per cent between 1991 and 2000,¹⁸ and the Association for Canadian Studies expects it to increase by a further 160 per cent by 2017, bringing the total to an estimated 1.4 million.¹⁹

The younger age profile of Muslims holds further implications for the future composition of these countries, raising the likelihood that the number of Muslims will rise in proportion to the general population. In France and the Netherlands, a significant proportion of non-Western immigrants are under 20 years of age,²⁰ while the median age of Muslims in the UK and Canada is significantly younger than the overall national median age.²¹

History of immigration and settlement

Although there are notable examples of earlier Muslim settlement in Western Europe, the bulk of immigration from predominantly Muslim countries began in the 1960s and 1970s, driven by labour market needs for unskilled workers after the second world war. As a result of previous colonial connections or other economic and trade relationships (often based on specific bilateral agreements to accept a certain number of unskilled migrants), certain nationalities and ethnicities are predominant in each country: in the UK, Pakistani and Bangladeshi; in France, Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian; in the Netherlands, Turkish and Moroccan; and in Denmark, Turkish, former Yugoslavian, Pakistani and Moroccan.²²

The majority of those who migrated during the 1960s and 1970s initially intended their migration to be temporary, as did the governments who had invited them. However, many stayed, and increasingly families joined them. Economic migration followed by family reunification became the primary driver of immigrant demographics. As a result, a large number of Muslims were low-skilled manual labourers who existed in tight-knit communities on the edges of mainstream society in their host countries.

In the past 20 years there has been further Muslim immigration from political asylum seekers and refugees fleeing conflicts in the Middle East, Bosnia, Chechnya, Indonesia, Iran and Afghanistan. This has made Muslim communities in Western Europe far more diverse. In the UK, for example, despite the predominance of Muslims of South Asian origin, British Muslims represent 56 nationalities, speak over 70 languages and attend more than 1,500 mosques.²³

In Canada, by contrast, immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries have arrived more recently, with most growth occurring from the 1990s onwards.²⁴ Canada is considered one of the most immigrant-friendly – as well as immigrant-dependent – countries in the world. Its population growth has become highly dependent on immigration, with recent statistics showing that net international migration accounted for two-thirds of population growth in 2004/05.²⁵ As European governments seek to restrict further immigration, immigrants are continuing to come to Canada in large numbers. Canadian immigration policy has operated on a points-based system since the 1970s, which means a high proportion of immigrants are skilled economic migrants who intend to remain in Canada permanently, a significant difference from Europe generally.²⁶ Investment in settlement and integration services has also been substantial in Canada since the 1950s: spending on integration programmes for 2008/09 was C\$825.9 million (US\$796.7 million).²⁷

In general, immigrants to Europe and Canada have tended to settle in urban areas, drawn in by opportunities in employment, housing and – importantly – social networks. In the UK, for example, 75 per cent of Muslims live in just 24 cities

or local authorities – and 38 per cent live in London.²⁸ In the Netherlands, 36 per cent of Turks and 47 per cent of Moroccans live in the four big cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and The Hague).²⁹ The same trend is true in Denmark, France and to some extent in Canada, where Muslims are predominantly based in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. The Greater Toronto Area has a larger Muslim population than any other Canadian city, or indeed any city in North America.³⁰

Socioeconomic profiles

Muslims constitute some of the most deprived and disadvantaged communities in Western Europe – although the pattern is not uniform. Unemployment figures, crime rates (especially among young adults), and education dropout rates are significantly higher than the average. How far this reflects the general trend among minority groups, and how far it is the result of religious discrimination, is not always clear – for example, Turkish immigrants in France and Muslim Indian migrants in the UK fare far better than Algerian and Pakistani migrants in the same countries respectively.

Education

It is difficult to analyse the educational attainment of the Muslim population because of the absence of official statistical data disaggregated according to faith. Some research in the UK shows lower achievement among Muslims in secondary education.³¹

Most research reveals that the greatest differences are seen in tertiary education and completion rates. One study shows that although young Muslims in France – with the exception of those of Turkish origin – have the same chances of completion at high school diploma level as young people of French origin, they have more difficulty finishing their school studies and obtaining their diploma at the university level.³² In the Netherlands, the average educational level of non-Western immigrants has increased faster than that of the native Dutch for the past 15 years, but still remains significantly lower.³³

In Canada, a comparatively high percentage of Muslims hold Masters degrees – 6 per cent compared with 2 per cent of Roman Catholics and 3.5 per cent of those with no religious affiliation. This is a higher proportion than in Europe. Likewise, in Canada 1.5 per cent of Muslims hold a PhD degree, compared with 0.3 per cent of Roman Catholics and 2 per cent of Jews.³⁴ Thus they share much in common with Chinese migrants to the UK who have above average secondary and tertiary educational achievement.³⁵

Labour market

Muslims are the most disadvantaged faith group in the Western European labour market. Among 16–24 year olds, Muslims in the UK have the highest unemployment rate (17.5 per cent).³⁶ In the Netherlands, the unemployment rate among Moroccans and Turks is 29 per cent and 21 per cent respectively, which is between two-and-a-half and three times the national average of 9 per cent. This may be partly driven by the high proportion of Muslim women over 40 without the native language and qualifications within these communities.³⁷ In France the 1999 census showed that the unemployment rate for young people of French origin was 20 per cent; for those whose parents are Algerian or Moroccan, it was 40 per cent.³⁸ Employment, when obtained, is often unskilled – leaving some in a position that is badly paid and beneath their skills and ability.³⁹ Muslim men in the UK are among the least likely to be in a managerial or professional job and the most likely to be in a low-skilled job.⁴⁰

Whether these figures are a result of discrimination or due to other socioeconomic factors is unclear. According to social capital theory, native populations use a mixture of strong and weak ties to gain access to the labour market, while immigrants focus on strong ties, from close friends and family members, thus perpetuating the cycle of lower-end jobs.⁴¹ Some recent research has also revealed labour market discrimination. In 2004, Jean-François Amadieu published a survey demonstrating that a CV was more likely to be rejected by an employer if the person had a migrant-sounding name rather than a European-sounding one.⁴²

The same experiment was conducted to the same effect in Britain,⁴³ Denmark and Canada.⁴⁴

In Canada, despite the fact that Muslims tend to be highly skilled and hold high educational qualifications, there is a comparatively high unemployment rate. With 14.4 per cent unemployed as of 2001, the unemployment rate for Muslims is nearly twice that of the Canadian national unemployment rate of 7.4 per cent.⁴⁵ This is still significantly lower than experienced in Europe and might be partially explained by the high proportion of Muslims in Canada (45 per cent) under the age of 24. Nevertheless, a recent study by Saeed Rahnama noted that, 'more often than not Muslims' occupations in Canada are not compatible with their levels and fields of education'.⁴⁶ Discrimination, and the perception of discrimination, has been a problem in Canada. According to a 2002 survey, 20 per cent of 'visible minorities' reported discrimination or unfair treatment; for Muslims, 30 per cent reported such experiences.⁴⁷ It remains extremely difficult to ascertain the extent to which discrimination is the main factor causing the labour figures stated above. For example, one of the main issues has been the acceptance by employers of foreign accreditation. The government has addressed this by creating the Foreign Credentials Referral Office in 2007, with further changes to speed up credential recognition enacted in 2009.⁴⁸

Poverty and housing

As a result of settlement patterns and labour market difficulties, Muslims in Western Europe score poorly on various poverty indicators: in the UK, 42 per cent of Muslim children live in crowded accommodation compared with 12 per cent of the population overall. Over one-third are growing up in households where there are no adults in employment compared with 17 per cent of all dependent children.⁴⁹ The majority of Muslims in France live in 'HLM' (*Habitation à Loyer Modéré*): housing provided by the government at sub-market rent levels. The situation is similar in Britain, Denmark and the Netherlands.⁵⁰ In Denmark, half of the migrant population from non-Western

countries of origin live in socially deprived areas, which are over-represented by low-income households, long-term unemployed, single parents and alcoholics. Indeed, neighbourhood is often a better predictor of poverty and attainment than race or religion.⁵¹ Saeed Rahnema has shown that Muslims in Canada receive lower incomes compared with the rest of the population: just over half have an income below C\$20,000.⁵²

The predominance of social housing and the clustering of communities has resulted in the ‘ghettoisation’ of some areas, leading to social tensions. In 2001 riots broke out between young Asians and white youth in Oldham, in the UK. Some suggested the riots were the result of a highly divided community and the unwillingness of ethnic groups to mix, while the Islamic Human Rights Commission blamed anti-Muslim hostility.⁵³ Local town leaders rejected both arguments, suggesting instead that poverty, social exclusion and the lack of government funding triggered the violence.⁵⁴ The situation is arguably worse in France, where in 2004 there were 630 *quartiers* that were classified as ghettos.⁵⁵ In Denmark, concerns about ghettoisation have led to restrictions being placed on new refugees, preventing them from finding housing beyond the municipality allocated to them for a period of three years in an effort to counteract such concentration.⁵⁶

In Canada there is a lack of data about Muslim groups and their income and housing status. Statistics referring to recent immigration (not necessarily of Muslim immigrants) show that a larger proportion of recently arrived immigrants live in low-income neighbourhoods than the general population. In 2000, for example, recent immigrants made up 39.1 per cent of Toronto’s low-income neighbourhoods, while the percentage was almost 20 per cent in Montreal.⁵⁷ However, there is no evidence of immigrant ‘ghettos’ in Canada to the extent that they exist in Europe, and it has been shown that while newly arrived immigrants initially settle in low-income neighbourhoods, they eventually move to higher-income areas.⁵⁸

Muslims are also over-represented in Western European prisons. For example, in the Netherlands, both first and second-generation people of Moroccan descent are involved in crime

more often than natives and most other ethnic groups.⁵⁹ The Open Society Institute estimates that Muslims constitute 20 per cent of all adult Dutch prisoners, while forming only 6 per cent of the national population. Muslims make up 3 per cent of the UK population but 11 per cent of the prison population, with the number of Muslim prisoners doubling between 1993 and 2000.⁶⁰ In France, it has been estimated that as many as 70 per cent of inmates are Muslim.⁶¹ In all countries, it remains unclear what accounts for such figures, although concerns have been expressed that Muslim communities are being unfairly policed, especially in respect of stop and search powers under anti-terrorism legislation.⁶² Research has found that crime is also correlated with socioeconomic circumstances. Similar Muslim incarceration figures are not recorded in Canada.

How significant is religion to this picture?

It is important to note the complexity that lies behind these figures. Research undertaken by the Runnymede Trust in 2009 found that in the UK 'poor white' boys perform worse in school than black and Asian boys of a similar socioeconomic background, which prompted a debate about how far class was becoming a more important barrier to social advancement than race or ethnicity were.⁶³ Indeed, the differences *between* different ethnic groups are less significant than those between richer and poorer groups: the gap between poor white students and affluent white students is more than three times bigger than the gaps between different ethnic groups who are equally disadvantaged.⁶⁴

Similarly, while the UK's National Equality Panel found that 'Muslim Pakistanis, Muslim Bangladeshis, Muslim white people and Sikh Indians are disadvantaged in terms of both education and occupational attainment',⁶⁵ Shamir Saggat found that most data collection and demographic analysis about Muslims is in fact based almost entirely on communities of Bangladeshi and Pakistani origin, which only constitute two-thirds of the British Muslim population. When other, less numerous, Muslim groups are examined, powerful counter-

examples emerge: Indian Muslims, East African Ismailis and people of Turkish background, for instance, perform significantly better than Pakistanis or Bangladeshis in the labour market, which according to Saggar ‘points to a country of origin effect, rather than a religious effect’.⁶⁶

Islamophobia and occidentalism

Compounding these socioeconomic issues – and potentially perpetuating them – is the perception of Islamophobia across Western Europe. Although some media reporting after 9/11 painted a picture of a Muslim community that was ‘extreme’ and ‘intolerant’, there are also cases of a small number of individuals within Muslim communities who are quick to label any type of criticism as Islamophobia.

The 2006 Pew Global Attitudes Project showed that 66 per cent of French non-Muslims and 61 per cent of British non-Muslims believe that the relationship between Muslims and Westerners is bad, and half believe Muslims to be ‘fanatical’. Similar figures are even higher in other European countries such as Spain and Germany, and have remained fairly stable over the last few years. But the survey also found that overall British Muslims have negative views about Westerners: 67 per cent of British Muslims consider Westerners ‘selfish’ and 64 per cent regard them as ‘arrogant’.⁶⁷ A six-year Gallup poll ending in 2007 explained that inter-religious and inter-regional antagonisms were founded not necessarily on a rejection of the values of the ‘other’, but on the perception that the ‘other’ rejected their own values. As the academic John Esposito reports: ‘Resentment against the West stems from what Muslims perceive as a hatred and denigration of Islam, a smug Western belief that Muslims are inferior, and a fear of Western intervention and domination.’⁶⁸

In Canada, a recent Environics survey showed that 49 per cent of Canadian non-Muslims have a ‘generally positive’ impression of Islam (up 4 points from 2003). At the same time, 35 per cent of Canadians said that the guarantee of religious freedom under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms ‘could lead

to abuses where this guarantee is used to pursue religious practices that are against Canadian values' (although this does not necessarily mean just Islam).⁶⁹ Likewise, a recent Ipsos-Reid study suggested that Canadian Muslims have a positive image of Canada, but many have experienced discrimination. Many blamed the media for perpetuating negative stereotypes – that Islam was synonymous with Arabs and the Middle East.⁷⁰ Another poll conducted by Angus Reid Strategies, however, found that Canadians viewed Islam least favourably compared with all other religions (only 28 per cent saying they had a generally favourable view of Islam) and 45 per cent believed that Islam teaches violence.⁷¹ Views in Quebec were even more severe than the Canadian average, with only 17 per cent saying they had a favourable view of Islam and 57 per cent believed it taught violence.

Like many snap poll surveys, it is difficult to interpret these findings – much depends on the wording of the questions, for example. Certainly, in Canada general hate crime seems to be rising; in particular some research points to an increase in the frequency of anti-Muslim hate crime since 9/11, although Statistics Canada reported a decline in anti-Muslim hate crime over 2007-08.⁷² A number of recent events (and more importantly, the subsequent media coverage) have raised the profile of these issues and generated a national debate on the lines of 'reasonable accommodation' to immigrants. The most significant event was a proposal for Sharia to be used along with Canadian legislation in arbitration tribunals in Ontario. Despite the use of other such religious tribunals (including Jewish and Catholic), the addition of a Sharia-based arbitration mechanism sparked considerable concern among both Muslims and non-Muslims, and the proposal was never enacted. This event was widely discussed among people we interviewed for this project as indicative of Islamophobia in Canada, and based on a misconception of what Sharia law is about. In response to the debate over reasonable accommodation the government created a commission led by Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor, two prominent academics, to investigate. The Taylor Bouchard Report concluded that the media played an integral role in

projecting the image of a crisis over reasonable accommodation, stoking fears and concerns.⁷³

Political and social organisation

The political and social organisational infrastructure for Muslim communities differs greatly between countries, but there are some similarities. This section focuses on the European context because Canadian Muslim organisations are dealt with in a separate section below. The presence of ‘communities’ among Muslim immigrants grew once families began to join the migrant workers in the 1970s. Mosques were often the centre of social organisation but eventually more formal community organisations along national and ethnic lines emerged. In some cases, organisations were formed in response to specific events, either domestic or international, which gave the impression of the need for community unification or organisation – to speak with one voice. The Rushdie Affair in 1989, the attacks of 9/11 and the cartoon controversy in Denmark in 2006 are three prominent examples that resulted in the creation of new organisations that sought to unify Muslims.

Categorisation of Muslim community organisations is difficult.⁷⁴ Western European Muslims have divided opinions on social and political issues and particularly on topics such as terrorism and security, a fact that is reflected in the diversity of community infrastructure.⁷⁵ There has been significant growth of explicitly ‘religio-political’ organisations such as Muslim Brotherhood affiliates and splinter groups, as well as the growing presence of ‘missionary’ groups such as the Tablighi Jamaat. Often overlooked is the extensive growth in ‘secular’ or ‘modernist’ Islamic movements, such as the European Muslim Network, which seek to find common ground between Western democracies and Islam.

Government engagement

The growing size of the Muslim population has forced Western European governments to seek (and sometimes create)

representative bodies in recent years with whom they could work. This has sparked debate about who are appropriate interlocutors or legitimate representative bodies – including within Muslim communities themselves. In the Netherlands, two organisations have been officially recognised by the government in the last five years: the Contactorgaan Moslems en de Overheid (CMO) and Contact Groep Islam (CGI). Both receive public funding and hold meetings regularly with government officials to discuss the integration of Muslims into Dutch society.⁷⁶

In France, the situation is complicated by the '*laïcité*' laws, which mean that the French state should limit (or even restrict) its interventions concerning the organisation of religious communities and that it should not interfere with issues of doctrine. But by 2001 the French government felt there were no suitable interlocutors with whom they could work. At the time, the major national organisation in France was l'Union des Organisations Islamiques de France (UOIF), which is thought to be close to the Muslim Brotherhood, and a beneficiary of financial support from the Gulf States. In reality, the French authorities will negotiate with any group as long as it respects public order and *laïcité*;⁷⁷ however, the UOIF has been critical of some aspects of *laïcité* and indeed has organised protests against the banning of hijabs in schools, and most recently the wearing of burkhas in public. In 2003 the French government created the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (CFCM), consisting of 25 regional councils, as a representative body of French Muslims.

These same debates have been prevalent in the UK and Denmark. Until recently, the main 'official' organisation in the UK was the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), which represents over 500 affiliated national, regional and local organisations, mosques, charities and schools. Immediately following 9/11 and 7/7 the government was keen to have an organisation that claimed to speak for British Muslims and it strengthened ties with the MCB. However, a number of competing bodies emerged to question the MCB's legitimacy, including the Muslim Sufi Council and the Federation of Muslim Organisations. Many have criticised the MCB for its connections to the Muslim Brotherhood and for its origins in 'political Islamism' and the

‘sectarian politics of Pakistan’.⁷⁸ It has also been criticised and for a period shunned by the UK government for pronouncements from MCB leadership against Israel (including sanctioning the use of violence against Jewish troops and communities).⁷⁹ The UK government has since moved away from a single interlocutor model, recognising that the overwhelming diversity of Muslims precludes a single representative body.

In Denmark, a number of formal organisations arose in response to the Prophet Mohammed cartoons controversy in 2006, and similar internal debates about legitimacy took place. These groups included, among others, the Muslim Council of Denmark (Muslimernes Fællesråd), Denmark’s first multi-ethnic Muslim umbrella organisation, the Organisation of Democratic Muslims and Muslimer i Dialog (Muslims in Dialogue). Another organisation, Islamisk Trossamfund (IT), received a great deal of press coverage as a result of the cartoon controversy as its leadership played a prominent role in the internationalisation of the affair, despite efforts by the Danish government to keep it contained.⁸⁰ Abu Laban, then leader of IT, claimed his organisation represented all Danish Muslims, and described Naser Khader of Democratic Muslims and other modernist Muslim Danes as ‘rats in holes’.⁸¹ *Ekstra Bladet*, a Danish news publication, estimated that support for IT is approximately between 5,000 and 15,000-strong.⁸² Although IT is now affiliated to the Muslim Council of Denmark and appears more moderate, it has been reported that members of this group have been targeted for deportation and censorship.⁸³

Muslim communities in Canada have an extensive number of organisations that exist at the continental, national, provincial and municipal levels; there are far too many, and they are far too diverse and varied to list here. The diversity of the organisations is extensive, divided primarily by ethnicity and by schools of Islamic thought. The highest profile organisations include the Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC), the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the Canadian Council on American–Islamic Relations (CAIR–CAN) and the Muslim Association of Canada (MAC). Similarly to the Western European experience, there are often media discussions and disagreements about many of the

major representative organisations.⁸⁴ For example, ISNA has been lauded for engaging moderate Muslims and for its social work, but others have criticised its support for the Pakistani scholar Farhat Hashmi.⁸⁵

The problem for all organisations is how far they can genuinely claim to represent the Muslim community, and especially the ‘second generation’ – those who are born and raised in Western countries to immigrants. Evidence has shown that Muslim youth in particular do not feel adequately represented by any of these organisations, and in France and the UK established organisations appear to be losing support among younger people. Recent survey results found that the vast majority of young British Muslims did not think that the MCB represented them – indeed they thought that no one represented them.⁸⁶ In France, too, it appears that the gap is widening between some representatives of official Islam and young Muslims.⁸⁷

2 Why do people radicalise?

Three fundamental principles constitute the essential conditions of all human development, collective or individual, in history: (1) human animality, (2) thought, and (3) rebellion.

Michael Bakunin, *God and the State*, 1916 edition

Radicalisation, as defined by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), is the process by which ‘individuals are introduced to an overtly ideological message and belief system that encourages movement from moderate, mainstream beliefs towards extreme views’.⁸⁸ Although not necessarily problematic in itself, radicalisation that leads to violence remains a subset of this larger phenomenon.

A variety of disciplines, ranging from economics to psychiatry, have attempted to explain what causes radicalisation. As a testament to the disparity of these works, important literature reviews on this topic have recently been undertaken and inform this report.⁸⁹ In this chapter, literature that is relevant for the two key questions at the core of the research is reviewed: the first on the causes of radicalisation to violence, and the second on *how* radicalisation can lead to violence.

What causes radicalisation to violence?

Researchers often point to underlying socioeconomic or political factors that create the conditions for radicalisation and terrorism to occur. It used to be popular to refer to such underlying factors as root causes, implying that they somehow cause, albeit indirectly, terrorist activity. It is now more common to argue that underlying causes are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for terrorism, but are ‘permissive’ factors that help establish an environment in which terrorism is *more*

likely to occur.⁹⁰ In a recent meta-review of counter-terrorism literature, Darcy Noricks uses three categories of permissive factors that we borrow here. They are used to explain various types of radicalisation and all three are common in literature in each of the countries considered.⁹¹

Global factors

Global factors are mostly geopolitical affairs, foreign policy decisions and military interventions. Many global factors have led to the sense among some Muslims that the West is on a crusade to oppress the Muslim world. Globalised media, especially the internet, has exacerbated this phenomenon, as it allows young Muslims in the West to feel connected with Muslims in places like Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan who are suffering injustice and whom they feel it is their duty to defend. This is particularly true in countries like Canada that are involved militarily in a Muslim majority country.⁹² The globalised media has created the fusion of local and global grievances: the perception of ‘Muslims under attack’ in Afghanistan becomes enmeshed with local struggles to obtain employment at home.⁹³

State factors

Muslim communities living in Western democracies share certain experiences, and often suffer considerable educational, professional and economic disadvantages, as discussed in the previous chapter. Some scholars suggest that radicalisation emerges among Muslims that fail to integrate culturally and economically into Western societies. How far this is an individual choice, a cultural preference, or the result of a lack of opportunities for them to do so remains hotly contested.⁹⁴ Tahir Abbas, for example, claims that radicalisation to violence stems from marginalisation from state and social structures, which have contributed to enormous socioeconomic disadvantages.⁹⁵ In a specific Canadian case study, Paul Barmadat and Scott Wortley argue that religious radicalisation ‘stems from feelings of

alienation, perceptions of persecution and the unfairness of the social order'.⁹⁶ Such claims are difficult to prove, as integration is complex to measure. If residential concentration (ghettoisation) can be used as an indicator, integration of visible minorities is considerably higher in Canada.⁹⁷ Although some ethnic neighbourhoods exist in Canada, such 'enclaves' are relatively few and more dispersed than in the USA and Western Europe.⁹⁸

The role of deprivation as a permissive factor is made more difficult by the fact that both *real* and *perceived* deprivation are recognised as important. As noted in Chapter 1, there are signs of both among Muslim communities in Canada, in respect of employment and income for example.

The lack of political representation, which can help people address these grievances, is also a state factor. According to French Salafism expert Samir Amghar and his colleagues, the lack of political representation and the abandonment of Muslim communities in French suburbs have allowed radical religious groups to fill the void.⁹⁹ The inability to tackle problems with conventional means is akin to many experts' claim that violence is essentially a last resort, once non-violent means have failed.¹⁰⁰ However, although this assertion is valid for individuals living in countries under state sanctioned repression, it is not clear that similar explanations hold true elsewhere.

Sociocultural factors

Sociocultural factors are a complex mixture of characteristics relating to ideology, culture and identity. Farhad Khosrokhavar and Olivier Roy's dual identity theory argues that Western Muslims, often second or third generation immigrants, are unable to reconcile their Western identity with their heritage identity, and are constantly managing two sets of norms.¹⁰¹ Roy argues that the traditional Islamic devotion of parents is giving way to ever more 'individualised' expression of religiosity by their children, and that young people invoke Islam in protest against undesirable social conditions that have been exacerbated by post-colonial discrimination.¹⁰² In that context, extremist

ideologies can sometimes provide a clear (albeit negative) identity, a set of norms that reduces uncertainty.¹⁰³

In Canada, this theme was raised throughout our interviews: ‘they’re trying to collapse [our] identities into one in a contrived or mechanical, or artificial way’, and it is especially bad for South Asian Muslims who are neither really Arabs, nor really Canadians¹⁰⁴ (in Canada, such explanations for radicalisation are asserted by Taylor and Louis¹⁰⁵). As our research demonstrates, this is not necessarily problematic or likely to lead to violence.

The roles that ideology and religion play in radicalisation are contentious. Indeed, especially after 9/11, influential analysts such as Walter Laqueur in *The New Terrorism*¹⁰⁶ and Paul Bremer in *A New Strategy for the New Face of Terrorism*¹⁰⁷ stressed that a qualitatively new brand of terrorism was emerging: a brand motivated by religious fanaticism to go to further lengths and at greater human cost to achieve their objectives.¹⁰⁸ More recently, however, the fundamental ‘newness’ of al-Qaeda inspired terrorism has been questioned, with influential terrorism scholars leaning towards the view that more things unite ‘old’ political terrorism and ‘new’ religious terrorism than divide them.¹⁰⁹ From an academic perspective, ideas and ideologies are often seen simply as vehicles to frame other, pre-existing, grievances.¹¹⁰ For others, however, religion can shape the symbolic content and meaning of a movement, bringing the individual to believe a movement is just – in some instances offering legitimacy (even an obligation) for the use of violence.¹¹¹

The question of whether or not Islam itself contains the seeds of violence is understandably controversial. Although the Old Testament has been, and sometimes still is, used to justify violence, some academics and other commentators – including prominent Muslims – stress that Islam needs to undergo reform at its roots, because there are within the sources of Islam – the Qur’an, Hadith and Sharia¹¹² – passages that could be interpreted as permitting or commanding terrorism of the kind carried out by al-Qaeda.¹¹³ As Sookhdeo suggests, ‘the only way to bring an end to Islamic terrorism is to reform the teachings of Islam with regard to war and violence’.¹¹⁴ However, other

research has shown that Islamic religiosity can lead individuals to reject and actively discourage violence, often through moral and social sanctions.¹¹⁵ Religion itself can provide a moral basis both for why political violence is obligatory or forbidden. Indeed, a report leaked by the British Security Service MI5 (which was only seen by one UK newspaper) emphasised that a strong Islamic religious identity can act as a buttress against vulnerability to extremism.¹¹⁶

How can radicalisation lead to violence?

The identification of permissive factors helps to explain why radicalisation might occur, but it does not explain the processes by which some people who experience those factors come to justify violence. A host of theories have been offered to explain how radicalisation leads to violence.

Rational choice model

Many experts have argued that, under certain circumstances, terrorism can be a rational response. By ‘rational’, it is meant that terrorists are not necessarily terrorists for the sake of terrorism, but rather select terrorism from a range of alternatives as the tactic most likely to achieve their aims.¹¹⁷ Ariel Merari, in his 1993 article ‘Terrorism as a strategy of insurgency’, argues, ‘in reality the form of insurgency – terrorism, guerrilla, mass-protest, or any combination of these – is mainly determined by objective conditions rather than by strategic conceptions of the insurgents’.¹¹⁸ Martha Crenshaw, an advocate of this approach, argues that a number of factors are necessary in the decision to use terrorism by the group: small size, failure to mobilise support, and that it is the likeliest way to set the political agenda.¹¹⁹ Indeed, as Faisal Devji points out, 9/11 did raise the profile of grievances within the Muslim world.¹²⁰

The rational choice model has been useful in dispelling the myth that all terrorists suffer from severe mental health conditions. The overwhelming conclusion that unites the recent authoritative demographic studies of terrorists is that there is no

common etiology, personality type or developmental trait, nor are there common conditions in the background of terrorists.¹²¹ Indeed, Martha Crenshaw identifies *normalcy* (or *normality*) as the characteristic feature of terrorists rather than psychopathology or personality disturbance.¹²² The same is true demographically. MI5's research has shown that British terrorists are 'demographically unremarkable': most are British nationals, often in their twenties and thirties, but are more likely to be neither married nor single.¹²³ In short, as Bakker notes in his profiling work of home-grown European terrorists, 'their socioeconomic background... is reflective of many youngsters in immigrant Muslim communities in Europe, to which most of them belong'.¹²⁴

Stage models

There have been many attempts at modelling radicalisation into violence as a process of discrete phases that individuals go through before undertaking violence; some have envisaged this process as a sort of conveyor belt. These models provide intervention strategies based on which stage an individual is currently in. The New York Police Department (NYPD) suggests four distinct and successive phases: pre-radicalisation, self-identification, indoctrination and jihadisation.¹²⁵

Moghaddam by contrast uses the metaphor of a staircase, where each floor represents a necessary psychological condition for the next. Mobilisation, at the base of this staircase, begins when people experience feelings of deprivation and perceived injustice about their relative lower status, or that of others with whom they identify (ground floor); they proceed to the next step when they begin seeking options to fight this injustice (first floor). At later stages, the person disengages from mainstream values and edges towards justifying violence.¹²⁶ Similarly, Gleees and Pope conclude that there is a conveyor belt process from Islamism to terrorism – their research found that there is a parallel between the activities of the extremist Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir and Islamic student societies at London university campuses (and elsewhere in the UK) and the recruitment of British Muslim students into terrorism.¹²⁷

The multitude of models gives rise to discrepancies and considerable disagreement. For example, Moghaddam's model entails that personal feelings of injustice and oppression are key to the initial stages of radicalisation into violence. Conversely, the NYPD model clearly states that radicalisation is not triggered by oppression, suffering or desperation. More fundamentally, stage models outline clear stages, in line with the psychological literature that stresses the importance of a tipping point marking the decision to move from language to action. However, this contradicts Marc Sageman's claim that radicalisation into violence is not a linear progressive process at all, but rather emerges once several factors are present. Whereas Sageman suggests four factors, McCauley and Moskaleiko point out at least *ten* different social-psychological processes that might be at play during radicalisation.¹²⁸

Social movement theory

Social movement theory has become popular in the study of Islamic terrorism as an attempt to overcome the various shortcomings listed above. It regards terrorist groups as rational actors responding to various incentives, not just those outlined by rational choice theory. Social movement theory integrates social and historical conditions (meta-level), dynamics of groups and organisations, and their relation to society (meso-level) and personal leadership, membership, ideology (micro-level) into one analytical framework. Louise Richardson, in *What Terrorists Want*, integrates each level of influence in her explanation of the causes of terrorism as 'a lethal cocktail containing a disaffected individual, an enabling community and a legitimizing ideology'.¹²⁹

Social movement theory recognises that people are drawn into movements for reasons other than those directly related to the aims of the group itself. In particular they show that these networks of relationships can serve to facilitate mobilisation even before awareness of the grievances of a group becomes prominent.¹³⁰ Robert White's study of IRA supporters in the Republic of Ireland showed that only half the interviewees had

been aware of the grievances faced by Catholics in Northern Ireland before joining the IRA, for example.¹³¹ Through his documentation of al-Qaeda operatives, Sageman emphasises the importance of social affiliations and networks that solidified and preceded any formal induction into the terrorist network.¹³² Bakker's work shows the importance of friends and family connections within networks, and not necessarily links to formal Salafist networks.¹³³ For those without these pre-existing family ties, a significant change is needed to disrupt their existing social networks to make them seek out new ones; for Sageman's sample group this was social or geographical mobility.¹³⁴ Finally, in his landmark study of the now banned UK group Al-Muhajiroun, Wicktorowicz identifies the stages of an extensive socialisation process that enhances the chances that a potential joiner will be drawn to a radical Islamic group and eventually participate.¹³⁵

Social movement theory also recognises the importance of group dynamics at play in the radicalisation process, which remains relatively under-examined in this field. For Wiktorowicz for example, 'socialisation' encourages participants in radical groups to accept that a true believer must engage in, or agree with, violence as this is God's commandment – and part of an individual's self-interest. Other social psychology research has noted how the creation of 'in-group – out-group' distinctions is important. Smith argues that members of terrorist groups show a higher degree of both affiliation with insiders and hostility towards outsiders than those in non-violent groups.¹³⁶

Conclusion

The literature discussing the process of radicalisation does offer some important insights and has helped to dismiss a number of misconceptions. Nonetheless, there remains no grand theory: there is no typical terrorist profile, neither is there a typical journey of radicalisation into violence. There are many different, and sometimes opposing, models offered, to which there are always important exceptions.

Most of the studies reviewed above focus on the (relatively) small number of known terrorists, from which most conclusions

about profiles, stage models and permissive factors are drawn. In scientific terms, conclusions are based on looking at the outliers, without comparing them to the hundreds of thousands of people who experienced the same permissive factors, came into contact with the same people, read the same books, and had the same background, but were radicalised (or not) in very different ways.¹³⁷ This is compounded by a lack of new field research in this area. Indeed only 20 per cent of research articles about terrorism are based on new research, which is particularly problematic when trying to formulate policy in a very contentious area.¹³⁸ A recent meta-review of counter-terrorism research concluded that much more data are needed – especially the kind that can only be obtained by fieldwork.¹³⁹

3 The current threat of terrorism and radicalisation

It is possible, broadly speaking, to gauge the extent of radicalisation in a country by looking at three indicators: the extent of the terrorist threat; the size and activity of radical or ultra-orthodox groups; and the degree of community support.

Terrorist threat

Across most of Western Europe and North America, al-Qaeda inspired terrorism remains the most pressing security concern. Of all these countries the UK faces the most severe threat: in 2007, there were approximately 2,000 individuals who posed a direct al-Qaeda inspired threat and were actively plotting attacks within the UK.¹⁴⁰ Between September 2001 and March 2008, 1,471 terrorism arrests were made, of which 35 per cent have resulted in a charge, and around 60 per cent of those charges have been convicted.¹⁴¹ Across the countries, arrests for ‘Islamist’ terrorism for 2007/08 included 231 in the UK, 78 in France, four in the Netherlands and three in Denmark.¹⁴²

In Canada, there had been a total of 21 arrests (not including arrests in 2010) since the enactment of the Anti-Terrorism Act : thirteen individuals have been convicted or pleaded guilty, two are awaiting trial and six have been resolved without conviction. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) has stated publicly that it is monitoring ‘several hundred’ national security-related subjects of interest (among whom are radicalised individuals).¹⁴³ Al-Qaeda inspired terrorism remains CSIS’s first security priority, and Canada has been identified repeatedly in al-Qaeda propaganda as a legitimate target because of its involvement in Afghanistan.

There have been, conversely, some indications that the threat is decreasing in some countries. In the summer of 2009,

the UK security threat was reduced from ‘severe’ to ‘substantial’ for the first time since 9/11, although in January 2010 it was increased back to severe.¹⁴⁴ Meanwhile, at the time of writing, the Netherlands has reduced its security level from ‘substantial’ to ‘limited’, meaning the prospects of an attack against the Netherlands is relatively small.¹⁴⁵ The latest Danish assessment, however, still continues to stress the intensified threat to Denmark in response to the cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, underlined by the recent attack on their creator, Kurt Westergaard in 2010.¹⁴⁶

Radical, ultra-orthodox groups

The delicate security situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and the recent announcement that troop numbers will be increased in Afghanistan, may see threat levels return to very high. There is much uncertainty, especially given that external events, which we cannot predict, have a role to play in acting as a galvanising force. But what is certain is that the pool of individuals and organisations who might be sympathetic to the goals of terrorists potentially pose a social and indirect security concern.¹⁴⁷

Across Western Europe, such organisations have emerged and grown significantly in the past 20 years.¹⁴⁸ This includes a growing segment of religious and political groups – including Salafists (Wahhabist), Deobandis, Tablighi Jamaat and Hizb ut-Tahrir – as well as ‘political Islamist’ organisations such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami. These groups can be considered both ‘radical’ in that they seek far-ranging changes to society that are often hostile to core liberal democratic principles, and ‘ultra-orthodox’ because of the high degree of rigidity in their theological interpretation and their resistance to contemporary modifications or innovations.¹⁴⁹ Each country has its own mix of these groups, and views about their respective security and social threat vary from country to country. Canada is not included in this section as a separate review of Canada-based organisations can be found in Chapter 8. A full typology of groups is available in Annex 2.

Across Western Europe, Salafism or Wahhabism and Tablighi Jamaat are the two most high profile fundamentalist movements, although they are very different from one another. Salafism is a literalist Sunni Islamic movement that emphasises the importance of the Salaf, or ‘pious ancestors’, as the example of devout Islamic life. Modern Salafism emerged as an Islamic revivalist movement in the nineteenth century, seeking to reject post-Salaf modern innovations, especially Western influences. This idea of returning to ‘Pure Islam’ has been a recurring theme in the history of Islam beginning with Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, the founder of the Hanbalism school of law within Sunni Islam.¹⁵⁰ The modern form of Salafism (Salafiyya) emerged in Egypt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as an Islamic revivalist movement seeking to reject post-Salaf modern innovations and protect Islam from Western colonialism, while harnessing Western technological innovations. As an ideology, Salafism can be applied to a wide-ranging collection of individuals and groups, including so-called jihadist Salafists (those who advocate violent jihad) and da’wa Salafists who are committed to non-violence and proselytising.

Often used interchangeably with the term ‘Salafism’, Wahhabism is a specifically Arab version of Salafism originating from eighteenth-century thinker Abd-al-Wahhab, and forming the basis of the official form of Islam within Saudi Arabia.¹⁵¹ Although there is no clear difference between ‘Wahhabism’ and ‘Salafism’, their interchangeability is contested, with some scholars arguing that Wahhabism is a subset of a wider, broader and more diverse school of Salafist Islam.¹⁵²

The majority of Salafists are non-violent and they have a significant presence in the Netherlands, France and Belgium.¹⁵³ In the Netherlands, the growth of the Salafist movement has been attributed to a desire among young, second-generation Dutch Muslims to be more politically active and dynamic than their parents were.¹⁵⁴ In the Netherlands in particular da’wa Salafis have come under scrutiny from security agencies who consider them to be a threat to the security of the democratic order. In the UK, by contrast, there have been attempts – with some success – to work with some members of the Salafist community.¹⁵⁵

Tablighi Jamaat is a Sunni missionary group of South Asian origin. Founded in India in 1926 by Muhammad Ilyas, the movement is dedicated to a non-political brand of Islamic revivalism. This revival is conceived to be achieved by influencing Muslims, especially non-practising Muslims, to adopt lifestyles to be more similar to the example established by the Prophet Muhammad. The group refuses to enter into national-level political controversies or communications via mass media and instead works at a grassroots, individual, level. The group is thought to be active in over 150 countries. In France the Renseignement Général considers it to play an important role in the recruitment and preparation of al-Qaeda operatives, as some former members of Tablighi Jamaat went on to become jihadist fighters.¹⁵⁶

Hizb ut-Tahrir is a Sunni pan-Islamist Party founded by Taqiuddin al-Nabhani in Jerusalem in 1953, which aims to unite all Muslim countries into a unitary caliphate. It is most active in Denmark and the UK where it is a vocal critic of Western foreign policy, especially the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some commentators in the UK suggest that Hizb ut-Tahrir provides fertile ground for potential terrorists: in other words, that it is part of the conveyor belt moving towards terrorism, although this assertion has always been strenuously denied by the movement itself. Indeed, it has not been banned in Denmark, France or the UK. It claims it is committed to achieving its goals via ‘exclusively political and intellectual means, without using violence’.¹⁵⁷ However, some analysts claim that Hizb ut-Tahrir is ‘not against violence as such. It is just against the use of violence now.’¹⁵⁸

Estimating the size of this diverse and varied ‘radical community’ is extremely difficult. As one senior counter-terrorist analyst told us, ‘it is impossible to estimate how many “radicals” there are in reality, as there is probably a sizeable “invisible” element, embedded within communities, which officials do not have access to or understand’.¹⁵⁹

Across the countries in this study, the radical, ultra-orthodox element is thought to be between 5 per cent and 15 per cent of the Muslim population in each country. In France,

l'élément radical is believed to be between 300,000 and 500,000 people.¹⁶⁰ In the Netherlands, it has been estimated that about 5 per cent of the Muslim population – approximately 45,000 people – practise a very ‘conservative’ form of Islam.¹⁶¹ Dutch authorities, in contrast, estimate the actual numbers of people involved in terrorist activities to be just a ‘few dozen’.¹⁶² In Denmark exact numbers are equally limited: ‘a small segment of the population is militant Islamist, it is impossible to put precise figures on it’.¹⁶³ In Britain, a joint Home Office and Foreign Office report estimated that the number of British Muslims actively engaged in, or supporting, terrorism is less than 1 per cent of the British Muslim population.¹⁶⁴

Moral oxygen or moral policing?

The relationship between these groups and individuals that commit terrorist acts is unclear. Broadly speaking, there are two approaches to this issue. On the one hand, the ‘moral oxygen’ argument suggests that radical groups – even when non-violent – provide an environment of intolerance that sustains the inspiration and tacit support for terrorist activity and serves as a recruiting ground.

In the UK, commentators such as Melanie Phillips, Nick Cohen and the Quilliam Foundation argue that the UK continues to pursue a de facto policy of ‘appeasement’ with Islamic extremists, which is argued to have security and long-term social consequences.¹⁶⁵ In the Netherlands, the murder of film maker Theo Van Gogh in 2003 was depicted as proof of the dangerous ideology of radical Islam by rightwing politician Geert Wilders, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and academic Herman Philipse. Aim has been taken at Salafist Imams and mosques and the ultra-orthodox but non-political Jamaat Al-Tabligh Wal-Dawa (Society for Propagation and Preaching) movement. According to testimony by the Dutch government’s Deputy National Coordinator for Terrorism, ‘for most of the known Dutch terrorists, the non-violent variety of Salafism was the first step towards acceptance of jihadist Salafism’. Da’wa Salafist groups have also been viewed as posing a long-term security threat to

democratic order, through preaching intolerance and non-engagement, which has merited a response.¹⁶⁶

On the other hand, the ‘moral policing’ argument suggests that non-violent radicals provide an important buttress *against* violent action and are best placed to stop people getting involved in terrorist activity. And although some may go on to support or undertake terrorist activity, the vast majority do not.

Research into the ideological differences between these groups reveals quite substantial points of contention. This has particularly focused on the concept of takfir, where it is clear that al-Qaeda’s position differs from that of da’wa Salafists, who do not believe it is possible for Muslims to declare one another as unbelievers.¹⁶⁷ Similar debates have begun surrounding the concepts of dar al-Islam (‘land of Islam’) versus dar al-Kufr (‘land of unbeliever’) and dar al-Harb (‘land of war’), because these concepts provide a framework for actions that are religiously sanctioned, including rules around the use of violence. Traditional interpretations of this distinction conclude that dar al-Harb and the rules it allows for exist only when Muslims are being oppressed and prevented from practising their faith. Al-Qaeda and groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir differ from this interpretation by claiming that dar-al-Islam demands the existence of a caliphate and Sharia law, not just the free practice of their religion as provided in the West.

The Muslim Brotherhood and prominent figures such as Yusuf Qaradawi and Tariq Ramadan are encouraging an ideological shift away from this dar al-Islam–dar al-Harb distinction. Their reasoning is that Europe and North America cannot be considered dar al-Islam because Sharia is not enforced, but neither can they be dar al-Harb because Muslims are free to practise Islam and do not suffer persecution. This has led to new categories, including dar al-Dawa (land of preaching), dar al-Ahd (land of contact) or dar al-Shahada (land of testimony) and a new middle-way movement referred to as Wassatiyya. However, according to the academic Eric Brown, the ‘Wassatiyya “compromise” with the West [has not] moderated the underlying ideological antagonism of mainstream Islamists toward it’.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, the leaders of the Wassatiyya often still

have views on violent jihad in Palestine and Iraq that Western governments would label ‘terrorism’.

A number of academics and commentators argue that radicals are the best allies in the fight against terrorism because they understand the ideology and can help to direct people away from the violent elements of it.¹⁶⁹ Bob Lambert documents how the Brixton Salafis were the most effective group fighting London-based violent extremists in the 1990s; in the USA, Robert Leiken argues for engagement with the Muslim Brotherhood;¹⁷⁰ and in France, Samir Amghar takes a similar line.¹⁷¹

Community support? Levels of moral oxygen

Intelligence communities are also concerned about a more ephemeral issue – the degree of tacit support for terrorism from Muslim communities more broadly. Historically, the greater the community sympathy, the easier it is for conspirators to avoid detection. Public support for terrorism is known to be extremely important, perhaps even ‘the strongest conclusion from the social sciences affecting the counter-terrorism policy issue’.¹⁷²

Shamit Saggat recently dubbed this broader support as ‘moral oxygen’ – unregistered sympathy for the underlying aims of al-Qaeda inspired terrorism – and argued that there is probably a large group of sympathisers or fence-sitters who do provide the moral oxygen for the ‘men of violence’ to act.¹⁷³

The extent of this moral oxygen and what role it actually plays is unclear. Evidence tends to come from national level polling, which can be misleading and hard to interpret. A 2007 Gallup World Poll found that between 5 and 10 per cent of Muslims surveyed in Britain, France and Germany felt that the use of violence was justified in aid of a noble cause, however subjectively defined.¹⁷⁴ In the UK, surveys have variously depicted that between 2 and 20 per cent of British Muslims held some sympathy with the motives of those who carried out the 7/7 London attacks.¹⁷⁵ In Canada, similar polling has found that 12 per cent of respondents who knew of the ‘Toronto 18’ arrests felt that the goals of some of the group, had they been successful, would have been justified, and another 13 per cent replied ‘I

don't know'.¹⁷⁶ However, these individuals would probably not consider themselves in any way extreme, and may frequently move between groups and ideologies, defying any categorisation at all. It is not clear how large – or important – this group might be.

4 The policy response

The attacks of 9/11 hastened a wave of anti-terrorism legislation. Some countries were facing threats for the first time, while others were adapting to a new type of terrorism, able to draw on earlier experiences. As the threat has evolved, many countries – including Canada – have invested resources and significant effort into countering radicalisation to violence. This chapter compares work in this area in different parts of Europe and draws out useful lessons for Canada. Examples of prevention in Canada are not reviewed.

The immediate response

The first phase of legislation following the attacks of 9/11 was mainly about disruption and detection. Countries adopted similar measures, including expanded powers for police and security services, increased sentences for crimes with a political or ideological motivation, criminalisation of conspiracy, facilitation and recruitment to terrorism, and the proscription of a number of groups that were deemed to share terrorist aims. In Canada, the Anti-Terrorism Act was enacted in December 2001, amending the Criminal Code to create specific crimes designed to prevent terrorism. These included a definition of terrorist activity, crimes designed to combat the financing of terrorism, the crime of knowingly participating in the activities of a terrorist group for the purpose of enhancing the ability of any terrorist group to carry out a terrorist activity, and the crime of knowingly facilitating a terrorist activity.

The Canadian government also has the power under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act of 1978 to issue ‘security certificates’ for non-citizens whom the government believes pose a threat to national security. These powers allow

the government to hold such an individual in detention, and even deport them at the risk of facing torture. Since 1991, 27 individuals have been subject to security certificates, 19 of whom have been successfully deported from Canada. Since 9/11, security certificates have been issued for five individuals accused of having connections to terrorism. Under the security certificate regime, sensitive evidence that could endanger national security or compromise intelligence sources is not made public, nor is it provided to the accused. Rather, in response to a 2007 Canadian Supreme Court ruling that some elements of security certificates were unconstitutional, the law was revised to create special advocates with access to classified information to argue on behalf of the accused. Most recently Canadian courts have applied pressure to make the evidence behind certificates more widely accessible. However, the protection of sources and intelligence was deemed more important and consequently the security certificates for two of the five, Adil Charkaoui and Hassan Almrei, were quashed.¹⁷⁷

These enhanced powers hastened a continuing debate about the balance between security powers and civil rights, as well as the undue targeting of Muslims through profiling in general.

The new prevention agenda

Counter-terrorism increasingly includes policies to reduce the number of potential terrorist recruits by confronting those who seek to spread a violent extremist ideology and those who are vulnerable to its arguments. This general approach has been called 'prevention' work. Although it is difficult to define precisely because it covers so many different policy areas, Charles Farr, head of the UK's Office of Security and Counter Terrorism, sums up prevention strategies as targeting 'that much larger group who feel a degree of negativity, if not hostility towards the state, the country, the community, and who are, as it were, the pool in which the terrorists can swim'.¹⁷⁸

Prevention work can be seen as a four-tier pyramid:

- At the top (tier 4) are individuals who are actively seeking to break the law and must be dealt with using an enforcement approach based on disruption.
- Tier 3 includes those who hold or advocate extremist views or are in the process of becoming extreme and must be dealt with using an interventionist approach.
- Tier 2 comprises individuals vulnerable to radicalisation and involves a targeted approach of providing guidance and support.
- Tier 1 includes the entire community and focuses on ensuring equal access to public services, social and economic integration and preventing discrimination.

This structure of priorities is generally shared across prevention approaches in different countries.¹⁷⁹

In the UK prevention work has received political and financial backing: £45 million was committed for the ‘Preventing Violent Extremism’ strategy through the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) between 2008 and 2011.¹⁸⁰ However, across all departments, including the Home Office, Foreign Office, DCLG and Department for Children, Schools and Families, the figure for prevention-related work was as high as £140 million in 2008/09.¹⁸¹ The Netherlands and Denmark have initiated similar programmes.¹⁸² Amsterdam has allocated €1.3 million a year for these activities.¹⁸³

France has been largely the exception to this rule, viewing counter-terrorism as primarily the work of the Ministry of Interior, the police and security services. However, French authorities do acknowledge the need to address hearts and minds, which they do by ensuring there are democratic checks against their robust counter-terrorism powers and communications that take care not to conflate Islam and terrorism.¹⁸⁴ Other explicit prevention initiatives are, on the whole, absent because of concerns about their effectiveness as well as how far they clash with *laïcité*. One senior French official put it: ‘*Les autorités sont déraillées. Devons-nous dépenser de l’argent en prévention?*’ *On n’est pas convaincu, sauf que ça fait du sens sur le plan politique.*¹⁸⁵

The UK, the Netherlands and Denmark share similar aims in their prevention work: first, to challenge the violent extremist ideology; second, to build community resilience and social cohesion, and third, to provide protection and intervention to those vulnerable to radicalisation.¹⁸⁶ Where differences exist they are mainly a matter of emphasis. For example, the Danish government prioritises employment with regards to integration, especially of women and young people, while Dutch agencies are concerned with the long-term social threat of groups who preach segregation and withdrawal from Dutch society.¹⁸⁷ In the UK, by contrast, although ‘preventing violent extremism’ covers numerous areas, emphasis is placed on building community resilience and fighting the al-Qaeda ideology. Some specific initiatives are set out from each tier below.

Tier 4: Challenging the violent extremist ideology

The importance and effectiveness of the al-Qaeda narrative was noted throughout the interviews we conducted for this study with senior police, security service personnel and other stakeholders. In the UK, the Research, Information and Communications Unit (RICU) was set up to help the government communicate more effectively in order to reduce the risk of terrorism, by exposing the weaknesses of violent ideologies, and to support credible alternatives to violent extremism. RICU outlines words and expressions that need to be avoided when communicating with British Muslims. For example, its research claims that terms such as ‘battle of ideas’ or ‘winning hearts and minds’ refer to an opposition between Islam and the West and may imply a superiority of Western values over Muslim ones.¹⁸⁸

In the Netherlands, authorities take a clear line on stopping the preaching of intolerance. As one expert put it:

*We also expect them [mosques] to exclude jihadist recruiters and stop young people from opting for violence. If people in or around these centres prove to be promoting radicalisation or spreading hatred, we do not hesitate to prosecute them or deport them as a threat to national security.*¹⁸⁹

The UK has toughened its approach as well, jailing notable radical Imams such as Abu Hamza and Abu Qatada, while refusing to allow Omar Bakri to re-enter the UK. Since 2001, French authorities have also implemented heavy pressure on radical ultra-orthodox groups and individuals. Notably, this has involved openly monitoring places such as gyms, prisons, internet phone shops, clandestine mosques and car repair garages, but not major mosques.¹⁹⁰

Since 2005 the UK government has provided support for a number of initiatives developed by the Muslim community in order to encourage the growth of liberal and moderate voices. One example that seeks to create powerful counter narratives that appeal to young people is a scholars' road show, the Radical Middle Way. From 2007 to 2009 it held 82 road show events and a number of other formal and informal meetings with domestic and international scholars and speakers all around the UK. These road shows aim to talk to young Muslims about 'the correct understanding of Islam'; the project challenges 'extremism as un-Islamic' and portrays 'moderation and balance as Islamic virtues'.¹⁹¹

In the Netherlands, debate within and between communities is encouraged, on topics ranging from violent extremism to the history of Islam and the evolution of a European Islam. A senior Director at Politiet's Efterretningstjeneste (PET), the Danish Security Intelligence Service, suggested that the incorporation of women has been particularly effective in fostering debates. In their experience, bringing together people with different viewpoints – one more orthodox, the other more liberal, both of which could be quite vocal – has helped to promote pragmatic debate. Bringing such things out in the open often takes away the sting.¹⁹²

Tier 3: Protection for and intervention around those vulnerable to radicalisation

The hard edge of prevention work involves identifying individuals perceived to be in the process of radicalisation to violence and undertaking targeted interventions. This type of

work requires extensive partnership working between central and local government, community organisations, schools, teachers and social workers as well as the police and security services. However, this raises difficult questions about how far it is possible to spot such vulnerability, given that most research on the subject now concludes that there is no such thing as a 'typical' terrorist or journey of radicalisation into violence.¹⁹³

Substantial initiatives are under way in the UK, Denmark and the Netherlands to boost local police, social workers, teachers and parents' competences. In Denmark, local crime prevention cooperation between schools, social authorities and police has resulted in pilot projects that provide information and advice on how these partners can spot and prevent radicalisation into violence.¹⁹⁴ In the UK, the need for better methods of sharing information to ensure local partners have access to the latest research was highlighted in a recent assessment of prevention work by the Audit Commission, an independent watchdog that monitors government expenditure. Meanwhile, the Dutch government uses a system that enables the channelling of information from cities and local communities to a central database.

Once an individual is identified as being at risk, a number of intervention options are possible. In Denmark the security services lead on 'disengagement' talks with individuals who have been identified as extremist or vulnerable.¹⁹⁵ In the UK, the government has encouraged interventions coming from people within the community, either Imams or social and youth workers, as well as the police. For example, the Channel Project, run by the Association of Chief Police Officers, asks teachers, parents and community workers to look out for signs of vulnerability to radical views. A different type of project, the Brixton-based Street Project, provides a safe place offering 24/7 counselling and activities designed to counter the adverse impact of extremist and terrorist propaganda on a receptive youth.¹⁹⁶ It is run by a group of Salafis who work with the most vulnerable people; no names or details are shared with the police unless and until they have reasonable suspicion of terrorist or criminal intent.

Special attention is also paid to the risks of radicalisation into violence in prison. Dutch authorities isolate convicted terrorists from other prisoners in two detention centres in order to prevent ‘contamination’. Moreover, prison staff in these institutions are trained to detect signs of radicalisation to violence.¹⁹⁷ In the UK, a programme employs moderate Imams and mentors to challenge Muslim inmates’ extremist ideologies and behaviours, although this work has recently been criticised as being largely ineffective and nowhere near sufficient to tackle the problem.¹⁹⁸ In France, despite the strict applications of *laïcité*, there are prison Imams who seek out and work with ‘at risk’ individuals.¹⁹⁹

Tiers 1 and 2: Building community resilience and social cohesion

Building the capabilities of communities to resist and actively suppress extremism is a primary objective of prevent-based approaches. As seen above, many European Muslims find themselves on the lower end of socioeconomic indices. Addressing this situation is considered important to deflating the effectiveness of the extremist narrative, and reducing the pool of frustrated youths who may be vulnerable to an extremist or violent ideology.

A central aspect of improving community resilience is to increase the capacity of Imams and mosques to counter radicalisation into violence. This is based on the concern that they are generally out of touch with second and third generation Muslims, leaving an ideological vacuum which can be exploited. The UK government’s approach is a combination of work to raise statutory standards of governance, and supporting the community to improve broader standards in mosques. In 2007 it supported the creation of the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board, which is a national facilitatory body for good governance in mosques and for improving the performance of Imams and Islamic teachers through a process of self-regulation based on five agreed standards.²⁰⁰

In France, Dominique De Villepin introduced the creation of the ‘Foundation for the Works of Islam of France’ (Fondation

pour les oeuvres de l’Islam), which is required to manage French or foreign private donations for the creation or maintenance of Muslim places of worship in France and to subsidise the training of Imams. The Dutch government has set up something similar, having been blamed for doing too little to limit the increase of extremist Imams. In Denmark, however, Imams are not considered to be important in radicalisation and the restrictions placed on them (around language, for example) have harmed relations with Turkey.²⁰¹

Building community resilience includes tackling socioeconomic disadvantage. The UK, Denmark and the Netherlands have numerous targeted interventions to that end. In the UK, the Mosaic Muslim Mentoring Scheme, funded through the DCLG’s Community Leadership Fund, aims to recruit 100 Muslim professionals to mentor disadvantaged young Muslims in schools and colleges.²⁰²

Increasingly, cultural integration is important, which can include emphasising the need for immigrants to identify with shared values, as well as broader society to recognise the contribution of immigrants to the vibrancy of their countries and to give greater attention to the concerns and identity struggles of second and third generation Muslims. Building social cohesion through the development of common values begins at school. In Denmark and the Netherlands the school curriculum is based on confronting misperception and myth by promoting ‘true’ knowledge about Islam, in subjects such as history, literature and art. In the Netherlands, since 2006, primary and secondary schools have been legally obliged to build citizenship education and social integration into their curricula.²⁰³ The same is true in the UK, where local authorities – for example Birmingham City Council – are responsible for working with local faith schools to design and incorporate British citizenship courses into their curriculums.²⁰⁴

Conclusion: the lessons from prevention work

Even though the concept of prevention work is relatively new, there are a number of lessons that can be learned, particularly in

relation to how this kind of work relies on trust and credibility. In the UK, there is a continued mistrust of the counter-terrorism strategy as a whole, and of prevention work in particular, arising from a wide range of sources and political convictions.²⁰⁵ A lot of this is based on myth and misconception, but the government finds it difficult to know how to overcome that.²⁰⁶ Other European countries have faced similar problems, although they do not seem to have suffered the same extent of backlash as the UK, which may be the result of slightly different approaches. Looking across Europe, lessons should be drawn in the following areas:

The labelling of projects

Labelling projects that traditionally would have been considered social programmes as part of a new securitised prevention agenda has led to a number of organisations in the UK boycotting the programme entirely. For some it has become divisive: ‘those who take the money are seen as complicit with the government agenda and are sell-outs. Those who don’t are seen as borderline extremists.’²⁰⁷ Even where the labelling is not explicitly about terrorism or extremism, it can be viewed as still being part of a securitisation agenda – this has been the case in the Netherlands, although to a lesser extent than in the UK.²⁰⁸

Measuring success

Methods of assessing the effectiveness of prevention-related policies are significantly underdeveloped, making the efficacy of these projects hard to capture. In the UK, process-driven indicators tend to be employed (numbers of people involved, deadlines hit), rather than outcome-driven measures (the extent to which people changed their views).²⁰⁹ Measuring outcomes in any social policy is difficult and in prevention work this is particularly true. In Denmark efforts are made to measure ‘feelings of inclusiveness’; in the Netherlands there is not a single systematic metric of measuring success, although the work there is considered excellent.²¹⁰ There are some examples in other areas

where attitudes to certain issues can be measured before and after projects and differences are noted, which offers a promising way forward.²¹¹

Asking people to look out for ‘at risk’ individuals

The importance of local delivery of prevention work has required public servants to develop new skills: understanding many theological concepts of Islam, the specific details of different communities, theories behind radicalisation and the complexities of political Islam. This is an incredibly complicated and controversial matter when various public servants (and community people) are asked to look out for ‘at risk’ individuals who are vulnerable to radicalisation.

The combined focus of these prevent programmes has clearly put a strain on public sector professionals. This has been a particular cause for concern for university authorities who can mistake signs of increasing religiosity or expressions of disagreement with foreign policy as meaning radicalisation to violence.

Using prevention as intelligence gathering

Using prevention as intelligence gathering – either by direct police involvement, or asking frontline professionals to collect information on young Muslims – has caused concern among the UK’s Muslim and non-Muslim populations. Prevention work in the UK has been undermined to some extent by recent accusations that it has become part of an intelligence-gathering mission to map out Muslim communities, identify ‘at risk’ areas and target resources. For instance, members of the British academic community described attempts to include them in the collection of information to enforce the newly introduced ‘points-based’ immigration system as ‘sheer stupidity’, ‘discriminatory’ and ‘damaging for the vitality and exchange that characterises academic life’.²¹² In Denmark, a concerted effort has been made to ensure local prevention work is not about intelligence gathering.

Choosing the right people

Interacting with communities can require a steep cultural learning curve, and it is inevitable that governments will make mistakes. Across Europe, governments probably still engage too much with those who shout the loudest, which can be detrimental in the long term.²¹³ In the Netherlands, the body set up by the government to liaise with the Moroccan community is still not representative of the general Moroccan population,²¹⁴ and in France the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman is periodically criticised for being ineffective, even by those who helped to found it.²¹⁵ This has been made more difficult by a splintering of representation: many of the larger umbrella organisations are finding it harder to prove their legitimacy, which is compounded by the growing diversity of the Muslim population over the last decade. A recent survey in Britain, for example, found that 51 per cent of British Muslims felt *no* Muslim organisation represented their views.²¹⁶

In Denmark, the government seeks to promote dialogue and discussion with people who have inside influence within communities. It actively goes beyond religious figures to work with social workers, teachers and journalists. This process is still challenging but is considered to have been very effective to bring a greater diversity of people around the table, especially women.²¹⁷

Supporting groups without undermining legitimacy

Messages are received with an increasingly sceptical eye, not only for the nature of the message, but also for the nature of the messenger.²¹⁸ Credibility lies at the heart of successful counter-radicalisation programmes. Counter-radicalising messages and influences can only come from groups that have trust and traction with the target constituencies, which is not always the government. As a result, there is a difficult balancing act between working with people whom the government can trust to deliver, and who project inclusive, tolerant values, and those who also have credibility in the eyes of the community. In France, one senior government official advised that the government should never create Muslim groups to combat extremism – they will lose

all credibility.²¹⁹ Certainly the Quilliam Foundation in the UK, a ‘counter-extremism think tank’, has often been accused of losing credibility among those it is trying to reach for being seen as too close to the government.

5 Violent and non-violent radicals: social and personal characteristics

Much research has gone into attempting to identify the profile, or at least certain characteristics, of al-Qaeda inspired terrorists. The one certainty that can be concluded from these efforts is that a single profile does not exist. As noted in Chapter 2, researchers also regularly put forward either root-cause or permissive factors that create the conditions that make terrorism more likely, or trigger factors that explain an individual's specific decision to undertake terrorist activity.

However, research in this area has often focused solely on terrorists, omitting a comparison group of non-terrorists. In this chapter the characteristics and the experiences of terrorists and radicals for whom we have information are compared and contrasted against a number of root-cause and trigger factor theories. Where appropriate, young Muslims (aged 18–30) are also included in the analysis. By recognising which characteristics and experiences are common to all three of these groups, and isolating the differences, a better understanding of what causes radicalisation to violence is possible. Because of the small sample size, however, these differences are indicative, not predictive.

Education and employment²²⁰

Both high and low levels of education have been considered permissive factors for terrorism. A lack of formal education, as an indicator of poverty of opportunity, has been suggested as a reason why individuals resort to terrorism. Other research, especially recent demographic surveys, has emphasised relatively high levels of education as a signifier.²²¹ In our sample, educational attainment and employment stability differed marginally between the terrorist and radical groups. In the

terrorist sample, eight of 30 attended universities, 16 finished high school, and six were 'dropouts'.²²² Radicals were more likely to attend university: 13 of 21 did so, six finished high school, and one was a 'dropout'.

Recent sociological research has found that those with technical or applied degrees – medicine, applied sciences and, especially, engineering – were over-represented in extremist-Islamist movements in the Muslim world. Gambetta and Hertog suggest that those with a technical education (especially engineering graduates) typically exhibited common 'personal dispositions' – including a tendency to hold rightwing political views, higher than average levels of religiosity, and a propensity to combine these in a radicalising way.²²³ In the terrorist sample, only one of the 30 pursued an arts or social science subject, while the majority (17) studied vocational sciences, engineering, IT and business. In comparison, the radical group were equally likely to have studied arts or humanities as sciences or business (seven radicals studied the former, six radicals studied the latter). Whether or not one had an Islamic upbringing did not differ significantly between radicals and terrorists. Only seven out of 33 terrorists and three out of 17 radicals had a 'devout' upbringing; seven terrorists and five radicals had a 'moderate' Islamic upbringing, and 19 terrorists and nine radicals did not have a religious upbringing at all.²²⁴

Finally, radicals were slightly more likely to have been in employment than terrorists: 14 out of 15 radicals had been in employment at one point, compared with 21 out of 35 terrorists.²²⁵

Political views

Relationship to the state

Some scholars emphasise that individuals who feel alienated from state structures become prey for violent dogma.²²⁶ Indeed, some members of the Toronto 18 are alleged to have originally planned to 'storm' parliament buildings and take politicians 'hostage', in a bid to make the Canadian government comply with their demands (removal of troops from Afghanistan and the

release of prisoners in federal institutions). In the words of one individual involved, the plot was supposed to ‘screw’ Prime Minister Steven Harper, the government and the military.²²⁷

However, the large majority of radicals and young Muslims also displayed dislike of and a low level of trust in the Harper government (although this may have been a proxy for government in general). Of particular note is the high prevalence of conspiracy theories, and constant reference to high-profile cases of Muslims being unfairly treated in Canada. Several argued – without necessarily being very informed on the details of each – that both 9/11 and the Toronto 18 plot were set-ups and that the RCMP actively spied on the Muslim community by sending officials in disguise to mosques and community events. (It is to be noted that some information relating to the Toronto 18 cell was released after some of our interviews, which may impact on this finding. However, the ‘statement of uncontested facts’ from the Saad Khalid trial was available at the time of interviews.)²²⁸ In particular, young Muslims widely believed that the Toronto 18 were led into terrorism by the RCMP informer – and cited as ‘proof’ that some have since had their charges stayed or dropped.

It was also common for young Muslims to believe (incorrectly) that ‘they [the RCMP/CSIS] have the right to hold you without charge’ and ‘lock people up without Habeas Corpus’.²²⁹ Some were deeply critical of RCMP outreach programmes, cynically believing that the police ‘had their own agenda under their sleeve’,²³⁰ or were simply engaging in a ‘public relations game’.²³¹ However, the more cynical portrayals of government were only held by a minority of people in our sample, often the most vocal participants. A similar sentiment was echoed by community members in Europe, particularly in Denmark.²³²

Despite conspiracy theories being mentioned regularly by respondents throughout the fieldwork, it was difficult to ascertain how widespread these were held outside the sample. However, a study concerning explanations of 9/11 revealed that members of minority groups and youth were more likely to believe conspiracy theories, as were those who consume less ‘legitimate’ forms of media, such as blogs.²³³ Certainly, in the

Toronto 18 case the widespread distribution of the film *Unfair Dealing* suggests that many people are attracted by these alternative explanations. This film explains how the Toronto 18 terrorism plot was fabricated by the RCMP and CSIS in order to enact certain anti-terrorism laws and increase funding for national security. As this report went to press, the film had had more than 22,000 views on YouTube.

Foreign policy

Anger at Western foreign policy is frequently used to explain terrorist activity. For terrorists, the extent of this feeling is intense: Ressam, Meskini and Haouari of the Ressam cell in Canada believed that the United States ‘was the biggest enemy of Islam’ because of its foreign policy.²³⁴ ‘End the torture and leave Iraq’ was the message of leaflets distributed by a member of the London 21/7 cell,²³⁵ while another referred to the Netherlands as ‘a democratic torture chamber’ because of its involvement in Iraq.²³⁶ Momin Khawaja, a Canadian citizen found guilty of involvement in the UK fertiliser bomb plot, wrote in an email, ‘when the kuffar amreekans invaded Afghanistan, that was the most painful time in my whole life’.²³⁷

But this opposition is not unique to terrorists. Foreign policy is a major and consistent grievance among Muslims, and disapproval is nearly unanimous. Many radicals and young Muslims have participated in protests against the Iraq War. One Canadian radical even went to Iraq to repel the coalition forces’ ‘shock and awe’ offensive in 2003 as a human shield.²³⁸ Another stated that he agreed with defensive jihad ‘one hundred per cent’, arguing that ‘the West, for their geopolitical interests’ oppress Muslims.²³⁹ For the young Muslims in particular, there is great mistrust concerning the objectives of the war in Afghanistan: ‘it is for everything besides what they are telling us... it’s the ideology of a Muslim they don’t want’.²⁴⁰

However, it is important to note that radicals and many young Muslims voiced anti-war arguments that were unrelated to their Muslim identity. They felt that soldiers are dying unnecessarily and it is a waste of taxpayers’ money; as one put it,

‘forget me as a Muslim, it’s me as a god-damn taxpayer!’²⁴¹ These concerns come across powerfully in Europe. One radical interviewed in Denmark intellectually grounded his opposition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, drawing on international law and political self-defence principles and making no reference to religion at all.²⁴²

Experience of protest

While it is clear that all groups share frustrations, terrorists often refuse to engage in the political process or even in peaceful protest. Zakaria Amara of the Toronto 18 allegedly declared on a blog posting: ‘I hate flags, I hate countries... I hate man-made laws.’²⁴³ Likewise, convicted terrorists who were part of both the Vollsmose and Hoftsad cells disagreed with participation in elections and, more widely, with any engagement in politics, democracy or the judicial system.²⁴⁴

Conversely, many radicals channel their energy through community or political work. Interestingly, radicals were more likely to have been involved in political protest – over a third, compared with under a quarter of terrorists. These findings gain agreement in other literature. A recent study of young Muslim American experiences found political mobilisation to be the most important factor stunting radicalisation (including violent radicalisation).²⁴⁵ In our sample, one radical volunteered at a local correctional facility, counselling inmates,²⁴⁶ another even travelled to Afghanistan to set up various community programmes, to ‘contribute in the way that I can’.²⁴⁷ In general, political involvement tended to focus on foreign policy across both groups. Eight terrorists and six radicals described themselves as not political at all, but were nonetheless active about social issues.

Local politics and community

When local leadership fails to connect with young people in a community, it provides an opportunity for more radical influences. One radical had seen it happen in Canada himself:

*These people will take more of an interest in them, and they'll spend more time with them and they'll support them and so they have a tendency to maybe soften themselves to these kinds of people because they actually take an interest in them and seem to want to help them.*²⁴⁸

This failure of local leadership is something that is experienced to a large degree by radicals and young Muslims alike. A number stressed that mosques and community leaders are out of touch with the youth and preach sermons that do not relate to young people's experiences (although there are notable exceptions in the countries studied of course, including in Canada). As one radical put it, 'I'm tired of hearing about the battles 1,400 years ago. I want an Imam who can tell me about my kids smoking hash.'²⁴⁹ Interviewees also reported a degree of ignorance or naivety about what might be happening within the community: 'You see community leaders who are absolutely powerless, and that their views are spineless... [they] are completely clueless about what the al-Qaeda ideology is.'²⁵⁰ Every European country is facing an issue of inter-generationalism. In France, it is between '*les beurs*' and '*les blédards*': *beur* is a pejorative term for a French person of North African descent and a *blédard* is a pejorative term for someone who came from a rural town or village.²⁵¹ In Denmark, there is a concern about how few Imams can actually speak Danish, and that few have spent long enough in the country to 'connect' with their communities.²⁵²

Terrorists were more likely to have aggressively confronted the mosque leadership over these disagreements. Of course, confrontation is to be expected, and is not itself a worrisome indicator. For example, the Muslim community in Ottawa has recently petitioned to remove a newly appointed Imam at their local mosque, declaring, 'we do not need to import an Imam from abroad. We need an Imam who has command of English, who has lived in the West and who has knowledge of daily societal pressures.'²⁵³ However, the virulence of a confrontation can be an indicator that radicalisation to violence is under way, and such confrontations usually relate to the legitimacy of violence. Yasin Omar, one of the 21/7 bombers, argued with Said Bukhari at Finchley mosque about the legitimacy of suicide

bombing, saying, ‘Don’t mislead the people!’²⁵⁴ Similar confrontations occurred between some members of the Hofstad network and mosque leaders.²⁵⁵

Social views and experiences

Discrimination

Discrimination, perceived either personally or against Muslims generally, is frequently viewed as a permissive cause of terrorism.²⁵⁶ Many Canadian and European terrorists cited this as a reason for action. One convicted member of the Hofstad network was convinced that Dutch society was intent on ‘exterminating Islam’.²⁵⁷ According to another member of the same cell, the Muslim community is under ‘threat’ and ‘therefore armed action is legitimate and even obligatory in the Netherlands’.²⁵⁸ Likewise, Ahmed Abdullah Ali of the UK transatlantic airline plot produced a martyrdom video in which he defended his actions on the grounds that the ‘British are more concerned about the killing of foxes than of Muslims.’²⁵⁹

Although clearly felt among terrorists, feelings of discrimination do not set them apart from non-terrorists. Discrimination was also prevalent among our sample of young Muslims, although to a lesser degree. Most felt that, post 9/11, suspicion and distrust of Muslims had increased.²⁶⁰ One stated that, ‘People become very aggressive when they see you’;²⁶¹ another claims to have been unfairly dismissed from his job, as people were ‘scared’ of him,²⁶² while a number had experience of facing barriers in employment: ‘*Il y a une certaine égalité au niveau de la société, mais pour l’emploi, il n’y en a pas.*’²⁶³ Others argued that as ordinary Canadian Muslims, they were being made to feel ‘different’ by others.²⁶⁴ In Europe, this concern was equally, if not more, widespread. For instance, many felt the publication of the Mohammed cartoons in Denmark signified extreme ‘disrespect’ of Muslims.²⁶⁵

Among the sample of radicals and young Muslims, discrimination is sometimes viewed as embedded in official institutions. One radical argued that the government hands down ‘different treatments’²⁶⁶ while another believed that the

police unfairly target Muslim youth, detaining suspects with no proof.²⁶⁷ Young Muslims told stories of knowing a fellow Muslim being held at airport security ‘for no reason’. In the absence of personal experiences of discrimination, some cited cases that had received a great deal of media coverage, such as the security certificate recipients, the case of Maher Arar who underwent extraordinary rendition,²⁶⁸ the case of Abousfian Abdelrazik who was stranded in Sudan,²⁶⁹ and Suaad Hagi Mohamud who was detained in Kenya for three months.²⁷⁰ However, these were not considered to be sufficient justification to warrant a violent response.

Feelings about the West

Terrorists complained about the pressures of living in a secular liberal society, especially the conflict between the ideals of liberalism and the ideals of Islam. For Zakaria Amara, for example, there was a ‘lack of freedom to do what is halal [permissible]’.²⁷¹ Radicals and a significant number of young Muslims noted something similar, in particular the apparent hypocrisy displayed towards Muslims, most commonly expressed in respect of the veil and burqa. While in principle all agreed it ‘should be totally fine’ to be a good Muslim and live in a liberal democracy, the ‘two sides... are clashing’,²⁷² because of hypocrisy: ‘they [Canadian-born citizens] believe it is extreme that women cover themselves... and at the same time they preach that everyone has the right to do whatever they want.’²⁷³

Even if there are occasional difficulties, the majority of radicals and young Muslims reported very positive views of Canadian society. ‘I love Canada’ and ‘we as Canadian citizens’ were common phrases.²⁷⁴ One radical expressed affection for the Canadian way of life because it is ‘smooth’, whereas where he grew up you had to ‘bribe people for everything’.²⁷⁵ There was recognition that Canada is incredibly open, ‘they make space for you’.²⁷⁶ Interestingly, the ‘Canadian way’ was often contrasted with a ‘European way’ for Muslims, which was thought to be harsher.²⁷⁷ Muslims in Europe were viewed as having a more difficult life, and in particular suffering more discrimination than

in Canada. As one put it, ‘I’ve been to most European countries... I saw a lot of discrimination over there against Muslims. Over here, I don’t see it, not at all,’²⁷⁸ while another explicitly compared her experience in Canada with that in France, where ‘if you’re not the generic French man or French woman, it’s just stares from everyone’.²⁷⁹

Thus the opinion of a corrupt media and hypocritical, often discriminatory, government was accompanied by a genuine affection for Canada, its principles and society. In Europe, too, the radicals we interviewed recognised the benefits of living in Europe – ‘you have a good life’ – although less often than in Canada.²⁸⁰

In contrast, discussion within cells that include terrorists involved expressions of a deep hatred of Canadian and Western society. One member of the Ressam cell commonly talked about his hatred for the West: ‘[Their] culture – immoral dress and music, godless pursuit of wealth must be stopped.’²⁸¹ Likewise, one member of the Toronto 18 allegedly joked about how he ‘pretended’ to like Canadian culture: ‘You have to put on that face... you know what, I love all this ... non-believers, yup. I love your wealth... I love your women... Rome has to be defeated.’²⁸² This attitude is mirrored in terrorists’ romantic conception of life under Sharia law – often expressed in eulogies about the Taliban. One member of the Ressam cell wanted to go to Afghanistan because the Taliban had, he considered, created the only country that is truly Islamic.²⁸³ One convicted member of the Vollsmose cell dreamt of living in an Islamic society, believing that ‘women are freer’ under the Taliban,²⁸⁴ while the UK 21/7 bomber Yassin Omar admired the Taliban ‘for creating a true Islamic state’.²⁸⁵ Radicals and young Muslims, on the other hand, recognise the imperfections of living under the strict application of Sharia law – especially if they had spent time in a Muslim majority country. One said angrily, ‘*Les Talibans... c’est des malades mentales [sic] de ce qu’ils font faire aux femmes.*’²⁸⁶ For another, the experience of seeing life in a Muslim country made him realise ‘wow, we live in such a great country!’²⁸⁷ while another radical challenged those who criticise Canada: ‘Canada isn’t that good? Really?! Go to Saudi Arabia and check it out!’²⁸⁸

Identity and psychology

The ‘dual identity’ theory is a popular thesis that seeks to explain the phenomenon of home-grown, al-Qaeda inspired, violent extremism. It argues that second or third generation Muslims in the West are unable to identify with either their national or ethnic identity and find comfort in the simplicity of extremist ideology.²⁸⁹ Some element of an identity crisis appears common among terrorists. Zakaria Amara of the Toronto 18 cell is believed to have embraced Islam during a period of ‘general searching and questioning of his identity and his Muslim roots’.²⁹⁰ Likewise, several members of all cells that have contained terrorists across Europe experienced a period of profound searching following a period of hedonism, partying and drinking.²⁹¹

However, the exploration of one’s identity is shared by radicals, and could also be seen in our sample of young Muslims. During accounts of their journey towards adulthood, the majority of radicals emphasised the struggle in reconciling their Islamic heritage with the Western society they live in:

*You want to do the right thing so badly. You’re ashamed of your past, because you see all this partying and now this Islamic ideal. And you cannot run away from your past, so you try and get away from everything that reminds you of it.*²⁹²

In an attempt to balance conflicting values and ideals, some are confused, have questions and need answers.²⁹³ In this context, they recognised that religion provides ‘clear’ answers, structures and rules to follow, collapsing these identities into one.²⁹⁴ A number of radicals did not have a strong religious upbringing and reported turning to a fairly devout – but peaceful – Islam during a period of contemplation, ‘when you don’t have anybody’.²⁹⁵ Likewise, many young Muslims interviewed recognised that there were sometimes difficult moments reconciling one’s Canadian identity with one’s Muslim identity, but that, on the whole, it was perfectly possible to be and feel ‘both’.

Key findings

- Radicals had marginally higher levels of education than terrorists, were more likely to be employed, and more likely to have studied humanities. Terrorists were more likely than radicals to have dropped out of education. Because of the small sample size, however, these differences are indicative and not statistically significant.
- Terrorists had experienced societal exclusion, a distrust of government, a hatred for foreign policy, and felt a disconnection from their local community; many had an identity crisis of sorts. However, so did radicals and many young Muslims. These experiences do not explain why an individual chooses violence as a response.
- Radicals and many young Muslims were almost unanimously critical of particular government policy (especially foreign policy), the media and security-related measures. However, they were able to balance these views with a genuine affection for Canadian society and its values. Terrorists display a hatred for Western society and culture, which is often mirrored by admiration for an idealised Sharia-compliant society, which radicals and young Muslims do not share, or at least do not admit to.
- Overall, radicals and the majority of young Muslims contrast Canadian society and culture positively with the situation of European Muslims, which they deem worse especially in respect of discrimination.
- Many radicals and young Muslims were suspicious of RCMP's 'outreach' programmes, believing that the police had their own agenda or were simply engaging in a public relations game.
- Radicals and young Muslims were more likely to engage in political channels of complaint. Political and civic engagement could therefore make individuals less likely to become involved in terrorist activity.

6 Violent and non-violent radicals: religion and ideology

The role that religion plays in terrorism is the most contentious area of counter-terrorism research. Opinion is often divided between those who believe that religion (in this case Islam) itself is part of the problem, and those who believe that religion is a frame or vehicle through which other problems are expressed. This chapter uses the same approach as the preceding chapter to examine significant differences and similarities in the attitudes of the three groups towards religion, ideology and certain key religious principles.

Religious understanding

It is extremely difficult to make judgements about an individual's level of religious understanding, especially in relation to terrorists, because much of the information available comes from secondary sources. By combining these sources with interviews of people who knew them, it appears that a significant number of terrorists in our sample did not necessarily have an incorrect, or factually inaccurate, understanding of Islam, but rather uncontextualised and simplistic religious knowledge. However, this did not mean terrorists were less devout, or that religion was unimportant to them – indeed, they would almost certainly dispute the account offered here.

Although radicals do sometimes accuse the terrorists of 'not even knowing Islam',²⁹⁶ they are more frequently described as 'warped',²⁹⁷ following a 'shallow and baseless',²⁹⁸ 'do it yourself'²⁹⁹ or 'pamphlet' version of Islam.³⁰⁰ One radical interviewed who personally knew Fahim Ahmad, one of the members of the Toronto 18, said Ahmad had a 'shallow' understanding of Islam and 'could not offer any qualified scholarship to support his ideas on waging jihad'.³⁰¹ Sometimes this would be reflected

in poor religious practice – that they ‘don’t even read the Qur’an’.³⁰² This opinion was shared in Europe, where intelligence agencies do not consider home-grown terrorists to have a ‘well defined’ ideology, rather a ‘cut and paste variety’ that centres on the Iraq War and the cartoon controversy.³⁰³

The difference between the terrorists and the radicals was not the *level* of knowledge (which is difficult to determine) but the willingness to delve more deeply into the religion, to recognise its complexity and admit one’s own ignorance. As a group, radicals had delved deeper into Islamic history and jurisprudence, considering its depth, logic, capacity and rigour as great virtues. Within the sample of young Muslims, both views were present. Some expressed an unquestioned certainty that their views and interpretation was correct, that the Qur’an was the only source of religious guidance needed, and that other sects of Islam were un-Islamic. However, the majority of young Muslims took the approach of radicals. As one young Muslim put it: ‘As Muslims we’re people of law, we have a very developed society.’³⁰⁴ For the majority of non-terrorist groups, Islam is far too complex to be summarised as ‘us against them’.

Critical thinking and learning

Many radicals thought the root of the problem is that terrorists are unwilling to engage in critical thinking and analysis: terrorists did not ‘educate themselves’,³⁰⁵ did not engage in ‘deep analysis’,³⁰⁶ and therefore had grossly ‘misinterpreted’ the Qur’an.³⁰⁷ One radical who knew convicted members of the Vollsmose cell personally described them as ‘Sufi and simple’ (it is to be noted that our research did not observe any of the Vollsmose cell describing themselves as Sufi).³⁰⁸ This analysis is supported to some extent by some accounts of the al-Qaeda leadership. In his popular biography *Desperately Seeking Paradise*, Sardar recalled having met Osama bin Laden in Peshawar and discerned his defining characteristic to be a ‘blind adherence’ to literalism.³⁰⁹

Radicals and the majority of young Muslims alike stressed the importance of learning to overcome one’s own ignorance,

drawing on the importance the Prophet Mohammed placed on reflection.³¹⁰ One radical quoted a hadith: ‘Seek learning, even if it is in China.’³¹¹ Unsurprisingly, radicals and the majority of young Muslims stressed the importance of context, particularly in references to interpreting certain Qur’anic texts, especially the so-called ‘blood verses’, which speak specifically of war, including the oft-quoted ‘slay the idolaters wherever you find them’ (Surah 9, ayat 5).³¹² As one young Muslim in Montreal put it:

*Il y a dans le Coran des textes qui parlent du Jihad, qui parlent de la guerre, qui parlent comme parfois il faut aller commettre la violence, mais c’était lié à des événements comme au temps du prophète... des situations très particulières.*³¹³

When looking for answers to religious questions, radicals and young Muslims argued that one must be selective and very careful about sources of information, because of the power of the Qur’an: ‘If you manipulate it you can control someone about exactly what they’re doing.’³¹⁴ They recognised that there are so many sources of information and guidance available that ‘you have to be sure of your source’³¹⁵ because. ‘*c’est pas toujours fiable. Tu vas pas à n’importe quel site.*’³¹⁶ A small subsection of the young Muslims – those who generally expressed more radical views – believed that the only guidance they needed was the Qur’an, dismissing the need for an expert to help with interpretation.

Ideology and ideas

The distinction between ‘deep’ and ‘shallow’ religion does not mean that religion is insignificant. Even if radicals do not believe the terrorists are devout, they themselves certainly do, and will demonstrate that devotion to others.

One relatively common theme among all cells in which terrorists have been found was some engagement with Salafist or Wahabbist inspired ideology, although this was not necessarily through a formal organisation, and other Salafist or Wahabbist individuals rejected the use of terror. In the Netherlands, most

convicted terrorists have been in contact with Salafist ideas, thinkers and literature.³¹⁷ Some members of the Hofstad network were known to frequent the al-Tawheed mosque, known locally at the time as a Salafist mosque, and in Denmark the members of the Vollsmose cell were known to meet together frequently to discuss Wahabbi literature. The father of one of the members of the Chechen cell was considered locally to be a well-known Salafist preacher. One member of the Toronto 18 called himself a devout Salafi,³¹⁸ while the father of another member had written a number of 'ultra' conservative Islamic books blasting other fundamentalist movements for 'not being fundamentalist enough'.³¹⁹

A number of scholars and commentators argue that these schools of thought contain ideas that can lead to a propensity to terrorism for a minority of its adherents.³²⁰ However, the common thread running through cells in which terrorists are found is less engagement with particular schools of thought than attitudes to specific theological concepts. We therefore focus here on these potentially problematic ideas themselves, rather than the various ideological provenances of them.³²¹

Typically, there were two commonly held views among the terrorist sample, regardless of their supposed provenance:

- a) A rejection of Western society, rules and norms, which leads to supremacism combined with an exclusionary, discriminatory approach to non-Muslims expressed in the concepts of kuffar and segregation
- b) The notion that religion sanctions and sometimes even obligates a violent response in the face of current events, expressed in the idea that violent jihad is 'fard-al ayn' (see Annex 2 for a short definition). Terrorists appeared to come into contact with – and accept – certain concepts that illuminate these themes, which were not wholly shared by radicals or seemingly by the majority of young Muslims.

Takfir and kafir

The centrality of takfir and kafir (see Annex 2 for short definitions) has often been viewed as dangerous because these concepts form a central part of a discriminatory approach to both Muslims and non-Muslims. Takfir ideology is primarily concerned with the legitimacy of accusing other Muslims of apostasy, and as a result, condemning them to death. Loosely related is the more general position taken by terrorists towards kuffar (the plural of kafir) or non-believers. This was apparent among both Canadian and European people we interviewed, who deemed non-Muslims and indeed other Muslims as apostates or kuffar. The Toronto 18 cell discussed how to tell whether or not someone is a kafir or not.³²²

Most radicals and young Muslims agreed that non-Muslims *can* be described as ‘kuffar’. As one radical told us: ‘I’m sitting with you like this. But when I’m sitting with other Muslims, you are kuffar, you know... you are kuffar so I kill you? No – it doesn’t work like that!’³²³ A significant minority of young Muslims in our sample did not consider it to be problematic at all: ‘It’s just like concealing something, if you know the truth and then cover it, or merely a term which, in a very matter-of-fact way, refers to non-believers.’³²⁴ Far more common among the groups was the idea that the term should not be applied to other Muslims, and more importantly, that it is just impolite.³²⁵

Alongside this position a considerable minority of radicals did think that some form of self-segregation – of Muslims intentionally limiting their interaction with some forms of mainstream life – was sometimes advisable. This was because it can help maintain one’s identity and more importantly help one to be a good Muslim by avoiding some of the temptations of modern life. It was agreed, however, that complete segregation and refusal to engage with non-Muslims in any way is extreme and problematic.³²⁶ This view was evident among young Muslims, and often inspired heated debate. One young Muslim asserted: ‘How are you going to portray a positive image of Islam if you’re not going to mix?’³²⁷ Another emphasised: ‘A lot of Muslims live in these little enclaves. They don’t really socialise with other people... So we don’t hold those extreme views as much.’³²⁸ This was in contrast to others who felt that socialising

with non-Muslims could lead one astray from proper adherence to the faith.

This suggests that radicals and terrorists both accepted, to some extent, the generic concept of kuffar and the notion that some form of segregation can be beneficial. The difference, however, is in the extremity with which these ideas are held. For terrorists, both concepts serve to dehumanise non-Muslims and Muslims who disagree with their views. Research (not related to terrorism) in psychology has long noted that pejorative names and reducing people's worth is an important psychological stage that makes acts of violence more palatable to those who carry them out. People have instinctive moral guidelines that prevent evil behaviour. Dehumanisation turns a person into a 'non-person', unworthy of moral treatment. This is an important psychological strategy to side-step these innate moral guidelines³²⁹ and can be illustrated by the fact that radicalisation to violence involves discussions about the legitimacy of stealing from, or lying to, the kuffar. Deep engagement in literature that explains how to determine a kafir and what is permissible once one knows (for example, 'The Basic Rule of the Blood, Wealth and Honour of the Disbelievers'), alongside the more obvious jihadist texts such as '39 ways to undertake jihad' and viewings of gory jihadist videos, are indications of a culture of violence, beyond average literary curiosity. Even at an early stage, this indicates that the 'higher duty' of jihad frees one from the constraints of man-made laws and its enforcers.

The 'religious' sanction

The role of religion in al-Qaeda inspired terrorism is extremely contentious. Broadly speaking, a major line of disagreement is whether religion 'inspires' individuals to act, or serves as a convenient vehicle through which other grievances are given a religious legitimacy. In reality, it serves different purposes for different people.

Across cells studied for this report, there were numerous examples of cells seeking out sanctioning, it appears, after having made a decision to act.

All of the cells in which terrorists are found tried to find religious justification, and individuals would argue and discuss what was religiously permissible or not. This was often surprisingly time-consuming and difficult. One member of the Vollsmose cell desperately sought religious justification for an attack in Denmark, emailing many sources, ultimately unsuccessfully.³³⁰ The source had to be sound – the cell member was disappointed that the answers he received were ‘from the heart’ and not from the Qur’an.³³¹ In fact, two of the members of this cell argued about whether or not a Danish politician was a legitimate target, one saying it would be wrong to kill him, but ‘Ok to break his back’.³³²

Similar deliberations took place among some members of the Hofstad network in the Netherlands. Jason Walters was told that it would be halal to rob a public bank but not a private one – the war was against the Dutch government. The advice was followed.³³³ Interestingly, bank robbery figured in the religious debates of the Toronto 18. One radical interviewed who personally knew members of the Toronto 18 said that some members of this cell deliberated over whether or not it was permissible to kill an innocent person who happened to be in their way during a bank robbery. If the robbery was to fund jihad, then killing was permissible, alleged one member, as this person was obstructing their mission of jihad.³³⁴

These cases demonstrate that religious sanctioning, of admittedly varying quality, was a necessary condition of action. Not acquiring a sanction could act as a brake. Furthermore, it was common for the sanction to be sought after they had made the decision to act. As one radical who personally knew some of the Toronto 18 said, ‘They seek out facts that only support the hypothesis they have.’³³⁵ This insight seems to be the way that al-Qaeda has behaved more widely. Alan Cullison’s study of laptops looted from al-Qaeda’s offices in Kabul shortly after the 2001 invasion shows that senior al-Qaeda commanders sought post-hoc religious justifications for civilian killing from religious scholars. One such email read as follows:

*What is your lawful stand on the killing of civilians, specifically when women and children are included? And please explain the legitimate law concerning those who are deliberately killed... according to your law, how can you justify the killing of innocent victims because of a claim of oppression?*³³⁶

Although the research suggests that the sanctioning element was important for large numbers of people, we cannot conclude how far the role of religious texts also served as an inspiration for action.

Caliphate and Sharia law

Two other ideas are often associated with radicalisation to violence: the caliphate and Sharia law. The re-creation of an Islamic caliphate, or imposition of a caliphate in Europe, is often at the heart of terrorist ideology and is a key element of al-Qaeda ideology. Indeed, re-installing the caliphate was often discussed by members of the Hofstad network.³³⁷ However, this desire was not particular to terrorists. The caliphate was a popular concept among radicals – at least in an aspirational sense. As one radical put it: ‘The idea of an Islamic state? I say yes. Canada to become an Islamic state? I say yes. But how to reach it? We can’t? So what? I wish many things.’³³⁸ It is, for many, an un-realizable dream, completely impracticable, but a matter of ‘nostalgia’.³³⁹ It was also popular among many young Muslims in our sample, although knowledge about what it means in detail was extremely limited.³⁴⁰

The introduction of Sharia law is also a core tenet of al-Qaeda ideology. However, Sharia law was popular across all groups.³⁴¹ Radicals believed that Sharia law was compatible with democratic life, a beautiful concept being entirely misunderstood. Media representation of Sharia law often depicts it as repressive and violent (for example, stoning women or punishing crimes with amputations), but this is not the perception many Muslims hold: ‘It’s not to oppress people or to cause devastation or to do injustice – it’s just to live a moral code.’³⁴² These views were also reflected in a majority of the

young Muslims in our sample. Similarly to the caliphate, most radicals saw Sharia law as an ideal to be aspired to – ‘like having a dream’.³⁴³ For some young Muslims, introducing Islamic principles was even considered noble: ‘As far as I’m saying, when you’re a Muslim, right, you’re following Islam because you think it’s the right way, the right path so why won’t you wish that upon everybody? Why would you want to be selfish?’³⁴⁴ However, those who strongly believe that Islam should be adapted and ‘in tune with the time and place’³⁴⁵ suggested that aspirations to implement Sharia law in Canada, to proselytise and convert everyone, would be extreme.³⁴⁶

Scholars and texts

The recognition of complexity and context is caused by, and reflected in, the type of scholars and sources the groups draw on. Terrorists typically draw on a narrow band of thinkers, and four names frequently appear: Ibn Taymiyya, Sayyid Qutb, Muhammed Ibn Wahhab, Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi and Abdullah Azzam. The poetry of Mohammed Bouyeri, who murdered the Dutch film director Theo van Gogh, was inspired by Qutb and Taymiyya, and he often quoted Azzam’s famous maxim: ‘jihad by the rifle alone.’³⁴⁷ Zakaria Amara, a convicted member of the Toronto 18, allegedly wrote to his wife from jail that his predicament reminded him of a ‘jailed radical sheikh of the thirteenth century who inspired Wahhabism’ (Taymiyya).³⁴⁸ In the Vollsmose cell, most members owned works by Taymiyya and Azzam.³⁴⁹ They were inspired by Wahhabism, and met to discuss sources they had acquired from Saudi Arabia.³⁵⁰

Given their prominence on terrorists’ bookshelves, it is intuitive to infer that these authors inspire hate and violence. Yet the vast majority of radicals in the sample were also familiar with these writers, although there were two significant differences. First, radicals shared an interest in the respected ‘scholars’ of Islam such as Ibn Taymiyya or early political Islamists such as Sayyid Qutb, but not in more militant and modern jihadist thinkers such as Azzam, who make direct calls to action in reference to today’s circumstances. Second, radicals recognised

the importance of the context in which the authors found themselves at the time of writing. Radicals acknowledged that Qutb's writings contained harsh ideas, but interpreted these as a response to his imprisonment and torture. Our interviewees did not always agree with these authors' writings: 'There are certain things you will agree with, and certain things you will disagree with and certain things you may say, well, I don't know enough.'³⁵¹ Likewise, for Taymiyya, the majority of radicals were aware of him, that he 'has written great works', but that 'many people have taken some aspects' and presented them 'as a very negative aspect' – again 'put it into context, the perspective'.³⁵² It is also illustrative that radicals distinguished themselves from terrorists as they drew on a broader range of scholars, including more local scholars and thinkers: Faraz Rabbani, Sheikh Nu Keller, Hamza Yusuf, Rashid Ghannushi, Abdul Hakim Quick and Tareeq Jameel. In Europe, a similar pattern holds.³⁵³

Key findings

- Terrorists are viewed by radicals and young Muslims as having a simple, shallow and de-contextualised conception of Islam. However, this does not mean they are less devout or that religion is unimportant. Indeed, terrorists themselves would dispute this account.
- Radicals are not always more knowledgeable or devout than terrorists, but they appear to recognise their own ignorance, have a better appreciation of nuance and stress the importance of context, reflection and learning set by the example of the Prophet Mohammed. This appears to be the result of many factors, notably having spent more time researching and learning about Islamic history and jurisprudence, coming into contact with a more varied selection of sources, and being involved in political protest and engagement.
- Reading radical texts is not a significant causal factor for people becoming terrorists, although 'modern' writers such as Abdullah Azzam and Maqdisi, who refer to current events, seem more

problematic than ‘older’ scholars or political Islamists such as Taymiyya and Qutb.

- Local, respected preachers offer a potentially useful antidote to more violent preachers and scholars.
- Supporting the creation of the caliphate, or implementing Sharia law, is not a significant predictor of radicalisation to violence. Similarly, the general principle of takfir is not significant, although certain interpretations of it are.
- Radicalisation to violence is better understood as accepting certain key problematic ideas rather than schools of thought: accepting a dualistic Islam versus West narrative, a dehumanisation of the other using takfir ideology, and the view that religion sanctions or sometimes obligates a violent response. These ideas form the key justificatory landscape from which violent extremism emerges.
- Attaining religious sanctioning is an important element in most cells, although the quality of that sanction varies. The difficulty of attaining such sanctioning is an important brake on action.

7 Violent and non-violent radicals: attitudes to terrorism

The only excuse for war is that we may live in peace unharmed.
Cicero, *De Officiis*

Views about terrorism are complex, varied and diverse. It is not possible to make a simple distinction between terrorists, radicals and even young Muslims about their attitudes towards violence.

Jihad in the West

For terrorists, the common justification for violent jihad being a duty for Muslims in the West revolves around the idea that Islam and the ummah, the world's Muslim community, are under attack and must be defended.³⁵⁴ According to one radical interviewed, who knew members of the Toronto 18 personally, this formed a large part of the justification of those who were convicted.³⁵⁵ In the Netherlands, some members of the Hofstad network were permitted to 'slaughter the kuffar... their blood is halal because they declare war on Islam in public'.³⁵⁶ Terrorists consider it to be a religious obligation to use violence in what they argue is a defensive and reactive undertaking.

There is little evidence of terrorists in our sample studying the complexities of jihadist scholarship. For example, no one mentioned the concept of 'fard-al ayn' (that jihad is obligatory for every Muslim given the state of Islam today), which is a crucial aspect of all modern jihadist literature, from Azzam to Awlaki.³⁵⁷ There were, however, indications that the idea that Muslims are obliged to fight to defend themselves was widespread, including among radicals and our sample of young Muslims, but that this did not justify violence in the West.³⁵⁸

None of the radicals or young Muslims admitted to believing that violent jihad in the West is religiously obligatory, acceptable or permitted given the present circumstances. The three most popular rejections of this given by the radicals and young Muslims in our sample were (in order of popularity) the covenant argument, the civilian argument and the interest of Islam argument.

Argument 1: A contract or a 'covenant' has considerable weight in Islam, and must be respected

This argument appeared to be the most commonly deployed when radicals confronted terrorists about the legitimacy of terrorist action, and was seen as having considerable effectiveness.³⁵⁹ The power of this argument lies in its simplicity. As one radical put it: 'The Qur'an is very clear. They tell you when you go to a foreign country which is not your country, the law of the land apply [sic] to you.'³⁶⁰ Dr Fadl, an al-Qaeda founding member cum revisionist, uses this precise argument to oppose the use of violence.³⁶¹

The contract argument is controversial. In the UK, some suggest that this argument provides a weak basis for a defence against violence because it can be easily undermined.³⁶² For example, noting the emotional pull of radicalisation to violence, it is easy for some to conclude that Western countries have broken their side of the contract. Moreover, some scholars have noted that younger generations, particularly second and third generation Western Muslims, give less deference to traditional forms of authority. Nevertheless, our research suggests it is a way of verbalising how important it is for Muslims to be law-abiding citizens and to follow basic Islamic rulings.

Argument 2: Islam does not permit the killing of innocent civilians

Innocent civilians are not permissible targets under any circumstances, and the risk of accidentally killing innocent civilians, Muslim or otherwise, is too great to warrant action.³⁶³ As one put it, 'you can't just go into a shopping mall (even in

America) and destroy it, and say it is jihad'.³⁶⁴ This can act as a bar on those who are not personally opposed to violence, as another pointed out: 'When the time comes for fighting, we will fight of course but we are not going to be the ones to make the first move, because we are not allowed, you understand?'³⁶⁵ This view too, has a major weakness, which is down to the definition of what counts as an innocent civilian: for al-Qaeda, civilians living in Western democracies are either not innocent, or are the unfortunate collateral in times of war. Radicals reject such a broad conception, but accept that there are occasionally very specific situations that are sometimes unclear, for example a politician who voted for war.³⁶⁶ There is no easy way to remove grey areas such as this entirely.

Argument 3: Violent jihad does not help the advancement of Islam

The idea that violent jihad does not advance the cause of Islam does hold considerable weight within the Muslim community, although it should be viewed as a defence against violence in addition to, not instead of, other arguments.³⁶⁷ In short, 'What benefit would there be if I go and kill someone?'³⁶⁸

It is commonly asserted that al-Qaeda's ideology is appealing to many young Muslims because of its simple, catchy messages. Our research suggests that there are strong counter-arguments made by young Muslims using simple illustrations to reject terrorism based around three concepts, found in the following Qur'anic verses and Hadiths, which were the most commonly cited 'catchy messages' used to reject violence during our interviews:

- 'In war, we are not even allowed to chop down a tree.'
- 'It's quite simple – the Qur'an says we can't kill civilians.'
- 'Mohammed said if one person calls another a kafir, then surely one of them is.'

As advertising research shows, messages that 'stick' need to be simple and human.

Defensive jihad in the East

Although radicals do not defend jihad in the West, their views about the legitimacy of undertaking 'defensive' jihad overseas is more complex. The idea of jihad having a primarily peaceful meaning – a striving or inner struggle – is often cited as the 'true' meaning of the word. Indeed, a number of young Muslims referred to the personal struggle of living in Western society and avoiding its temptations, particularly alcohol, as being one's own jihad.³⁶⁹

Nonetheless, most recognised that there are several jihads, including the concept of violent jihad. Many found the idea of Islam being *only* and *exclusively* pacific to be one-dimensional. Instead, young Muslims and radicals stressed that violent jihad in defence of one's land, property, religion or family is no different from any other just war, often drawing comparisons with the French resistance in the second world war: when you are under attack, you fight back.³⁷⁰ In Denmark, radicals sent money to the Mujahideen and some even considered going to join them, with these discussions and decisions taking place through a Da'wa meeting.³⁷¹ According to those we interviewed, the need to support (though not necessarily financially) the Mujahideen overseas was a 'widely held' view in the mosque in Denmark where the Vollsmose group sometimes met.³⁷² As a result, defensive jihad is commonly framed as a matter of fairness – usually with no reference to religion whatsoever.³⁷³ Some were even more explicit about it: Western soldiers in Islamic lands are legitimate targets – 'kill them, as far as I am concerned... while they are there occupying, kill them'.³⁷⁴ The only difference between a Muslim and Western understanding is 'we call it jihad', but anyone in the same situation would do it.³⁷⁵ There is an element of 'just war' thinking for many radical and even young Muslims: that violence can, in some circumstances, be just, even obligatory, but that this 'justified violence' must be conducted according to Islamic law and jurisprudential thinking, and is subject to certain rules and conditions that govern when, where and how violence is used.

Where West meets East

Among the young Muslims there was almost unanimous support for Iraqi and Afghan people defending their own land. However, there is an important distinction to make: the idea of Canadian Muslims going to those countries to fight was *not* encouraged, although there was some support for the *motives* of Western Muslims going to these countries to defend Islam – it is widely considered a legitimate thing to do and so cannot easily be denounced. Canadian Muslims who went to these countries to fight were often viewed as young men wanting to go and do something good, but channelling their energies in the wrong direction. Some interviewees believed that those who go to fight in Iraq or Afghanistan are not traitors, or even extremists, but people who deserve some admiration for having courageously left their easy life to fight for justice.³⁷⁶ This is discussed more in Chapter 10.

Key findings

- Radicals and young Muslims do not believe that violent jihad in the West is acceptable, religiously obligatory, or permitted. Very similar denunciations came from a wide range of independent sources, which suggests that al-Qaeda inspired messaging has found little traction among the majority of young Muslims.
- The three most commonly cited arguments employed to that end are: killing civilians is not permitted under any circumstance, Muslims are obligated to respect domestic laws, and it does not further the cause of Islam.
- Simple and catchy sayings from the Qur'an and Hadith are frequently used to express that rejection religiously. These are important arguments to be included in the counter-narrative against extremism, as discussed more fully in Chapter 11.
- It is difficult to find justification for religiously sanctioned terrorist attacks in Canada, and there is little support for the idea that Canada has declared war on Islam. For large numbers of individuals, that lack of religious justification has clearly acted as a brake on action, especially for those who

could be considered 'on the edge'. The use of religious instruction for such individuals could potentially be effective.

- There is widespread support among radicals, and a significant proportion of young Muslims, for Iraqi and Afghan people 'defending themselves' from 'invaders', framed in the language of self-defence, just war and state sovereignty. The concept of jihad is often used simply as a way to define the idea of a just war in an Islamic context.
- Many of the Canadian Muslims we interviewed did not see it as obligatory to travel abroad to fight in defence of Islamic lands; they did not encourage such behaviour, but nor did they denounce it outright: this is a difficult grey area for many. A number of our interviewees may disagree with those who travel abroad to fight in defence of Islamic lands, but they agree with their motives. It is possible – and common – to believe violent jihad in Western countries is unacceptable, while simultaneously believing violent jihad in Muslim majority countries is acceptable. This is where clearcut violent–non-violent dichotomies break down.
- There are potential allies among radicals who denounce terrorism at home, but support the principle of violent jihad overseas as a natural extension of just war theory. Nonetheless, individuals who travel overseas to actually take part in military operations will, and should, remain of concern to security services because of the skills, training, contacts and credibility they could bring back with them.
- Islam is not viewed by radicals or the majority of young Muslims as a pacifist religion, but rather as based in part on 'justified violence', where violence must be conducted according to Islamic law and jurisprudential thinking, subject to strict rules and conditions that govern when, where and how it is used. This is a better way to frame distinctions between terrorists and radicals.

8 Violent and non-violent radicals: the journey of radicalisation into violence

The women of the future may sometimes wish that they could have lived in the heroic days of stress and struggle and have shared with us the joy of battle, the exaltation that comes of sacrifice of the self for great objects.

Emmeline Pankhurst

Our research suggests there is no one, predictable, path to terrorism. It is impossible to say precisely who will choose violence as opposed to peaceful activism. The reality is that everyone has different personality traits – faced with the same stimuli, two people react differently.³⁷⁷ This is unsurprising, of course, but limits how far we can predict and/or detect when radicalisation will turn into violence. It is more helpful to analyse what factors or conditions make terrorist activity more appealing as a solution than alternatives. The research suggests that five elements are often overlooked on the subject, but taken alongside other research they can deepen our understanding of how radicalisation that leads to violence sometimes differs from radicalisation that does not. They can also offer new ways to confront the problem:

- Emotional ‘pull’ to act in the face of injustice
- Thrill, excitement, and ‘coolness’
- Status and internal code of honour
- Peer pressure
- The lack of alternative sources of information

The process of accepting radical or violent ideas is akin to other social epidemics, where the influence of one’s peer group is critical. Radicalisation depends on how far one’s peers accept such ideas and the extent to which they are seen as worthy of imitation. The unfortunate reality is that characteristics of the

modern-day al-Qaeda terrorists – rebelliousness, impulsiveness, and risk taking – can be appealing to some young people.

The emotional pull

For many people violent jihad is about emotion – not intellect or reasoning. As one radical put it, ‘Some people, they don’t take the time to study it; they don’t want to listen to anybody because they are emotional... and some people will give into that.’³⁷⁸

Two common features suggest that the emotional pull is important. The first is the vitriolic and engaging narrative based on the notion of Muslims under attack all around the world from evil, scheming Western interests. It is alleged that some younger members of the Toronto 18 came under the influence of a senior at a local mosque who was espousing anti-American views and a literalist interpretation of the Qur’an.³⁷⁹ Many members of the European cells considered also came into contact with the ‘us versus them’ narrative in various guises. For example, members of the Vollsmose cell suggested in court that their own mosque ‘was quite radical’, with some individuals there expressing sympathy for al-Qaeda.³⁸⁰ This does not, alone, prove that such preaching convinced them that violent action was the appropriate response. As is discussed in Chapter 10, many individuals come into contact with similar ideas without accepting them or believing a violent response is required.

The second is the prevalence of jihadist videos, seen in every cell. One radical interviewed claimed that members of the Toronto 18 would watch videos that they called the ‘reality’ series, gory videos of Muslim oppression around the world, melding the injustices with Islam.³⁸¹ Some members of the Hofstad network in the Netherlands did the same, and so did one member of the Vollsmose cell, for whom some videos were ‘like action movies’. The gorier the better, often with beheadings.³⁸²

However, watching such videos is not necessarily confined to or indicative of terrorists. According to one resident of the estate where members of the Vollsmose cell were living, ‘everyone’ had heard jihadist songs and seen jihadist pictures –

but no one wanted to act on them. The important difference seems to be watching videos, or listening to these songs, in a group.³⁸³ Creating a culture of violence, where it is acceptable to use violence as a means to social or personal advancement, is clearly important, and group viewing of jihadist videos can encourage this.³⁸⁴

Adventure and being 'cool'

A number of home-grown terrorists, both those within the sample group considered here and others, have found the idea of violent jihad attractive for non-religious reasons: because they find it cool and exciting. One recent book on 'Cool', by Poutain and Robins, defines it as part of a general youth culture in Western democracies, 'an oppositional attitude adopted by individuals to express defiance to authority... a permanent state of private rebellion'.³⁸⁵ Those authors go on to argue, 'the uncomfortable truth is that, compared to the excitement of the drug and gun culture, a prosperous, well ordered society is boring'.³⁸⁶

To understand this aspect of its appeal, it is instructive to consider the way violent jihad is marketed to those who might be vulnerable to recruitment and the way it is discussed. It is alleged that the activities undertaken at the Washago training camp by the Toronto 18 are revealing: they used a '9mm semi-automatic pistol; an air rifle; paint ball guns and engaged in jihadist discussions, military style marches...'.³⁸⁷ These are strikingly similar to other adventure activities that attract young people (especially those interested in guns). Indeed, the training camp was sold to a number of unsuspecting youths as an adventure or activity trip – not as a terror training camp at all. It was reported by Canada's *Globe and Mail* that Zakaria Amara of the Toronto 18 declared in one blog posting, 'as for the paintball guns that we have, man, whether "training or not" it was a hell of a lot of fun'.³⁸⁸ One radical reported someone trying to recruit him by telling him they were off 'to the forest with a 9mm to fire off a couple of shots'.³⁸⁹ A Parisian sermon from 2002 promised similar excitement: '*Le Jihad, c'est mieux que les vacances à Los*

*Angeles. C'est l'aventure. On mange, on découvre le paysage. En plus, on aide nos frères.*³⁹⁰

In Denmark, it is alleged that three members of the Vollsmose cell made a trip to Copenhagen to pick targets and meet a clothes vendor.³⁹¹ Nizar Sassi and Mourad Benchellali, from a run-down banlieu in Lyon, France, were transfixed by Menad Benchellali's stories of excitement, exotic landscapes and guns and decided to go to Afghanistan to experience it themselves, an account corroborated by the prosecuting judge.³⁹² Both Sassi and Benchellali were incarcerated without trial in Guantanamo Bay and were subsequently cleared of terrorist activity on their return to France – but their stories do offer an insight into the phenomenon.

Status

Anthropological and social psychology has long shown that groups of young men (especially) have informal 'codes of honour' and internalised rules by which they operate. Cells in which terrorists are found are no exception and this can help explain a turn to action. Internal codes of honour are often connected to the notion of disengagement. Individuals who do not fit in socially often adopt a strategy of disengagement and develop subcultures that provide an alternative route to self-esteem.³⁹³ This echoes findings from studies of street gangs, which suggest that when young men cannot take pride 'in a prestigious job, nice house... their reputation on the street is their only claim to status',³⁹⁴

Improved status has been recognised as one of the 'rewards' of martyrdom operations in Palestine, but not studied with people engaged in non-suicide terrorism or home-grown terrorism.³⁹⁵ Our research suggests improved status is one further reason to explain why radicalisation to violence is also a social phenomenon.

To understand this, it is useful to study the status of cell members. A common feature within every cell studied was the accordance of status to those demonstrating defiant or violent tendencies and language: the more radical, the higher the

standing in the group. Many of the cell members seemed drawn to strong leadership and the sway of group dynamics in this way. For religious figures to be granted legitimacy, appearance and personal experience were as important as formal religious knowledge. The typical leader was often slightly older, always charismatic and with a smattering of Arabic.³⁹⁶ As one radical observed, ‘The guy just has to know Arabic... they think he’s a scholar... what are his qualifications?... He stands up against the big Satan [the US] – it’s not about scholarship.’ To many of the young Muslims in the crowd, the leader’s faith and trustworthiness are based on the fact that he is being bold, ‘the biggest thing... he is doing is speaking out’.³⁹⁷ Danish intelligence officers have observed that undertaking preventative talks with target individuals can have the unintended effect of increasing their status and credibility within the radical milieu.³⁹⁸

Previous conflict experience abroad, or the perception of ‘battle hardiness’, including the charisma and gravitas derived from such experiences, also emerged as important. Fatch Kamal’s role as leader of the Ressam cell certainly seemed to rely on his experience as a battle-hardened jihadi. The ‘millennium bomber’ from that cell, Ahmed Ressam, realised that the most respected men in his circle of friends had all been on military training or fought in Bosnia or Chechnya.³⁹⁹ Their meetings have been described as ‘terrorist tupper-ware parties... some of these guys were killers, and the others sat at their feet, enthralled. There were bragging rights’.⁴⁰⁰ One member of the Vollsmose cell was well respected among the group because he was strong, a career criminal (convicted for violent behaviour) and a good fighter; in the Hofstad network, Redouine Al-Issar fitted the same description: he had also been imprisoned, was formerly a drug dealer and very charismatic.⁴⁰¹ That status was reflected in part by violence, which was clearly explained by Nazir Sassi, who saw going to Afghanistan as a badge:

*C’est vrai... dans ma cité, celui qui a une arme, il est respecté... si tu peut dire que tu as été en Afghanistan, tout le monde te respecte.*⁴⁰²

Peer pressure

How words and outward shows of bravado turn into a willingness to act remains an important but difficult conundrum. Lessons from other disciplines are useful. Peer pressure is recognised in anthropology and psychology literature as critical to understanding the way a group behaves and evolves. In psychology it is well established that in-group competition can be important in pushing members of the group towards more extreme positions (in a variety of non-religious settings). This is known as ‘group extremity shift’ or ‘group polarisation’, where discussions within a group lead to an enhancement of an initially dominant position.⁴⁰³

The power of peer pressure in such settings is considerable. If defiance or radicalisation is tied to status, individuals will tend to compete with each other for status, and if status is equated with defiance or violence, there is a risk of spiralling into one-upmanship. This is common in all social movements, particularly radical ones, which split internally between ‘do-ers’ and ‘talkers’. The early Russian Communist movement was divided between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks; the former accused the latter of being ‘tea-makers’ for their unwillingness to take action; the 1960s Angry Brigade accused other Communist elements of being stooges for refusing to take violent action.⁴⁰⁴ In-group competition to be the most radical led the Weather Underground to terrorism.⁴⁰⁵ McCauley and Moskaleiko, in a broad study of terrorism, call this ‘fissioning’: when tensions among group members lead to splintering, the newly emerged groups will often take radical action against former allies to establish their new group norms as superior.⁴⁰⁶

This dynamic is also visible in cells reviewed in this research. In the Hofstad network, members would complain of ‘yoghurt’ Muslims who are only Muslims in name and do not take action while bad things happen to other Muslims.⁴⁰⁷ More explicitly, members of the Toronto 18 were interested in the impact that their attack would have and boasted about ‘out-doing’ those who perpetrated the London bombings. ‘It’s going to be destruction... it will make the London story very small.’⁴⁰⁸ It is alleged that the Toronto 18 split, with Fahim Ahmad and Zakaria Amara the ringleaders of the group. Those supporting

Amara accused Ahmad of ‘all talk and no action’, believing that they were the only ones who had the ‘real guts’ to proceed apace with plans.⁴⁰⁹ Indeed, members of the cell intended to show a cassette recording of their training camp to ‘higher up Mujahideen who would be impressed with us’ if they could be convinced the group was ‘the real deal’.⁴¹⁰

The lack of alternatives

Radicalisation to violence involves a lack of alternatives that could have acted as a diversion. Many of the radicals interviewed admitted toying with the idea of violence at one point in their lives, but explained why they ultimately did not resort to it. One noted the importance of having good ‘role models’ when he was growing up – the Imams ‘made an impact’ and ‘organised activities for youth, including education as well as other sport activities’.⁴¹¹ In a similar way, another explained that he was ‘lucky’ to have his father, who as a religious scholar was able to ‘direct’ him.⁴¹² One emphasised the importance of ‘reading everything’,⁴¹³ and it was access to Sufi texts that pulled another off a violent trajectory.⁴¹⁴ Another individual suggested that his attendance at conferences where scholars from all over the world came to discuss and debate Islam was significant.⁴¹⁵

Key findings

- The dangerous, exciting and counter-cultural element is an increasingly important part of al-Qaeda’s appeal. Radicalisation to violence is a social and psychological phenomenon as well as a tool of political violence. This aspect is often overlooked but has important – and difficult – implications for how to tackle it.
- Radicalisation to violence is not always a natural or linear progression from being a radical. Certain visible ‘signs’ seem to distinguish radicalisation that leads to violence from radicalisation that does not, for example: clashes with existing mosque authorities, debates between ‘do-ers’ and ‘talkers’, deep engagement in literature that explains how to determine a kafir

and what is permissible once you know, and any criminal activity undertaken in this respect. These manifestations are useful indicators for local police agencies, community leaders and members, social workers, or other public servants involved in working to prevent radicalisation to violence.

- Legitimacy and authority in these cells are often granted based on battle experience and a history of defiance, which acts as evidence of authenticity. This is often as important in terms of leadership as perceived religious knowledge.
- Groups undergoing radicalisation into violence are characterised by an internal code of honour, which appears to share much in common with other sub-cultural groups. This code is a parallel set of sub-cultural norms and rewards, where violent extremism can be a route of social advancement and accruing status. Other research suggests that this is especially the case in circumstances of relative deprivation where more orthodox routes of social advancement appear unavailable.
- Peer pressure is an important element of the move to violence within cells.

9 Violent and non-violent radicals: organisations

In Europe, certain Muslim organisations have been subject to intense scrutiny since 9/11 in part based on a series of alleged connections to recent plots. Considerable political and academic debate has been dedicated to understanding the role of formal organisations in the radicalisation process, and what should be done about them.⁴¹⁶ Canada offers a useful case study because although Muslim organisations are debated, links to terrorist plots have not been established, or at least not publicly acknowledged. The organisational topography in Canada is also diverse, based partly on different migration patterns, and is relatively young compared with Europe.

This chapter focuses only on organisations or ideologies that have sometimes been viewed as controversial in Canadian or European media; it is not a comprehensive account of the great diversity of Canadian Muslim organisations. Many Canadian Muslim organisations have impressive track records of carrying out positive social work. For example, the Islamic Society of North Africa (ISNA) is involved in Haiti earthquake relief and direct service provision; the Muslim Association of Canada (MAC) runs a fundraising campaign for environmental issues; and the Canadian Council on American–Islamic Relations (CAIR–CAN) is recognised as a leading advocacy and civil liberties organisation, which tracks and protects the human rights of Muslims.

Over the last five years, however, some of these Muslim representative organisations in Canada have been accused of either having links with radicalising individuals, or fostering radicalising conditions more widely.⁴¹⁷ These accusations have not been upheld or proven in court. In one case, for example, controversial remarks by an individual affiliated with an organisation and the response they engendered were met by that person's dismissal.

Ideologies and organisations

In this section, views and attitudes held by research participants regarding a number of organisations are discussed.

The Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood is a Sunni Islamist organisation. Founded in 1928 by Hassan Al Banna to oppose social injustice and British imperial rule, it has developed into a powerful social organisation and a popular religious–political ideology.⁴¹⁸ Ideologically, the Muslim Brotherhood operates on the foundational credo that Islam be ‘given hegemony over all matters of life’.⁴¹⁹ The Muslim Brotherhood has historically been centred in Egypt, but currently maintains branch organisations throughout the Arab–Muslim world.

It does not have a formal presence in Canada. However, a significant number of radicals and experts believed that the ‘philosophy’ and the social activism of the Muslim Brotherhood inspires a number of existing groups:

Formally, officially, probably I don't think they have a presence here, like a formal Muslim Brotherhood office or anything. But they inspired and influenced a lot of people's thinking... you can tell their influence and that's what they're thinking. They are very professional oriented, and they want to work with the system, they'll get the politicians at their events, you know that kind of stuff...⁴²⁰

One expert described the genealogy of Muslim Brotherhood inspired ‘Islamism’ as initially coming through ISNA, and then down through MAC. He suggested that these groups are the ‘old vanguard’, but that MAC is still seen as influential in the community and with young people.⁴²¹

Overwhelmingly, interviewees thought that there was no direct or formal relationship to Muslim Brotherhood organisations in the Middle East. MAC and ISNA are Canadian based and Canadian focused. One suggested:

I know people in MAC. MAC is different from Brotherhood. In Canada, they're young and they want to practise their faith like everyone else. I don't think [there's] anything unusual in that.⁴²²

According to one expert we interviewed, Muslim Brotherhood inspired groups ‘attract a lot of young people but because of their activism – not because of their theoretical foundational thinking’.⁴²³ That social activism was seen as a positive aspect. Many young Muslims and radicals felt that these organisations – particularly MAC and CAIR–CAN – had done ‘an amazing amount of really good work’.⁴²⁴ However, a small number of experts expressed a concern that Muslim Brotherhood inspired groups might feed the ‘us versus them’ narrative by arguing that Islam is under attack throughout the world – both by leaders in Muslim countries, and their supporters in the West.

Jamaat-e-Islami

Jamaat-e-Islami, or the ‘Islamic Party’, is a Pakistan-based Islamist Party founded in Lahore in 1941 by Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi. Jamaat-e-Islami is committed to ‘iqamat-e-deen’ – the establishment of a political entity governed by the precepts of Islamic law. The party’s rhetoric is structured around scepticism of a Western model of modernity and members strongly oppose the encroachment of Western social, political and economic systems of organisation into Central Asia. The party is explicitly committed to achieving these aims through non-violent means,⁴²⁵ but analysts have linked Jamaat-e-Islami with the violent group Hizb-ul-Mujahideen. Some have even described Hizb-ul-Mujahideen as the former’s military wing.⁴²⁶

The connections, influences and members of Jamaat-e-Islami tend to be within the South Asian community: among Pakistanis, Indians and Bangladeshis. Little was known about this group among radicals or young Muslims. One radical knew of it, but had never heard of it having a presence in Canada, while another claimed that it was no longer active, but its influence and inspiration could be seen in the community – particularly through the work of MAC. According to one expert we interviewed, Jamaat’s influence was significant but very indirectly:

*The message that the young people have been getting from 1980 until now has not changed that much; the discourse is still controlled by the Muslim brotherhood and the Jamaat-e-Islami in the city.*⁴²⁷

Hizb ut-Tahrir

As discussed in Chapter 3, Hizb ut-Tahrir is a Sunni pan-Islamist party with a relatively large following in Europe, particularly in the UK and Denmark. It aims to unite all Muslim countries into a unitary caliphate and although it claims not to advocate violence in pursuit of its goals, critics argue this is merely a tactical decision.⁴²⁸ It has not been banned in either Denmark or the UK.

A significant minority of interviewees had heard of Hizb ut-Tahrir and believed that there were members in Canada but its presence was not sizeable. One expert claimed that members are primarily based in Waterloo, Ontario, but there was little membership or activity elsewhere in Canada.⁴²⁹ There have been Hizb ut-Tahrir members at religious conferences, although infrequently, and they are generally not welcome.⁴³⁰ One radical was quite explicit:

*I don't know if they're officially present here, but I think they are. They probably have email exchanges, maybe they have informal secret gatherings... [but] it's not something that the community would know, because they'd freak out. Maybe Hizb ut-Tahrir tried to come and hand out some flyers or something one time about a few years ago at some event, and the organisers just flipped out. And I don't know if it was exactly Hizb ut-Tahrir, but people who think along those lines.*⁴³¹

Another radical spoke about ejecting from his mosque a Hizb ut-Tahrir member attempting to pass out flyers during Friday prayers.⁴³² In July 2009, Hizb ut-Tahrir held its first publicly announced meeting in Canada, in Mississauga. Approximately 40 people attended; the majority were young men between 20 and 30 years old, but there were a few older men and some women and children. Representatives made it clear that Hizb ut-Tahrir does not advocate 'senseless violence',

but stressed that the reinstatement of the caliphate, at the helm of a Muslim state, could fight the occupation and injustice done to Muslims in other lands.⁴³³ One individual who knows members of the group personally was more critical:

So for example if I'm a Canadian and I follow the Hizb ut-Tahrir understanding, I cannot vote, I can't accept any verdict of the Canadian government. So what's happening is I'm creating friction here... what I understood from what they've said is that if I'm doing something to establish the caliphate I don't even have to pray. So this means that I can do something wrong to establish the caliphate, which is not the correct understanding.⁴³⁴

Al-Muhajiroun

Al-Muhajiroun is a group of prominence in the UK that was formed by the former leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir, Omar Bakri, but has since been proscribed. There have also been reports that Al-Muhajiroun has offices and members in North America, primarily in New York.⁴³⁵ However, nobody interviewed in Canada said they had heard of this group or thought it to be operating in Canada.

Tablighi Jamaat

Tablighi Jamaat is a Sunni, non-political, trans-national Islamic revival movement that encourages Muslims to adopt lifestyles to be more similar to the example established by Muhammad. As discussed in Chapter 3, the group is thought to be active in over 150 countries. Despite its explicitly non-political and pacifist position, several terrorists are believed to have been former members of the group, raising concern among Western intelligence agencies that it serves as a potential recruiting group for terrorists.⁴³⁶

On the whole, Tablighi Jamaat was the most well-known group across our interviewees. Many had come in contact with it through its missionary work, where it visits and 'takes over' mosques for a couple of days – during which women are not

allowed to enter – to proselytise.⁴³⁷ It also has its own mosques throughout Canada, the Anoor mosques.⁴³⁸ Tablighi Jamaat holds an annual gathering in Canada where it invites its spiritual leaders from India and Pakistan.⁴³⁹

None of the interviewees expressed concern about Tablighi Jamaat in terms of radicalisation to violence. In fact, it was generally viewed as an organisation with very limited appeal to young Canadian Muslims:

*What you're really getting there is a guy gets up and gives a small end talk in the mosque and nobody is there and then people get there and he gets to the pulpit and speaks in Arabic, and all he does is recite verses of the Qur'an. And what young people have told me is that they stay away from those mosques, they're for the older, first-generation Pakistani, Indians and they come to this country and they go back.*⁴⁴⁰

This perhaps marks a difference in perception from Europe, where Tablighi Jamaat is looked upon with more suspicion, especially in France.⁴⁴¹

Salafism, Wahhabists and 'Pure Islam'

Salafism is an ideology that encompasses a wide range of individuals and groups that emphasise a return to the 'Pure Islam' of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. Although the overwhelming majority of Salafists are non-violent, there is a small subset of 'jihadist Salafists' who argue that violent jihad is an obligation for all Muslims.

In general, there does not appear to be a large network or formal existence of Salafists in Canada. Interviewees were typically familiar with Salafists and Wahhabists but did not believe their presence to be extensive, although one radical spoke of them as a discrete group, saying they were mostly Saudis and that they 'kept to themselves' and 'didn't normally mix with non-Arabs'.⁴⁴²

However, there appears to be a wider, general acceptance of some Salafist ideas, according to radicals, but also visible within our sample of young Muslims. This appears to coincide

with a refusal to recognise or apply the label of ‘Salafi’. One such radical noted:

*The problem when you say ‘Salafi’ is that you could have something different in your mind than what I think... You know, we distinguish ourselves from the people who created sects and with innovation. That’s all. So I don’t accept any innovation.*⁴⁴³

Among those interviewed, some radicals and some in our young Muslim sample had adopted Salafist principles, but neglected to identify themselves as such. For example, many Salafists reject the possibility of interpretation of the Qur’an, and rely on a literal approach. This view was reflected by a small number of the participants, who felt that the Qur’an was the only guidance they needed to be good Muslims, dismissing the complexities of interpretation. These same individuals were also more likely to feel that calling someone a kafir was purely descriptive and not derogatory, and to believe that some Muslims were technically kuffar.⁴⁴⁴ The majority of those who did know about Salafism felt that Salafists and Wahhabists were ‘dangerous’ because they created a ‘do-it-yourself’ Islam by not following the traditional understanding. Salafists were frequently described as ‘offering things in black and white’ and ‘playing on ignorance’.⁴⁴⁵

The Al Maghrib Institute was the only formal Canadian organisation that was mentioned in interviews when discussing Salafism. One expert claimed that the Institute was informally and ideologically descended from Wahhabis in Canada in the 1980s and 1990s. As one expert put it:

*They sat and strategised post-September 11, ‘what is our message?’ And there’s this marketing genius, they use a marketing genius, how do you market... If you go to journeyoffaith.com that’s them, you’ll see them advertising Al Maghrib Institute... they pull the Somalis and the Arabs, and all their speakers are from the same spectrum, the radical spectrum, left conservatism ideologically oriented, and what they do is, they have this weird combination of a very strident Islam but mellowed, it’s got a little bit of beauty in there, it’s got a little bit of softness in there.*⁴⁴⁶

A representative of the Al Maghrib Institute denies this genealogy, pointing out that the Institute was only founded in 2004. Some experts expressed more concern over the Al Maghrib Institute than groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir, ‘because Hizb ut-Tahrir, they depend on their leaflets. But these guys [Al Maghrib] are actually doing work. They’re pretty active within the communities.’⁴⁴⁷ However, even those who expressed concern – primarily experts and some radicals – did not think the Institute was directly related to terrorism or advocating violence but that it encourages a rigid, sometimes intolerant, position about life in Canada:

Now they [Journey of Faith and Al Maghrib] don’t preach violence or defend violence. But when you preach rigidity you are saying to a person, a young, naïve, gullible, young person who’s not well read, not well grounded... ‘Okay then, this is the way and anybody else who don’t [sic] follow the way I have to be against them.’ So there’s no tolerance.’⁴⁴⁸

A representative of Al Maghrib Institute interviewed for this research contested these accusations. He noted first that the Journey of Faith conference was distinct from the Al Maghrib Institute and that the two should not be conflated. Second, far from preaching no tolerance or self-segregation, the Al Maghrib Institute encourages open-mindedness and exposure to many different ideas. It is an academic institution where young Western Muslims can go to study Islam in their own countries, as opposed to travelling to the Middle East, which helps to foster a greater sense of belonging to their own country.

One expert suggested that the problem was ‘do-it-yourself’ Islam, inspired by their condensed seminars and weekend courses:

Then they say, ‘Look, the traditional sciences are saying this, this, this and this.’ Then they say, ‘But however, let’s analyse all of these and come up with our own.’ And then at the end they say, ‘Look, you have the ability to do that, come up with your own Islam.’⁴⁴⁹

The Al Maghrib Institute defends itself from this charge, on the one hand by arguing that this accusation is contradictory,

as by definition Salafists employ a literalist interpretation based on the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, not a ‘do-it-yourself’ interpretation. On the other hand, it stresses that its approach seeks to simplify the complexities of Islam so that it may appeal to a wide range of people, and seeks to use modern examples as a way of stressing its contemporary relevance.

Although young Muslims knew about the Al Maghrib Institute, their knowledge was primarily based on the Institute’s conferences and weekend classes, and the young Muslims did not consider it to be problematic or extreme. On the contrary, conferences at the Al Maghrib Institute drew a large selection of young people on the strength of their speakers’ appeal. This apparent difference between the views of experts, radicals and young Muslims towards Al Maghrib could be seen as part of the broader identity shift between first and second or third generation Western Muslims.

Key findings

- Almost nobody considered any Muslim organisations present in Canada to be a direct threat to the security of the country. Nor was it felt that any of these organisations or people affiliated with them openly advocated violence. This appears to be distinct from the European experience, where organisations are often considered to be central to the process of radicalisation to violence.
- Groups that are of specific concern in Europe, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, appear to have a small and insignificant presence in Canada, and they experience some community-level criticism and even difficulty operating.
- The Muslim Brotherhood philosophy of social activism is seen as influencing the Muslim community in a very general sense through groups like ISNA, CAIR–CAN and MAC, but these groups are perceived to work through democratic channels and are not linked to organisations in the Middle East. The lack of a clear link to ‘parent’ organisations in Muslim majority countries also appears to be an important difference between Canada and

Europe and indicates the potential for the growth of a 'Canadian' Islam.

- Tablighi Jamaat is relatively well known, but is viewed as being an organisation that appeals to first-generation migrants from the Indian subcontinent, and not younger Muslims.
- Concern was raised among some interviewees about the Al Maghrib Institute, not because of it preaching a violent ideology, but because of general dislike of its approach to Islam, which included accusations of its teaching a 'do-it-yourself' version of Islam and ideological rigidity. However, on the whole young Muslims did not share this view and a representative of the Al Maghrib Institute contested these accusations.
- Young Muslims had limited knowledge about so-called radical organisations thought to be problematic in Europe, or the various Muslim organisations operating in Canada. Knowledge was greater in Toronto than it was in Montreal.

10 Violent and non-violent radicals: the community

The guerilla must move amongst the people as a fish swims in the sea.

Mao Tse Tung

One of the most difficult questions for security services and other agencies is the relationship between radicalism or extremism in the community at large and terrorist activity. Does the former give the moral oxygen to allow the latter to mature or seek moral cover? This chapter addresses the nature of the physical relationships between and beyond people considering violence, radicals and broader Canadian Muslim communities. Given the relatively limited sample size, it cannot do justice to the diversity and complexity of Muslim communities in Canada, but rather aims to shed some new light on community level approaches to extremism and terrorism. It is divided into two sections: radicalism in the community and terrorism in the community.

Radicalism in the community

What does the community define as extreme or radical?

Definitions of ‘extremism’ and ‘radical’ are contested and subjective, with these labels often being employed to delegitimise the views of others.⁴⁵⁰ Understanding what Muslims consider ‘extreme’ is useful in assessing the societal impact of terminology employed by the government.

In general, many radicals – as well as many of our young Muslim sample – emphasised that extremism or radicalism is not necessarily a bad thing. It can be both negative and positive, especially in respect to practising Islam.⁴⁵¹ Some asserted that secularism was extreme, or that what a secular society may consider extreme was to them an expression of faith. Pious

adherence to their religion – ‘holding to the principles’, ‘praying five times a day’⁴⁵² or ‘following the fundamentals’ – is to be respected and admired.⁴⁵³ On the flipside, most agreed that an inflexible, literalist interpretation of the Qur’an is ‘extreme’ in the negative sense: ‘they are rigid and won’t tolerate other people who... are more open, more flexible in their approach’.⁴⁵⁴ Some in our young Muslim sample spoke about how the treatment of women under Taliban rule was not only ‘extreme’ but ‘inhuman’.⁴⁵⁵ Many emphasised how Islam is a dynamic and evolving religion⁴⁵⁶ – and if one did not contextualise Islam,⁴⁵⁷ and balance it with a respect for the laws and norms of the society one lives in, this is ‘extreme’.⁴⁵⁸

There was, however, more disagreement over whether certain attitudes and concepts were ‘extreme’ or not. As noted above, the concepts of kuffar, the caliphate and Sharia law are seen as less worrying than certain interpretations of them.

Equating extremism with violence was problematic for many. The majority of radicals shared the perception that not all violent action was extreme. This was also true among young Muslims. Indeed, there was an overwhelming consensus that *defensive* action in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and so on, definitely did not constitute extremism – it was carried out by ‘normal’ citizens trying to defend their country, family and freedom.⁴⁵⁹ However, a distinction was made between *defensive* action abroad and *offensive* action at home. One Young Muslim summed up: ‘There is a big difference between self-defence and someone who is going “Oh, you don’t believe in Islam? Let’s kill you”’.⁴⁶⁰

How much of a problem is radicalism?

Interviewees were divided over the prevalence and trajectory of different types of radicalisation within Muslim communities (and therefore over whether or not it was problematic).⁴⁶¹ Indeed, while their assessments of the threat were based on first-hand experience, they were anecdotal. It is noted that the various experts interviewed (mainly but not exclusively non-Muslim experts) were more likely than radicals and young Muslim interviewees to view radicalisation as pervasive and dangerous.

Some interviewees claimed that radicals (not necessarily violent ones) are circulating within the Islamic community, be it at mosques or religious conferences: ‘What we’ve seen in recent years, after an influx of the so-called jihadis... pushing people around, pushing Muslims around and moving in on their mosques and God knows what else.’⁴⁶² It is important to note what ‘attendance at a conference’ actually means – Hizb ut-Tahrir, for example, once had a booth at one conference – one of maybe 100 – and was banned not because of its ideology but because the members who attended were rude and disrespectful.⁴⁶³ For another, radicalisation was growing but it was not violent.⁴⁶⁴ For one Toronto-based radical, extremism was ‘absolutely’ on the rise; he had ‘seen it first hand’.⁴⁶⁵ One Toronto (male) focus group was unanimous that brainwashing was taking place: ‘Leaflets are out there, people might be receiving [them]... information is being pumped out to the people.’⁴⁶⁶ However – and this is an important distinction – violence was dismissed as a ‘fringe thing’,⁴⁶⁷ or something that was talked about but not acted on, ‘a very tiny percentage of them may talk about violence... they wouldn’t do it, they’d be too chicken to do it, and they talk in theory’.⁴⁶⁸

At the same time, experts within the community did speak about the prevalence of radical speeches delivered in mosques throughout Toronto at Friday prayer. One expert believed that Friday prayers are often dominated by Muslim Brotherhood type messages, and are on the subject of international events in the Muslim world, particularly conflicts, delivered by people with limited knowledge of these events. Although this was not connected to violence *per se*, it was felt that it served to confirm the hatred that many people felt.⁴⁶⁹ However, most respondents recognised that although there are occasionally Friday prayers of this nature, they are the exception rather than the rule.

Several interviewees from within Muslim communities dismissed extremist talk as disingenuous, or as a tactic to be heard in competitive religious and public debates:

You see, there are people who would never survive in a Muslim community if they didn’t differ so much. So they have to differ so much that they come

*with all these extreme elements... So in a Muslim community you do have also [a] group of people who have seen that the only way how to come on the top is to be loud and to bring these big words and use them as their ideological tools to mobilise vulnerable people.*⁴⁷⁰

However, interviewees generally thought that radical views were a healthy and natural part of airing issues and allowing people to make informed decisions. It seems apparent that a number of young Muslims in Canada are questioning and debating controversial areas within their religion and society, such as suicide bombing and jihad.⁴⁷¹ This is neither unusual nor surprising given the amount of attention the subject receives in the media, and is a useful and positive sign, because it allows for greater community self-policing. One interviewee noted that debate doesn't always happen when it should, 'for the youth – they should know the tremendous intellectual debates that took place. Our institutions do not offer that.'⁴⁷² As the Dutch experience indicates, airing a wide range of ideas in the community can take the heat out of an issue, leading to greater levels of knowledge and understanding. Critically, this does not equate to renouncing or changing one's religious position. As one radical noted, 'you don't need to reject your faith or jihad... you need people who will discuss the real issues of jihad'.⁴⁷³

Terrorism in the community

There was little evidence among the data analysed to suggest that more than a very small minority of people in Canada advocated violence, which is consistent with estimates from European experts, namely in Denmark and the Netherlands.⁴⁷⁴ It is also noted that many of those described as violent were not seen as a particular threat to Canada itself, but were aspiring towards violent action overseas.

Visibility

The crucial point is how far, and in what ways, people considering violence brush up against other, non-violent,

elements in society because this can offer new intervention points to prevent attacks. The research suggests that this type of encounter does happen.

Interviewees observed that people considering violence existed on the fringes of society, partly because of their unwillingness to participate in organised groups or institutions, and also because they wanted to avoid detection by the Canadian authorities.⁴⁷⁵ One radical told us that he came into contact with young men considering violence, but they did not always welcome his invitations to talk: ‘I’ve told them... “my centre door is open, let’s step outside”... They don’t come over... because their mentalities are already gangster, most of them to begin with.’⁴⁷⁶

While it is inevitable that people considering violent action will be secretive and low-profile, they do talk nonetheless. As one radical noted, ‘I may have come across them, I may have overheard them, they may have dropped hints, but they are very secretive about these things.’⁴⁷⁷

It has been reported that Aly Hindy, an Imam at the Salaheddin mosque, and a high-profile figure within the community, knew members of the Toronto 18: he performed the marriage service between Zakaria Amara and Nada Farooq, was friends with the Khadr family, and is believed to have had private one-to-one conversations with Fahim Ahmad.⁴⁷⁸ There have also been noted ties between those involved in the plot and other individuals who have been identified as radical by sources we spoke to. Three interviewees suggested that individuals affiliated with Al Maghrib were friends with some of the arrested, and that three of the Toronto 18 (including one who was convicted and two others who had the charges dropped) attended a course hosted by Al Maghrib.⁴⁷⁹ However, as a representative of Al Maghrib noted in response to us, over 4,000 individuals in Toronto have attended such courses.

That individuals considering violence come into contact with a range of people is further demonstrated by the fact that – entirely by coincidence – some individuals in the sample of young Muslims in Toronto had personal knowledge of individuals convicted for terrorist activity in connection with the Toronto 18 (either through a mosque or as neighbours), viewing

their arrests with surprise and arguing that they were local boys who were taken advantage of. That is, they were not ‘terrorists’, but ‘a bunch of boys who made some stupid mistakes. They’re just being over-punished.’⁴⁸⁰ This tallies with the Danish experience in which the majority of people from the same neighbourhood as those implicated in the Vollsmose case viewed the suspects as potential criminals but not terrorists, believing the arrests to be a set-up.⁴⁸¹ Indeed, key figures were well known to the community. As one Danish expert noted, ‘Everyone in the neighbourhood knew Mohammed Zaheer and that he was a conservative Muslim.’⁴⁸² It is not possible from this research to detect with any accuracy the relative importance of these specific contacts, but it is to be noted that cells do have contacts with other members of the Muslim community.

Nonetheless, given the credibility and status attached to violent activity among some sectors of the community, individuals are tempted to let people know about their activities and beliefs, particularly if part of the reason for them becoming involved in violent activity is to gain social status. One radical told us, ‘the fact the people are in that mentality maybe [makes them] open their mouths a little bit too much, and it makes it back to me’.⁴⁸³ There were some reports of members of the Toronto 18 attempting to proselytise ‘their aggressive, rough brand of Wahhabi-influenced prayer, getting into the personal space of neighbouring worshippers’ in mainstream mosques and Islamic centres.⁴⁸⁴

Moral oxygen or moral policing?

A vital question is whether community-level dynamics help create conditions that allow terrorism to emerge (‘moral oxygen’) or prevent it (‘moral policing’).

Radicals reported a significant amount of direct, active contact with potentially violent individuals in a counselling or leadership role, displaying a willingness to discuss ideas and also to challenge them. Two had personally counselled young people against fighting overseas, while a number of others had debated or argued with individuals promoting violent action.

The analysis also suggests that self-policing is common within communities. First, radicals and community leaders reported a high level of knowledge about what was occurring within their immediate vicinity; as one noted, ‘We have our own intelligence, so to speak.’⁴⁸⁵ Second, interviewees described a process of active discouragement of individuals who are displaying violent tendencies:

A person came to me in Vancouver and said ‘I want to go to jihad’. I looked at him and said, ‘Why?’ He said, ‘To give life for’. I said, ‘We need [a]live people here... listen to me... You are wanting to contribute something to Islam?... We need a person to help us out in the mosque... You will serve Islam in Canada.’⁴⁸⁶

It was widely reported that one member of the Toronto 18 was attempting to give out jihadist videos outside Salaheddin mosque, where he was confronted by another worshipper.⁴⁸⁷ One radical interviewed recalled confronting members of the Toronto 18 after seeing them trying to recruit others outside mosques in the city.

There is some evidence that a proportion of young, potentially violent extremists are willing and able to listen to other opinions and information, if they come from a respected figure in the community. As one radical interviewee reported, ‘People come to you and say, “I’m thinking of doing something, going overseas and protecting our people, brothers and sisters, fellow Muslims”.’⁴⁸⁸ Some leaders have had some success using arguments based around supporting young people’s desire to contribute but promoting other, non-violent means for them to do so:

I met a few guys like this [who say that they want to go and fight], I’m not sure I convinced them, but you know I tell them, ‘you are here, you are in a better position to serve Islam than if you go there... Other thing you have vote, you vote. You can send to the newspaper a letter. You can go for rallies’.⁴⁸⁹

The appeal to take action for Islam, and to take action for brothers and sisters abroad, was palpable throughout all our

interviews, especially in our sample of young Muslims. Yet many allude to feelings of powerlessness; if this energy can be effectively channelled, there is tremendous potential for positive action.

Interviewees further noted a community desire to report actively on those whose behaviour or views appear dangerous: 'If I would know that somebody in my community doesn't like Canada, talks bad about Canada or wants to harm Canada in any way, I'll be [the first] one to report that person.'⁴⁹⁰ Young Muslim interviewees reported that, 'If the scholar is someone who is not providing correct information, then he will be ousted by the community.'⁴⁹¹

For some people, it is the threat of being watched and the consequences that contribute to self-policing – the fear of RCMP or CSIS presence is having an effect. As one radical pointed out (about Hizb ut-Tahrir), 'If someone like that shows up at your event, then you know for sure heat's gonna be on you, the light's gonna be on you, so they don't want that.'⁴⁹² This is similar to practices in the Netherlands wherein offensive or dangerous individuals have been expelled from mosques.⁴⁹³ However, it is noted that self-policing and reporting appears to be less common in Europe than in Canada. In the UK, Denmark and the Netherlands experts have reported a more marked tendency to 'look the other way'.⁴⁹⁴

At any rate, community self-policing is not a panacea. It has been argued that certain communities provide a sort of 'moral oxygen' for terrorism, creating a culture that supports violent extremism and turning a blind eye to it when it occurs.⁴⁹⁵ One interviewee believed there was 'a lot of denial' within the Muslim community.⁴⁹⁶ Some others noted that some Imams have created a culture conducive to supporting or sympathising with violence, preaching vitriolic (and sometimes inaccurate) sermons; however, it is noted that European experts have played down the importance of Imams.⁴⁹⁷ This sense of tacit support was also observed within the broader community, which again provides a moral infrastructure for individuals who turn violent:

*So on the passive Islamist stream you have all these non-violent things but still enough fervour, there is so much fervour in that activity because it is ongoing, it's daily, they are teaching it, they are learning it, promulgating it, so this will give a foundation for a person to either step over the line and go into active Islamism.*⁴⁹⁸

Many radicals sympathise with the motives of Canadian Muslims wanting to travel overseas to fight, without necessarily supporting or encouraging them to do so, and this may in effect help to create an underlying moral oxygen. The same was true of a considerable minority of young Muslims. As one Imam told us:

*There are people who come up with negative impressions such as these. So what I say is, 'Look, I understand where you are coming from and no doubt what you're thinking in terms of challenging the evil, it's something that is justified.'*⁴⁹⁹

Key findings

- Canadian Muslims' understanding of what constitutes 'extreme' or 'radical' ideas is varied and diverse. Certain elements were common: not balancing your religion with respect for the law and norms you live in; complete segregation from non-Muslims (some degree could be acceptable, if it is to avoid temptation); and treating non-Muslims as lesser humans. These ideas are more significant than discussion of certain specific ideologies such as Salafism.
- There was little evidence among the data analysed to suggest that people advocating violence were anything more than a very small minority. It is also noted that many of those described as violent were not seen as a particular threat to Canada itself – or even the United States – as they aspired towards violent action in Muslim majority countries overseas.
- People who might be considering violence often exist on the fringes of the community, because of their unwillingness to participate in organised groups or institutions and also the desire to avoid detection. This is particularly the case once individuals

believe violence is religiously obliged. This might be something that becomes more apparent given that the Toronto 18 cell was infiltrated.

- Some research on the issue of how terrorists operate within communities suggests that they are entirely disconnected from the rest of the community. However, the credibility and status that would-be terrorists attach to violent activity to some extent motivates them to vocalise their activities and beliefs. This does not necessarily imply that all communities are able to self-police effectively, but it does suggest that information and partnership are important for community intelligence. It appears possible that the media coverage of the Toronto 18 case in particular has encouraged some interviewees to recognise the role they can play in preventing similar plots in the future.
- Within Canadian communities there is a clear effort to clamp down and fight radicalisation to violence without the intervention of government agencies. There was a strong desire to report those whose behaviour or views appear dangerous, particularly if they relate to terrorist attacks in Canada.
- Respected figures in the community, including radicals, have worked effectively to dissuade a proportion of individuals contemplating the necessity or justification of violence. The appeal to Islam and recognition that these young people have the energy to do something in response to current events can work to help people channel those energies more effectively.
- However, community self-policing is not a panacea, for three reasons. First, some cells will operate in secrecy (more so given that the Toronto 18 cell was infiltrated) and so communities will not always be aware of them. Second, this research and other work has found examples of communities either failing to spot, or failing to stop, individuals demonstrating violent tendencies. Finally, under Canadian law, Canadian citizens travelling overseas to undertake terrorist activity are committing a criminal offence, and there appears to be less of a consensus about the legitimacy of this activity. Therefore, community self-policing and the development of partnerships between communities and intelligence and law enforcement agencies should take place

alongside, not instead of, existing forms of intelligence and security work.

- There is some evidence that the threat of being watched contributes to self-policing – in Canada, the fear of RCMP or CSIS presence is having an effect.

11 Recommendations

The worth of a State, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it. A State which dwarfs its men, in order that they may be more docile instruments in its hands even for beneficial purposes, will find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished.

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, 1859

There are no easy solutions when dealing with radicalisation to violence and it cannot be solved through any mechanistic policy response. Humans are complicated and act, react and interact in inherently unpredictable ways. There is an exception to every rule about terrorist profiles, indicators of a threat, or characteristics of people vulnerable to recruitment. Security services must make difficult decisions, because every decision to monitor an individual or group means *not* monitoring someone else. Social policy will also entail controversial decisions, and unintended consequences. Three general principles need to be applied to help prevent al-Qaeda inspired terrorism.

First, al-Qaeda inspired terrorism in the West shares much in common with other counter-cultural, subversive groups of predominantly angry young men. Being radical and rebelling against the received values of the status quo is an important part of being young, and being radical is not always the first step on the path to violence. Government policy must distinguish clearly between radicalisation that leads to violence and radicalisation that does not. Prevention work should avoid 'mission drift' and be narrowed to focus on individuals displaying indicators towards violence. At the same time, government should invest in new forms of prevention work. Ways must be found to ensure young people can be radical, dissenting and make a difference, but that do not have serious or violent consequences.

Second, the best way to fight radical ideas is with a liberal attitude to dissent, radicalism and disagreement. Silencing radical views is not only wrong as a matter of principle, but it can also create a taboo effect that inadvertently makes such ideas more appealing. Radicals in our sample had access to the same thinkers and ideas but had the ability to contextualise and nuance their arguments. These critical thinking skills can only be developed through open discussion. A liberal approach can thus demystify and de-glamourise terrorism without alienating large numbers of people. However, a liberal approach depends on independent voices setting out forceful counter-arguments against extremist ideas. Government and non-government communications must have traction with communities, and should reflect arguments and messaging already circulating, in order to isolate violent extremists. A liberal approach also requires wide engagement of stakeholders, including those with potentially anti-liberal views.

Third, the threat of violent radicalisation can never be ‘solved’ or completely neutralised; it can only be managed. Despite thousands of academic articles and dozens of models, the process of radicalisation to violence still eludes complete understanding: there is no such thing as a typical journey into terrorist activity and no such thing as a typical terrorist. Violent radicalisation is a ‘wicked issue’ – there is little or no agreement about what the problem actually is, let alone how to solve it. No matter how sophisticated our understanding becomes, there will always be a high degree of uncertainty and unpredictability. Therefore, radicalisation to violence cannot be ‘solved’ in any traditional sense of the term and any response will entail controversial decisions and unintended consequences. Overreaction by the government and security services can actually increase the risk and the appeal of a violent ideology. Therefore, governments must focus on the things they can realistically change, while the lead role must be played by society – individuals, groups, organisations and communities.

This requires placing greater emphasis on building trust between government, police and communities. This includes investing in a wide array of relationships, ensuring a free flow of

information, and working with community members as partners, not informers. Many people within Muslim communities, including those with radical views, are already taking steps to prevent the spread of the al-Qaeda violent ideology. They should be supported and encouraged. One important implication is to ensure broad social policy and counter-terrorism policy does not necessarily overlap. Government obviously must – like other types of crime prevention – stop crime from happening where there is good evidence of a high risk. National security is the first duty of the state. Yet, this can be done without dealing with Muslims as a separate or special group. Many Muslim communities face economic and social difficulties, poor life chances, poor education and professional attainment, and challenges relating to integration and social cohesion. There is little evidence that these factors directly contribute to radicalisation to violence. Islamicising and securitising what are often social or economic issues can be divisive and unhelpful. Of course there does need to be some common ground to hold societies together. Governments should work and invest in creating cohesive and integrated societies, but should recognise that the best way of doing this is largely through indirect means by addressing economic inequality and social mobility, and providing opportunities for greater interaction.

The following recommendations are based on these three principles and aim to inform difficult policy decisions for all agencies involved in counter-terrorism work. They are applicable to a range of security, government and non-government agencies across Europe and North America. A small number of the recommendations are specific to Canada.

Distinguishing radical from violent

Governments should distinguish between radicalisation that leads to violence and radicalisation that does not. The two should be dealt with distinctly.

Assuming that radical views such as those noted above constitute the base of the terrorist pyramid can result in counter-radicalisation strategies against large numbers of people who

object entirely to al-Qaeda's methods and could backfire through pushing people towards al-Qaeda inspired groups.⁵⁰⁰ Any approach to counter radicalisation and prevention should clearly distinguish between radicalisation that leads to violence and other types, and should not seek to collapse social issues into security concerns.

Radicalisation that does not lead to violence could be a positive thing, for example if it leads people to become engaged in political and community activity. Political and social activism should be encouraged so long as it respects certain democratic and pluralist parameters. However, clearly not all types of non-violent radicalisation are positive – some forms may represent a long-term social threat if their message involves intolerance or complete separation. It might be preferable to consider social policy or even non-judicial methods, such as decisions related to funding, discussed further below.

Agencies and others must look for signs of a shift towards violence.

It is important to understand nuanced views about certain religious doctrines. Simple decisions to intervene wholly based on an individual's school of thought, admiration of certain thinkers, or the books they read, should be avoided. It is possible for people to read or have read radical texts, be strongly and vocally opposed to Western foreign policy, believe in Sharia law, hope for the restoration of the caliphate, and even support the principle of Afghan and Iraqi Muslims fighting allied troops, while being extremely vocal in denouncing al-Qaeda inspired terrorism in Western countries. These people can be important allies.

There is no obvious conveyor belt into terrorism, with a natural, linear or predictable process of radicalisation leading to violence. For some individuals there are therefore a number of 'non-religious' behaviours and attitudes that indicate a shift towards violence. This could include aggressive conflict with existing mosque authorities about the legitimacy of violence, or an interest in literature about what one can or cannot do to 'kuffar'. These are signs that are potentially useful for community members, leaders, public servants and local police

agencies who are involved in preventing radicalisation to violence.

Intelligent prevention work

Preventing individuals from becoming involved in or supportive of al-Qaeda inspired terrorism must remain a priority for Western governments. By definition, this covers a wide array of different types of interventions as discussed in Chapter 4. Radicalisation to violence is one of the most difficult and contentious areas of social and security policy. Dealing with it should draw on wicked issue theory. Wicked issues are characterised by a lack of agreement about what the problem actually is, let alone how to solve it.⁵⁰¹ This is true with radicalisation to violence, as many disagree about whether the problem is one of foreign policy, immigration and integration, religion and ideology, or youthful radicalism. The fact that there is no single profile of a violent extremist, or pathway to violence, demonstrates that humans are complicated and will always act in inherently unpredictable ways. Therefore, radicalisation to violence cannot be solved in any traditional sense of the term, and any response will entail controversial decisions and unintended consequences. No single policy is ever going to please everyone, and there will always be difficult trade-offs. Policies can be better or worse, not right or wrong.

Government responses to social problems characterised by a high degree of uncertainty, unpredictability and unintended consequences should be guided by the following principles. First, it is important to focus on factors that government can realistically change, not the things it cannot: in other words, where do governments have leverage?⁵⁰² Trying to impact or control every possible social or political factor that influences processes of radicalisation to violence is impossible. It is better for government to focus resources on areas it can realistically change. For example, government is better setting governance standards in mosques than dictating theology to Imams. Therefore, it is suggested that broad social policy and counter-terrorism policy should not necessarily overlap.

Second, government agencies must always consider what unintended consequences there might be, and seek to minimise them. Security work does not take place in a vacuum, and this is especially true of community engagement and prevention work. One recent example is the shift in the UK towards encouraging communities to take an active role in self-policing. Although the idea was designed to engage communities more, some thought that it meant they were being expected to spy on their children, friends or students. Security and social policy must be designed and implemented with great care to predict – and avoid – negative unintended consequences.

Finally, it is vital for governments to recognise the limits of what they can achieve. There is an exception to every rule about terrorist profiles, indicators of a threat, or characteristics of people vulnerable to recruitment. Given the complexity of the subject and the changing nature of the threat, it is inevitable that some people will slip through the net. This does not mean that the system is broken. Knee-jerk reactions based on individual or anecdotal failures in intelligence are to be avoided.

Therefore prevention work must avoid ‘mission drift’. Across Europe, prevention work covers a wide range of policy initiatives, including: targeted interventions for those deemed radicalised, challenging the violent ideology, supporting vulnerable young people, building community resilience to extremist ideologies, and even addressing generic grievances. Interventions and policies specifically under the rubric ‘prevention work’, however, must become more focused.

Prevention work should focus on targeted interventions where there is a clear, identified danger of groups or individuals undergoing radicalisation to violence.

In seeking to prevent radicalisation leading to violence, police and security agencies should focus on initiatives appropriate to their remit. The primary focus of prevention work should be on targeted interventions where there is a clear, identified danger of groups or individuals undergoing radicalisation *to violence*, and should not seek to address other very broad, permissive factors

that can feed many different types of radicalisation. These interventions could take place in specific local areas, such as small clandestine mosques, prisons or certain neighbourhoods, but should always be employed in conjunction with community partners.

Including issues of social concerns within an al-Qaeda inspired anti-terrorism agenda risks perpetuating the perception that radicalisation to violence is only a concern within Muslim communities and not others. Thus, ‘whole of government’ approaches to prevention work risk isolating Muslim communities and stigmatising social policy – without the evidence base that they contribute to radicalisation to violence.

Broad social policy interventions can tackle underlying factors but these should not become part of a security agenda and should be clearly separated from police and intelligence work.

Some Western Muslims, including Canadians, face economic and social difficulties, poor life chances, poor education and professional attainment, and challenges relating to integration and social cohesion. There is little evidence that these factors directly contribute to radicalisation to violence. Islamicising and securitising what are essentially social or economic issues can be divisive and unhelpful. Tackling these issues is a matter for social policy, not a tool to prevent radicalisation, and it is on this basis alone that social policy interventions should be conceived, explained and measured. There are already a large number of projects taking place to that end in all countries studied, and they should continue.

Most countries undertake numerous interventions that contribute to prevention policy goals. Given wide variation, prevention work could be audited by one coordinating government department (for example, in Canada, Public Safety Canada or in the UK the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism). Federal and provincial level government in Canada already undertake a considerable amount of work that has an indirect impact on preventing radicalisation to violence, even if it is not measured explicitly. Because prevention work covers so

many areas of social policy, there is danger of replication of work and lack of coordination.

Governments should create and encourage programmes that offer exciting, meaningful alternatives.

A significant proportion of young Muslims – like many young people – will want to dissent and rebel, and the idea of being part of an international jihadist movement can be exhilarating. It is therefore important to ensure that non-violent alternatives can compete. Young Canadian Muslims are politically engaged, knowledgeable, interested and care about Canada's role on the world stage. For a small number, being part of a radical movement is a way to channel that engagement: it can offer the chance to be rebellious and adventurous. The research also revealed that for some young Muslims the desire to fight in Iraq or Afghanistan was driven by a need to do something.

Governments must be more radical and daring in devising ways of engaging young people. For example, schemes that allow young Western Muslims to volunteer in those countries they are most concerned about, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, could be considered.

This could be accomplished through partnerships with international charities or a programme similar to the US Peace Corps programme. A number of international charities, such as the Red Cross and Islamic Relief, offer opportunities to volunteer abroad in areas of suffering and conflict. There are already two schemes – Canada World Youth and Crossroads International – that offer opportunities to young Canadians to travel abroad. These should be expanded and promoted to all young people, including those deemed at risk of radicalisation to violence. Opportunities to travel and volunteer abroad can not only channel energy and engender a concern for others, but also take the glamour out of the al-Qaeda narrative and increase appreciation of Western citizens for the rights granted in their own countries. However, it is important that this has some degree of effectiveness. The challenge for Western governments is to create exciting opportunities for activism while

demonstrating that greater social activism can have a tangible effect on decision-making.

Prevention initiatives should adopt a ‘multi-component’ approach imported from successful counter-gang techniques.

Radicalisation to violence shares common ground, at least for some individuals, with gangster lifestyles, both in the nature of group or gang recruitment, and in inter- and intra-group dynamics. Given this overlap, prevention-related activities must learn from successful gang-related techniques. There should be a formalisation of cooperation between prevention and counter-gang professionals on multiple levels: from mixed-personnel working units, joint planning exercises, joint policy-planning seminars, joint rehabilitation and anti-recidivism programmes in prison to senior staff transfer, collaboration and strategic planning.

The lessons from different gang intervention programmes are valuable for prevention work. For example, interventions that are purely curriculum-based (such as lectures on the dangers of gang membership) typically yield only short-term and modest change, as do pure suppression programmes (judicial responses, heavy surveillance, tough prosecution), such as Wisconsin’s Proactive Gang Resistance Enforcement, Suppression and Supervision (PROGRESS). The latter only serve to displace gang activity.⁵⁰³ Multi-component programmes that combine heightened policing and harsher judicial punishments with opportunities for a way out of gang life have demonstrated long-term success, especially when accompanied by all-community involvement from the police, social support services, charities, youth groups, local churches, parents’ organisations, rehabilitation centres and schools.⁵⁰⁴ ‘Push’ and ‘pull’ factors, combined with rigorous theological refutation of violent ideology, have already been used with some success in de-radicalisation programmes in Egypt and Saudi Arabia.⁵⁰⁵

Governments should support and encourage citizenship projects that seek to increase civic engagement of young Muslims and contribute to the development of a uniquely European or North American Islam.

Programmes that seek to increase civic engagement are a key part of protecting vulnerable young people and building community resilience to extremism. The research suggests that civic engagement and political protest distinguishes radicals from terrorists. The project My Canada, which was organised by the Canadian Council of Muslim Women and funded through the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Multiculturalism Programme, is a good example of this type of programme.

Lessons from similar programmes in the UK and the Netherlands show that their success depends on being led by young people and communities themselves, and that they risk losing impact if they are seen as part of a counter-terrorism strategy. It can also put unhelpful pressure on organisers to force the conversation and focus on violent radicalisation instead of allowing young people to explore these matters themselves. These types of programmes provide an important outlet to discuss issues facing young Muslims and young people more generally, and can help to contribute to the development of a uniquely North American or European Islam. Similarly to above, programmes of this nature should be part of an effort to improve civic engagement, rather than part of an explicit counter-extremism or counter-terrorism policy.

Demystifying and deglamourising al-Qaeda

The idea of al-Qaeda is as important as the ideas it propagates. At least some of the appeal of terrorist activity is the notoriety, glamour and status that it brings. In some circles it is fashionable and even cool to talk about being a jihadi. Removing this glamour is a key element of the battle of ideas. Young Muslims – like any other young people – will be drawn to radical ideas, radical books and radical thinkers. They will argue about them and discuss them. Banning texts often merely adds to the appeal and does not prevent their circulation. Openness is a more

potent weapon. It is extremely difficult for the government to play a lead role in this area. These recommendations are primarily aimed at non-governmental organisations and individuals.

What distinguishes radicals from terrorists is not their lack of contact with radical ideas, people or writing. Rather, they choose to reject, or not act upon, those ideas, because they have had access to a large diversity of thinkers and sources, radical or otherwise. Building critical faculties occurs when people debate and argue over such issues: when people have access to multiple (including the radical) sources of information.

A liberal approach to debate and freedom of speech also relies on forceful counter-arguments against extremist ideas, including from Muslim communities and individuals.

Silencing radical views or proscribing groups must be considered as a last option, because banning radical voices will neither prove effective nor lessen their appeal. For at least a small number of individuals it also legitimises the message, because clashing with the authorities is often viewed in jihadist circles as testament to truth.⁵⁰⁶ In some cases it can cause the taboo effect, where messages become intrinsically more appealing and exciting because they are banned.

There are limits to free speech, of course, and each country has different degrees of tolerance. As a general approach, language that incites violence or hatred against others based on race or religion should be met with the full force of law.⁵⁰⁷ Current hate laws in Canada should be sufficient for prosecuting this sort of fiery rhetoric. Section 319 of the Criminal Code criminalises the public incitement of hatred ‘in such a way that there will likely be a breach of peace’, while subsection 319(2) criminalises the wilful promotion of hatred against an identifiable group.⁵⁰⁸

There can be longer-term social consequences when people hold some radical views, for example promoting intolerance or segregation, even if they do not break the law. Governments should take care not to promote, support or fund groups and

organisations that espouse these ideas, but more importantly, non-government agencies – including Muslim ones – must set out counter-arguments as to why particular radical or extremist ideas are wrong.

Western governments must be confident that free speech is a potent weapon against extremism, not a hindrance. This does not mean that societies will not, or should not, have moral codes, nor does it entail that the government is not able to vigorously protect or defend those values.

Imams should be required to pass mandatory language proficiency to ensure young people have access to a wide range of information and sources.

It is impossible for governments to stop the flood of books, pamphlets and ideas circulated on the internet. A far better approach is to allow ideas to be aired, discussed and debated openly. The weight of Islamic thinking rejects violent activities in the West. No religious establishment has validated 9/11 nor the religious interpretation that permitted those attacks. Takfirism has been rejected in a hermeneutic way.⁵⁰⁹ People need to reach that conclusion themselves. Imams are vital in helping this happen. They need to be accessible to young people. All new and existing Imams should be required to pass a national language proficiency test, and offered language training through existing educational institutions. These types of initiatives are already being created and led by some local communities themselves, including the Canadian Council of Imams, the Canadian Council of Theologians and the University of Toronto.⁵¹⁰

The concepts of jihad, terrorism and radicalisation can be demystified through a series of open, local level debates about these terms.

The issues of jihad and terrorism are frequently in the media. Muslims, like anyone else, are going to discuss them. It is better to have them out in the open. Voices then must compete with

each other, forcing the more extreme ones to justify their stances. As one radical pointed out, ‘There has to be freedom to talk about this stuff – because at the moment as soon as anyone uses the word jihad, some guy there is going to write down the Imam was talking about jihad.’⁵¹¹ Some of the most successful programmes in the UK focus on encouraging debate within communities, particularly among young people, with a concern for developing their ability to be critical of and challenge extremist arguments. An important element of their success is that they are led by those participating, and not dictated by anyone else.⁵¹²

Government and non-government communication

Legitimacy is key to al-Qaeda’s vision of success and counter-terrorism strategies and messaging may unwittingly boost it.⁵¹³ Governments must keep their messaging about what constitutes ‘good’ or ‘bad’ Islam to a minimum. Official badging of ideas or initiatives can damage legitimacy. However, governments will, inevitably, talk about al-Qaeda inspired terrorism and Islam. Where they do, messages should reflect the community’s own terms in order to isolate terrorists. Certain messages can help drive a wedge between radicalisation that leads to violence and radicalisation that does not.

Terrorists are criminals, not holy warriors. Their understanding of religion is a ‘cut and paste’ or ‘do-it-yourself’ version of Islam.

Although it is difficult for governments to dictate fashions, recognising the appeal of messaging is important and implies that certain techniques could undermine it. One way to do this is through the language employed to describe terrorism. Islamic terrorists are better described as criminals than as operatives, and extremist groups might be better labelled as ‘cut and paste Islam’, ‘pamphlet Islam’ or ‘do-it-yourself Islam’. In addition, government press releases, where possible, should consider ways to let it be known that most Islamic terrorists are in fact incompetent, narcissistic and irreligious – not religious warriors.

Islam is not solely about peace, but it has exacting rules about the use of violence.

The dominant message from Western governments at present is that al-Qaeda inspired terrorism is encouraged by a twisted reading of Islam, which is at core a peaceful religion. However, although superficially attractive, this message is in fact subtly different from the majority view of radicals and young Muslims. A more accurate message – with more purchase among Muslims – is to say that Islam, like all religions, has peaceful and violent elements. But Islam has very clear rules about the use of violence, which is called for under certain, very carefully defined conditions, and should be applied in a just, fair and appropriate manner. Islam is about justice, which sometimes requires violence in self-defence, a principle enshrined under international law. Individuals who plan attacks on Canadian – or any Western – soil are, by all standards of recognised scholarship and jurisprudence, ignoring these rules.

Islam is a religion of great complexity and depth.

Many radicals stress the complexity, logic and depth of Islam. Terrorists do not, and this difference should be stressed. Scholars who take this line are useful allies. Hamza Yusuf is a good example. He offered young Muslims a new way forward – a connection to Islam that is deep, political, ethical and spiritual.⁵¹⁴ This complexity and depth is something that Muslims are proud of; however, in the eyes of radicals, terrorists show extreme hubris in thinking they have mastered jihadist scholarship in a matter of weeks.

Strip away the glamour and mystique.

Messaging, from a range of organisations, should stress that most al-Qaeda inspired terrorists are in fact incompetent, narcissistic and irreligious, certainly not worthy of imitation. Indeed, a number of recent failed attacks have demonstrated an extreme incompetence that could undermine the brand of al-Qaeda. One other potential way to do this is could be through satire. Satire has long been recognised as a powerful tool to

undermine the popularity of social movements: both the Ku Klux Klan and the British Fascist party in the 1930s were seriously harmed by sustained satire.⁵¹⁵ Of course, governments cannot be the institution that satirises terrorist movements for a number of reasons, but might be in a position to offer support and information to those who do. This work therefore needs to come from non-government organisations and agencies. Given the danger of such tools backfiring, it is suggested that such approaches are used extremely carefully.

Choosing a diversity of working partners

Western governments seek to build relationships with Muslim communities through partnerships. The decision about who to work with is often portrayed as a choice between ‘moderates’ (easy to work with) and ‘extremists’ (have more credibility). As Griffiths-Dickson rightly notes, each of these views is open to challenge by media, commentators, public intellectuals and the Muslim community itself, for different reasons.⁵¹⁶

This is a false dichotomy. In different contexts and settings, different partners are useful. In local communities where face-to-face interaction takes place, personalities, local street credibility and local knowledge are vitally important. However, at a national level, the promotion of tolerance and diversity are more important considerations.

Engagement needs to be widened.

Many individuals who claim to speak on behalf of others do not. One scholar has recently noted that Canadian Muslim communities are undergoing a change in their perceptions of authority and representation.⁵¹⁷ It is therefore important to try to speak to those beyond the usual suspects.

Engagement should always be as wide as possible, covering as many schools of thought as possible, and should make a special effort to include women. A recent report suggests that Muslim women are an undervalued group within counter-terrorism.⁵¹⁸ Many have the knowledge and skills to

communicate and work with the most marginalised members of communities, and may be able to connect with women who are already supporters or potential perpetrators of extremist violence – there were such women present around at least two of the cells studied.

Governments should work with radicals or extremists in certain local instances where there is a clear tactical benefit.

Police should form ‘tactical partnerships’ with radicals when useful, but such engagement should not evolve into a permanent strategy.⁵¹⁹ This is especially true in local partnership policing where it is important to work with people who know the scene. For instance, some individuals who are considering that violent jihad is a religious obligation might respond well to the religious guidance of a well-respected Salafist scholar. In London, Brixton Salafis’ strict allegiance to Salafist scholars (and disdain for Sufi scholars) gave them credibility when tackling violent Islamists in the 1990s.⁵²⁰ Indeed, psychology literature has demonstrated that different messengers can yield different results: people are more influenced by an argument made by a fellow group member than the same argument made by an out-group member.⁵²¹ As one of our interviewees noted, a Salafist ‘will not listen to a non-Salafist’.⁵²² This sort of engagement should only be considered for individual cases, targeted at specific individuals, not as a general policy.

Governments must work with non-religious leaders.

Radicalisation to violence is not a purely religious phenomenon. Therefore religious leaders are not the only individuals who can be useful partners. Local social workers, teachers or sports coaches with local street credibility are also important. At the local level, a person’s school of thought is less important than their style, street knowledge and credibility. Governments could work with former reformed jihadists to de-radicalise others at risk. People who have been involved in crime, such as former street gang members, can also be employed. This is

especially true in local partnership policing where it is important to work with people who know the scene and have a good local reputation.

Community self-policing

The term ‘community self-policing’ is used to describe the action taken by communities themselves to spot radicalisation to violence and take measures to stop it. Self-policing is vital because key behaviours and indicators are most visible at the local community level, and those within the community, not the police, have considerable leverage to challenge violent ideologies and provide information to security services. Research also suggests that there is some ‘talk’ at the community level among people considering violent activity.

In Canada it appears that there is a considerable amount of self-policing. Recent research from the USA has found that it occurs to a significant degree within Muslim communities there too.⁵²³ In the UK the ‘Brixton Salafis’ spent considerable time and effort trying to undermine the influence of extremists like Abu Hamza, Abdullah el-Faisal and Abu Qatada, while nobody else really knew what was going on.⁵²⁴

However, there are limits to what self-policing can achieve. There will always be individuals who are beyond the reach of communities. Although the research points to some indicators particular to terrorists, it is probably impossible to ever know *precisely* the distinctions between behaviour that is potentially offensive but not likely to lead to criminal activity, behaviour that is potentially dangerous but suitable for community intervention, and behaviour that might indicate a serious threat and should be reported to the authorities.⁵²⁵ Furthermore, the fact that the Toronto 18 cell was infiltrated by community members makes it possible that future cells will become more secretive.

Partnerships with key community members and community policing should be prioritised.

Policing and security agencies should allow and encourage both new and existing self-policing through close partnership with communities, alongside other forms of security and policing work, while developing a trusting relationship with policing agencies to facilitate a two-way flow of information. The success of these partnerships depends on there being a trusting relationship between the police and intelligence agencies and minority communities. Partnership policing of this type does not preclude 'hard' counter-terrorism from pursuing terrorist suspects in more familiar ways. A breakdown of relations between communities and the police can make effective policing far more difficult to achieve.⁵²⁶

There is a broad trend across Europe towards more citizen engagement in policing, and increased community and neighbourhood policing. In many ways, it is a return to the vision of the founder of the modern UK police force, Robert Peel, who thought policing should 'give reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public, and that the public are the police'.⁵²⁷ However, community policing in counter-terrorism is controversial. Many accounts separate 'high policing' (intelligence collection, analysis and distribution, stops and searches) and 'low policing' (the relaying of community information and cooperation) with communities in areas deemed at risk.⁵²⁸

Working in partnership means treating members of the community with a history in this area (not necessarily those in official leadership positions) as equal and trusted partners who can provide important information and advice, not as informers. A community leader is more likely to impart sensitive information to police when he has established a significant level of trust.⁵²⁹ Community leaders often become more confident in dealing with community issues if they feel they have the trust and support of police officers who will treat them openly and honestly. On the other hand, partnerships and general information sharing can help officers develop a far deeper understanding of internal politics within local communities that are otherwise unknown.

Community partnerships are already a key element of the strategy of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. For example, the Ottawa Police Service has made significant inroads with religious and cultural minority communities in the city, including partnerships with the organisation Muslim Presence to facilitate debates.⁵³⁰ Information about other partnerships was relayed to us anecdotally by INSET teams – integrated counter-terrorism teams consisting of RCMP, CSIS and a range of provincial and municipal partners – in Toronto and Montreal. Such partnerships need to be developed further.

The focus should be on areas of common agreement for partnerships.

Our research indicates that many people within Muslim communities denounce terrorist activity in Canada and are willing and ready to work with authorities to prevent it. The picture for terrorism committed overseas is less clear. The clearest basis for agreement, partnership and community-level self-policing is stopping terrorism at home.

Partnership policing might entail working with people who have real traction among young people within a community – those who can access others considering violence, which could mean those who come from sections of the community regularly described as extremist, fundamentalist and subversive, and who might hold views about terrorism overseas that are unacceptable – while vigorously denouncing terrorism in the West. These individuals can be important allies. It will not be possible to work in partnership with some individuals or groups, because of their particularly virulent ideology or untrustworthiness. However, judgements about such groups and individuals should not be made on the basis of their school of thought. Effective community policing can help us discern those individuals within the community who could serve as useful partners, and those who ought to be avoided.

Deployment of Muslim officers should be increased in areas where engagement with Muslim communities is important.

Muslim police officers in the UK are equipped not only with operational and community policing experience, but also with social and cultural capital that may enable them to build partnerships with particular minorities within the Muslim population.⁵³¹ Although it is not always the only thing that matters, having some religious knowledge is important – it is a resource.⁵³² Conversations with INSET teams in Canada showed that tactical deployment of Muslim officers is deemed contrary to the principles behind the Canadian approach, which stress equality and the importance of cross-cultural dialogue. Although these principles remain important, and there is a risk that Muslim officers could exacerbate political or sectarian tensions, the tactical deployment of Muslim officers should be given greater consideration.

Building confidence and trust in police and intelligence agencies

The police are key in leading a multi-layered, multi-agency approach to countering terrorism. But trust and confidence in the police can be undermined in situations where certain communities feel that they are being over-policed, and a breakdown of police–community relations can have serious consequences for policing.⁵³³ Opinions about the effectiveness of RCMP and CSIS engagement with Muslim communities were mixed. Many noted the importance of building bridges between communities, and having a dialogue about these kinds of issues, but the RCMP and CSIS were criticised for speaking to the wrong people, rubber-stamping decisions that had already been made, encouraging people to spy on their neighbours, and showing insufficient cultural understanding.⁵³⁴ In particular, a number were concerned that the perception in the community was that RCMP and CSIS just ‘did whatever the hell they liked’ and were using engagement work as an excuse to spy and generate intelligence, ‘trying to infiltrate the community’.⁵³⁵

There is an extent to which such criticism is inevitable. Nonetheless, many Canadian Muslims pay close attention to

stories about RCMP and CSIS actions and conspiracy theories abound about a concerted effort to undermine Islam. For those who are seeking to build a single narrative about the persecution of Muslims around the world by ‘Western interests’ these cases fit comfortably – regardless of their trustworthiness. It is important to work towards increasing people’s trust in policing and intelligence services. However, this cannot be achieved through quick fixes or top-down information campaigns.

Personal experiences must be improved.

Research by Wesley Skogan has highlighted the importance and significance of personal experience on popular assessments of the quality of police service. Skogan found that the factors contributing most to a good experience include fair treatment and politeness, followed by helpful and prompt service.⁵³⁶ However, one expert has suggested that police officers in Canada involved in engagement initiatives are not always typical of the officer the community is likely to come into contact with on a day-to-day basis. While trust can be built with individual officers, trust for the police department as a whole depends on whether or not trustworthy characteristics are reflected by other officers in ‘non-engagement’ environments. Limited and discrete engagement exercises are not sufficient for building trust between individuals, as one radical noted.⁵³⁷ Trust is something that is built over a long period of time, through multiple interactions. A counter-terrorism strategy geared predominantly towards establishing community engagement partnerships, rather than engaging in aggressive or coercive infiltration tactics, will require a shift in the embedded culture within an ‘elite’ police unit.

There must be a policy of ‘maximum disclosure’ for known cases and issues of controversy.

All governments are in a difficult position. By trying to disseminate information about their positive work they risk fuelling the very conspiracy theories they seek to debunk. The best way to counter mistrust and misperceptions is not through

government-led campaigns, but through increased transparency, which allows people to reach their own conclusions. Ideas are spread through networks;⁵³⁸ certainly it is through word of mouth that (often inaccurate) ideas surrounding the Toronto 18 and security certificates are circulated. It is difficult for government to counter such views even when they are demonstrably false. Rumours must be countered through networks and word of mouth, rather than government information campaigns.

Of course in many instances transparency and openness about sources of intelligence are not possible for security reasons. As seen in the recent security certificate court decisions for two of the five post-9/11 security certificates in Canada, security agencies may deem information too sensitive for public release and would rather have the security certificate quashed than make public its evidence for fear of compromising intelligence sources.

However, there are some useful examples that can be applied elsewhere. In Denmark, intelligence agencies publish an unclassified assessment of their judgement of the threats facing the country. In Northern Ireland, the policy of ‘maximum disclosure’ of providing families with everything known about the killings during the Troubles – even if the police could not convict a suspect – has been proposed as a model for police work elsewhere.

One area especially where greater transparency could help is in publishing details of terrorism trials. Court transcripts and other related documents should be made much more widely accessible to the public. It is not sufficient for the media to report on details from trials, because often the media is equally viewed with suspicion and mistrust as was seen in our focus groups with young Muslims. In Canada, it was only after the conviction of members of the Toronto 18 and the public release of one individual’s ‘Statement of Uncontested Facts’ that many – particularly within certain Muslim communities – finally accepted that the police and Canadian Government did not exaggerate the threat. This is related to the recommendation below, whereby certain community leaders could be given access

to (carefully redacted) classified intelligence sources, and are then able to inform others about why security services responded in the way they did. Ensuring that the public has greater access to these documents can help to prevent the spread of conspiracy theories and mistrust among communities whose cooperation is key to effective prevention measures.

Policing agencies should employ a range of consultation formats including both proactive and reactive engagement strategies.

A significant degree of political buy-in is essential if police are to adopt a beneficial long-term strategy towards building confidence and trust among Muslim communities. At present, most policing engagement focuses on informing communities about issues of national security and how police and security agencies operate, with the goal of countering misperceptions and mistrust.

Traditional consultation formats like public meetings are not always the best way to do this as they are often poorly attended and not representative. In the UK, one model for creating dialogue has been adopted in Operation NICOLE. In this form of engagement, the police invite members of the community to participate in role-playing scenarios around issues such as identifying individuals at risk of radicalisation leading to violence, and the management of police and security service raids.⁵³⁹ This engagement model helps both sides achieve better understanding of each other's concerns, while at the same time potentially providing a basis for ongoing partnerships. The RCMP is already doing this to some extent with its 'Citizen Academy', with positive feedback from those who have taken part. The 'Citizen Academy' allows a range of Canadians to spend up to 18 hours training and shadowing RCMP officers to learn about how they operate. Programmes like this and Operation NICOLE, which seek to initiate two-way dialogue and a shifting of perspectives, should be continued, extended and adopted elsewhere.

Future academic and research work

Counter-terrorism research and project implementation has become a cottage industry. There is at least one book about terrorism published every six hours.⁵⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the vast output actually obscures major weaknesses, as it ‘exists on a diet of fast-food research: quick, cheap, ready-to-hand and nutritionally dubious... while the field may appear to be relatively active and energetic, growth in key areas remains stunted and halting’.⁵⁴¹ Our research has identified four major weaknesses that should be addressed by academic institutions and can inform the criteria for government-sponsored research:

Research on terrorism must produce more primary data.

The first, and most obvious, problem with research in terrorism studies is that remarkably few of the contributions offer any new primary evidence or data, relying instead on secondary sources: the majority of studies are ‘glorified literature reviews’, with 80 per cent of research based solely or primarily on already published material.⁵⁴² Furthermore, the nature of terrorism and those committing terrorist acts is changing quickly. Focusing not only on terrorists themselves, but also on wider communities, provides for targeted research: people who had contact with terrorists, people who were members of the same community or mosque, and people who have seriously contemplated violent extremism should all be investigated.

Research on terrorism must analyse the data more rigorously, especially through the use of more proxy ‘control’ groups and grounded theory.

Where primary research is undertaken, it is characterised by a lack of rigour in analysis; there is a heavy reliance on qualitative and journalistic approaches, which lack the validity and reliability generally expected within mainstream social science research.⁵⁴³ Only 10 per cent of articles published in the core terrorism journals post 9/11 have relied on inferential statistical analysis, where data are not organised and deployed descriptively to support a thesis, but patterns are interpreted, with a control

element, in the statistics themselves.⁵⁴⁴ Our research has sought to impose quantitative rigour into the study of a phenomenon that is inherently qualitative. To this end, by borrowing techniques from grounded theory methodology, we do not test an *a priori* hypothesis, but instead allow the theory to be generated from the data (see Annex 1 for a full description of our methodology).⁵⁴⁵

Core terrorism studies research must introduce more sophisticated techniques of data analysis. It must forgo lazy journalistic techniques and a purely descriptive use of information, and instead use more inferential data analysis – where the theory is moulded to fit the data, rather than the data to fit the theory, including the careful creation of control groups.

Research on terrorism must be more multi- and interdisciplinary.

Core terrorism studies do not borrow sufficiently from methodologies and approaches from other disciplines related to violence and terrorism.⁵⁴⁶ So although the wider literature offers a wealth of insights into terrorism and radicalisation, and methodological suggestions for how the phenomenon can be approached, much of the literature by terrorism experts remains highly empirical and narrowly focused. Terrorism and radicalisation are social phenomena, the products of social, cultural and political forces. There are many disciplines – from sociology to psychology, economics, international relations, organisation theory, theology and philosophy – that can be deployed in understanding terrorism and radicalisation. More disciplines must be exploited in understanding terrorism, and there should be more collaboration of disciplines in research.

Research on terrorism must question its underlying political-normative biases.

Terrorism studies have been charged with being ‘counter-insurgency masquerading as political science’.⁵⁴⁷ A consequence is that academic scholarship is often composed within a paradigm that points naturally towards the eradication of

terrorists, if not radicals more widely. In this research we have tried to divorce moral sentiments about whether terrorists and radicals are *right* or *wrong* from the analysis of the mechanisms of the phenomenon of radicalisation itself. Moral questions of, say, engagement with radicals are important, but should be explicitly recognised as moral dilemmas that are distinct from the question of what actually happens. It may not be morally acceptable to deploy methods that are known to be effective to counter radicalisation; these are two separate matters that should be treated as such.

Terrorism is not a distant matter of historical record, but deeply shapes the daily world in which we, the researchers, also live. Researchers must be circumspect, self-aware and explicit about the political–normative biases that *inevitably* underpin their interpretation.

Annex 1 Research methodology

Aims of the project

The original stated aims of the project were to:

- identify the factors that drive violent and non-violent mobilisation in Muslim communities across five countries (Canada, Denmark, France, the Netherlands and the UK)
- investigate the differences and similarities in characteristics and attitudes between terrorists and radicals
- investigate the scale and nature of interactions between these groups
- investigate the differences and similarities in the norms, attitudes and legitimisation of terrorists and radicals towards violence and various aspects of extremist ideology
- set out the relevance of our findings for public policy.

Data collection

We collected a great deal of data from many different sources. For simplicity, we have categorised our data as coming from two broad sources: archival research and field research.

Archival data

The archival data were obtained through an in-depth literature review of security services reports, trial information, books, academic publications and various media publications, such as internet blogs and local newspapers. These were from English, French, Danish and Dutch sources. Our review of academic and governmental research features prominently in Chapter 1. Our review of legislative and strategic government policies is mostly discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 11.

Field data

The data gathered through field research were obtained through focus groups, ethnographic-type observations and interviews. In total, 166 interviews were undertaken between 2007 and 2009. We conducted 75 interviews with security and intelligence experts, senior government officials, community leaders, activists, academics, religious scholars and journalists. Of these, 36 were conducted in Canada, and 39 in the UK, France, the Netherlands and Denmark. We interviewed 20 radicals in Canada and Europe and 70 young Muslims in Canada.

As this research focused on the radicalisation of Muslim individuals, a large proportion of our interviews were carried out with Muslim people. In order to make meaningful comparisons throughout this report, we chose to categorise direct research subjects into one of three groups: ‘terrorists’, ‘radicals’, and ‘young Muslims’. As with any research on violent extremism, such partitions and labels are contentious. After a careful review of the literature we settled on various criteria in order to categorise participants, as discussed below.

Terrorists

‘Terrorist’ is used to describe anyone who has been convicted of a terrorist-related crime. We created detailed profiles of 62 terrorists. Of these, 22 were of people involved in the ‘Toronto 18’ and ‘Ressam cell’ in Canada, and 40 were drawn from across European cells: the ‘21/7’ and ‘fertiliser’ (aka Operation CREVICE) plots in the UK, the ‘Chechen cell’ in France, the ‘Hofstad network’ in the Netherlands, and the ‘Vollsmose cell’ in Denmark. No terrorists were interviewed for this research, so the profiles were based on a combination of public sources: newspaper reports and primary data sources such as translated court transcripts and interviews with people who knew the individuals in question.

It is important to make a clear distinction between terrorists and those individuals who were arrested for being considered as part of a cell and then later released, acquitted or had their charges stayed. The appellation ‘cell’ is often shorthand used by intelligence services or the media, which includes individuals who were ultimately released. Cells do

contain terrorists, but also those who are entirely innocent of any crime of terrorist activity. For the purposes of this research, *terrorists are only those who have been found guilty of various terrorism-related offences, or, in a few rare cases, are still at large or have been deported or had citizenship revoked for being considered a threat to national security in the countries considered.* The term does not include any individual who may have been arrested in connection with a cell but was subsequently either not charged, or charged and acquitted.

A similar approach has been taken with other cells in this study. For example, the Vollsmose cell and Hofstad network both included several members who were either not charged or cleared of terrorist activity (see glossary, below). In respect of the Toronto 18 cell, 18 people were initially arrested, but at the time of writing, seven members had their charges stayed while six people pleaded guilty and were sentenced: Zakaria Amara (life), Saad Gaya (12 years), Ali Dirie (10 years), Saad Khalid (14 years), Amin Durrani (7 ½ years) and Jahmaal James (7 years). Two individuals were found guilty and convicted: Nishanthan Yogakrishnan (2 ½ years), and Shareef Abdelhaleem (awaiting sentencing). Three others (Fahim Ahmad, Steven Chand, Asad Ansari) have recently pleaded or were found guilty and when this report was going to press they were awaiting sentencing.⁵⁴⁸ Only the individuals found guilty are considered as ‘terrorists’.

However, the research does consider the wider membership of cells in discussion – including individuals who were not arrested – in order to examine how and why *some* members of these cells come to engage in violent activity. Individuals who may have been arrested in connection with a cell but not charged with a terrorism-related crime are occasionally mentioned, but in order to better understand cell dynamics, and it should not be taken to mean they are terrorists.

Radicals

Radical is a label that is used for individuals who are considered by interviewees, mostly members of the Muslim community, as holding ‘radical views’ of varying degrees, but who have not been convicted of taking part directly or indirectly in any

terrorist activity. We interviewed 20 radicals in total: eight in Europe and 12 in Canada and a further eight profiles were created using information from publicly available resources and court transcripts. It is worth noting that many radicals were solicited for this research but refused to participate.

‘Radical’ is obviously a relative term: it is used for someone who merely expresses significant dissent from prevailing norms. Hence, it was necessary to become familiar with the norms of Muslim communities in each country, as these norms represent the baseline on which radicalism can be determined. When starting this research, we used a threshold model to determine if participants qualified for this category. If one or more of an individual’s views differed sufficiently from the orthodoxy on one or more key questions of religious, social, political or cultural organisation and the rectitude of the use of force, they are a ‘radical’. We defined orthodoxy from the perspective of the country in which those individuals were found, thus radicals rejected certain key tenets of liberal democratic values of the countries in which they lived. These were, broadly:

- the relationship between church and state (for example, a desire to install a caliphate would be a ‘radical’ designation)
- the role of religion in law (for example, a desire to impose full orthodox Sharia law would be a ‘radical’ designation)
- the use of force (for example, a defence or support of those actively and violently resisting Coalition forces in Iraq would be a ‘radical’ designation).

The specific threshold of ‘radical’ in any of these senses was not set in stone at the beginning of the study, and during the work it was moved, when necessary, to maintain a rough relational ratio between a wide mainstream and narrower margins of radicalism. It was also recognised that ‘radical’ describes not only the view itself, but also the force with which the view was held. An individual actively agitating for the implementation of Sharia law would be more ‘radical’ than a passive supporter. An individual who recognised the full authority of the Canadian government, but who welcomed some

form of Sharia law in their lives, would not be a radical at all. In order to ensure some degree of objectivity in the sample, the decision about who was radical was further based on an anonymous reading of the transcripts of the interviews by two or more researchers.

Several caveats should be noted about the label ‘radical’. We recognise that some of our participants would not necessarily accept the appellation in a negative sense. We do not attach any value judgement to the term. We also accept that ‘radical’ encompasses a very large and diverse spectrum of beliefs. This group includes apolitical religious conservatives (‘ultra-orthodox’) and active political Islamists, among others. In many respects these are very different groups, and the term ‘radical’ is useful as it captures a wide range of views that are distant from the mainstream.

Young Muslims

The ‘young Muslim’ group are those participants selected to represent the young adult population of Muslim communities in Canada (aged 18–30). Because the research was focused on Canada, we only conducted interviews with young Muslims in Canada. Most of the interviews with people in this category took the format of ‘focus groups’, which involved a total of 70 individuals. Two focus groups were conducted in Montreal (in French), and another four were conducted in Toronto (in English). In Toronto, one focus group was conducted only with Muslim converts. Each group was designed and recruited by an independent recruiting company to include a diversity of religious beliefs that broadly reflected the diversity of the various Muslim communities in those cities.

Caveat about categories

These categories are necessarily crude, and do not capture the many inherent nuances. Most notably, no two radicals were the same: they ranged from one who believed that he was under constant surveillance by security services, to another who was vehemently peaceful himself but actively supported suicide

bombing in Iraq and hoped to create an Islamic caliphate in Canada. Indeed, on certain subjects, some 'mainstream' Muslims were more radical than the 'radicals'. All of these points were taken into consideration during our analysis.

Methodology

Recruitment and interviews of radicals

In order to recruit Muslim people who met the criteria of being radical, we adopted a targeted recruitment strategy. This first involved identifying people who met our criteria of radical (as noted above). This identification process was based on a review of literature about Muslim extremism in Canada, which included security services reports, trial information, books and academic publications. However, most of the participants were found through internet reports and media publications, especially local newspapers. Additional information was collected from journalists, and religious and community leaders. Once people were identified as meeting the criteria of terrorist or radical, we contacted them directly, informed them of this study, and explained how we planned to categorise and label people for the purposes of analysis, and that the aim of the study was to assess the differences between violent and non-violent radicalisation. In some cases, snowball sampling occurred: people we interviewed suggested or directly referred us to other potential radicals.⁵⁴⁹

We met people who agreed to participate in our research for an in-depth semi-structured interview. During this interview, we asked participants demographic information, and for information about their youth, their involvement (if any) in politics, their religious inspirations, their views about theological concepts, their opinions about violence, their knowledge of extremist literature, and their interactions with violent members of their community. We digitally recorded and transcribed the interviews.

Recruitment of young Muslims

We conducted a series of focus groups in Toronto and Montreal. They were essentially interviews, but with eight to 15 people answering the questions at the same time. Participants for most focus groups were recruited by a research agency, which used random telephone solicitation and internet advertising to find people. All participants were aged between 18 and 30 and were selected on the basis that they considered themselves Muslim and politically minded and had spent at least three years living in Canada. The groups were designed to include a diversity of beliefs and religious devotion – for example, at least two participants in each group prayed five times a day.

Other participants, such as those who took part in a special focus group with Muslim converts, were recruited with the help of contacts made during our fieldwork. We separated groups by gender. The same themes explored in the semi-structured interviews mentioned above were featured during the focus groups.

Data analysis

Data gathered during the interviews and focus groups were analysed in a qualitative manner, borrowing certain techniques from grounded theory methodology.⁵⁵⁰ Grounded theory is well suited for investigations of more general questions, where no *a priori* hypothesis is to be tested. Rather, theory is generated from the data.

All of our interviews were recorded, anonymised and transcribed professionally. We had over 100 interviews (some of the interviews were not fully transcribed), which we analysed. We undertook a separate process of coding (of characteristics and attitudes, religion and ideology, interaction and relationships, organisations, and journey to jihad). Following grounded theory, we did not set out looking for anything specific, but looked instead for very general themes that were relevant to the phenomenon under consideration, and any significant similarities and differences between and across groups. In this way we sought to allow themes to emerge. Three of the researchers had no prior knowledge of the background

literature and theories surrounding this subject, and thus coded 'blind', which helps reduce bias in the analysis.

The first step was to mark key points with a series of codes, which are extracted from the text. The codes are grouped into similar concepts in order to make them more workable. From these concepts, categories are formed, which are the basis for the creation of a theory. The coding process followed five steps:

- 1 Read through each interview and code each phrase that is relevant to the phenomenon. Adopting a process called 'deductive coding', we looked out for common ideas, theories, concepts, emotions and the differences between the two groups on similar issues. This is called 'open coding'. For instance, for religion and ideology, we coded views on key concepts such as the legitimacy of violent jihad, the caliphate, Sharia law and Takfir.
- 2 Pull out each code and list it separately in a new document, with the data source reference number (interview number and page number) and put similarities together.
- 3 Analyse codes for any commonalities, noticeable differences, emerging themes. We then found links and associations that allowed us to create broader headings under which we placed certain codes that were more important than others (this is sometimes called 'axial coding').
- 4 Focus on a handful of key codes, which are clearly vital to understanding the phenomenon studied. This is called 'selective coding'. From this we developed concepts from which we generate theories.
- 5 Compare codes, revisit the data and refine the codes throughout.

In grounded theory, 'theoretical saturation' is the point at which any new data just confirm what has already been found. This is considered to be the moment at which a sufficient sample has been reached. We began to reach this level after carrying out 20 interviews with radicals and 70 interviews with young Muslims.

Objectivity, reliability, validity

To ensure that our own bias is not reflected in the research, researchers who undertook the interviews in Canada did not complete the analysis. Once an interview was completed, the anonymous recordings were professionally transcribed, and labelled with a number. That way researchers undertaking the analysis did not know who was who, and thus did not bring preconceptions about any given individual. As noted above, at least one of the researchers coding had no prior knowledge of the background literature and theories surrounding this subject, and thus coded 'blind'. All European interviews were also anonymously coded for the analysis and all identities were kept anonymous.

The main threat to establishing reliability was that interviewees used 'double-speak', giving a sanitised view rather than being honest. However, the level of consistency among interviewees coupled with their acknowledgement of some levels of violent extremism within the community would suggest that this did not occur in our research. In our interviews we made a conscious effort to push the individuals we were interviewing and not simply be pleasant, kind and deferential in order to gain their trust.

Our terrorist profiles also drew on publicly available sources – primarily newspaper articles. There was therefore a danger – particularly where stories immediately follow an arrest – that they would subsequently prove to be inaccurate. We sought to ensure reliability by triangulating data, by seeking alternative sources for contentious issues, and where possible by confirming certain details through primary interviews. Often the problem of obtaining comprehensive and reliable information is impossible to resolve completely. We have to focus on managing tensions and not necessarily resolving them in areas this contentious.

Finally, to ensure validity, we have used a lot of direct source quotation throughout the report to ensure the interpretations are transparent. Where appropriate, excerpts of raw data, in the form of extended quotations, are included alongside the researchers' accounts of them.

Data protection and ethics

We knew there would be a number of difficult ethical concerns to overcome in this project so we convened a steering group to act as an ethics panel, whose members advised on all matters of ethical concerns.

The project required us to work with sensitive issues of a religious and cultural nature. For this reason, we drew extensively on the expertise, advice and experience of this group – the members of which were selected on the basis of their reputation in the field as well as their knowledge of specific national, ethnic and religious perspectives. We complemented the advice from the committee by carefully designing the research to take into account potential sensitivities, such as appropriate dress, conduct and protocols during meetings, the timing of activities, and how to access and approach certain groups (notably women and young people).

In this project there was the potential for researchers to be required to work with sensitive materials. A first issue was securing the trust of the individuals we planned to interview and guaranteeing confidentiality. During the course of the research, we respected the confidentiality of all of the people involved in the research process (partners, interviewees and others) – unless they had given their express permission to do otherwise. We made it clear to each person before they were interviewed what our research was about and who was funding it, although stressing the independence of our work. We assured them that all research participants understood how far they would be afforded confidentiality and were able to reject the use of data-gathering devices such as digital recorders. All conditions relating to freedom from coercion, confidentiality, secure data storage and anonymity were followed. Data were stored securely to reflect the possibility that we held contentious and private information. Limited access to the data was granted.

Changes en route

As the research was being undertaken, a number of other areas of interest emerged, and subsequently other questions have been addressed in the report. For example, it became clear that the

research would be significantly strengthened by including a 'mainstream' comparison group for more detailed comparison. We also decided that a detailed analysis of different countries' prevention work in this area would be of particular use in the Canadian context, given its policy relevance.

Other elements of the research were abandoned as their limits became clear. We had originally envisaged that we would represent 'the scale and nature of the interactions between individuals', using social network analysis, a mathematical tool, which allows the creation of a visual map, plotting individuals according to the strength and depth of their relationships to one another. However, social networks work on the logic of knowing everyone within a network and having full access to members of the network. The value of the map is in being able to represent accurately large amounts of data in an illustration that allows the user to find out an individual's importance within the network. Drawing a map of a covert network means working with incomplete data and this means the map could be determined simply by what data we could access either through primary or secondary sources, which was often unreliable and incomplete, hampering how far we could quantify our results. We therefore abandoned this element of the work.

Annex 2 Glossary of terms

Religious terms

Caliphate Historically, a system of governance established by Muhammad's disciples as a continuation of the political authority he established; in contemporary Muslim discourse, a theocratic political unit, often taken to mean one that would unite all Muslim nations under one global ruler. It is, therefore, a central concept in trans-national Islamist revivalism.

Fard-al ayn 'Individual religious duty': the individual obligations of each Muslim – including prayer, charity, fasting and pilgrimage. The precise extent of these individual obligations, especially 'reproaching the unjust ruler', is theologically contested.⁵⁵¹

Hadith 'Report of the words, teaching and deeds of Muhammad and other early Muslims.'⁵⁵²

Ijtihad 'Islamic legal term meaning "independent reasoning" as opposed to taqlid (limitation).'⁵⁵³

Islamism A spectrum of ideologies united by the claim that Islam has a political as well as religious manifestation. 'Islamists' are committed to the establishment of a political entity governed by the precepts of Islamic law as a normative base. However, the word Islamism is fraught with difficulties and any simple definition is to be avoided. Indeed, some self-pronounced 'Islamists' do recognise the value of the separation between church and state.⁵⁵⁴

Jihad Within a Qur'anic context jihad is a struggle 'in the way of Allah'. This struggle can take different forms. The 'greater jihad'

is a general and personal struggle to live a virtuous life – a ‘struggle against oneself’.⁵⁵⁵ The ‘lesser jihad’ is a legal category of warfare, and the only one permissible within Islamic jurisprudence.

Kafir ‘Rejecter’: a person who does not believe in Islam. A person who, therefore, ‘rejects’ the truth. The plural (used in this report) is ‘kuffar’.

Mujahideen The plural of ‘Mujahid’. Mujahideen or ‘freedom fighters’ derives from the common Arabic trilateral root ‘jihad’. It describes those who exert effort in the struggle of jihad and was first used in Western political discourse to describe the loose groupings of Afghan opposition groups fighting against the pro-Soviet Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in the 1980s. The term retained an explicit military connotation, and is now used as a self-identification by a very wide range of groups claiming to be waging a defensive war – or ‘lesser jihad’ – in the name of Islam, against Western aggression.

Qur’an ‘The book of Islamic revelation; scripture. The term means “recitation”. The Qur’an is believed to be the word of God transmitted through the Prophet Muhammad.’⁵⁵⁶

Salafism A Sunni Islamic movement that emphasises the importance of the example of the Salaf, or ‘pious ancestors’. Salafis hold that the first three generations of Muslims represent an important example of appropriate Islamic practice.

Sharia ‘God’s eternal and immutable will for humanity, as expressed in the Qur’an and Muhammad’s example (Sunnah), considered binding for all believers.’⁵⁵⁷ Within a Qur’anic context, Sharia means ‘God’s Path’, and is used to describe both a formal system of Islamic law and, more widely, an Islamic way of life including ethics. Sharia is ‘a long, diverse, complicated intellectual tradition’, rather than a ‘well-defined set of specific rules and regulations that can be easily applied to life situations’.⁵⁵⁸

Takfir An Islamic legal term describing the act of declaring someone else to be a kafir. Contemporarily, the doctrine of takfir holds that ‘Muslims whose beliefs differ from the *takfiri*’s are infidels who must be killed’.⁵⁵⁹ It therefore serves as a vital justificatory device for indiscriminate violence by extremist groups. Takfirism was declared a heresy within Islam in the 2005 Amman message.

Wahhabism A political ideology originating from 18th-century thinker Abd-al-Wahhab. Wahhab was principally concerned with a ‘revival’ of Islam through the removal of corrupt innovations, and returning to the core teachings of the Qur’an and Sunna, and the core example of the original righteous generations (Salaf).

Cells in which terrorists have been found

Cells are the appellation given to a group of arrests in connection with terrorist activity. However, although they do contain convicted terrorists, many of them have also contained individuals who have not been convicted of any terrorist related activity. Therefore the term ‘cell’ does not indicate that everyone within it is a terrorist.

21/7 cell A cell operating in London during 2005 with the intention of perpetrating attacks to cause mass casualties against passengers on London transport. After an abortive attempt to detonate five bombs on London public transport on 21 July 2005, the core members were arrested. These individuals – Muktar Said Ibrahim, Osman Hussain, Yasin Hassan Omar, Manfo Kwaku Asiedu and Ramzi Mohammed – were all convicted for conspiracy to murder; other ‘lesser’ members of the cell were also convicted for a range of terrorism-related offences.

Chechen cell On 14 June 2006, 25 individuals were convicted for planning a bomb attack against one or more targets in Paris, thought to include the Eiffel Tower. The group was called the ‘Chechen network’ because the attacks were planned to advance

the cause of Chechen independence, and many members of the group attended training camps in Chechnya. The Chechen cell is thought to have had a branch in Lyon, centring on some members of the Benchellali family. Menad Benchellali, one of the group's leaders, was convicted, along with a number of his family members. It is that part of the cell which is included in this study.

Fertiliser cell Also known as Operation CREVICE, the fertiliser cell is the name given to five British citizens and one Canadian who were convicted of plotting to detonate fertiliser bombs in a range of UK commercial establishments, including a popular nightclub and a shopping mall. The five British men (Omar Khyam, Jawad Akbar, Salahuddin Amin, Anthony Garcia and Waheed Mahmood) were each sentenced to life in prison for conspiring to cause explosions likely to endanger life, and Mohammad Momin Khawaja was sentenced to 10.5 years imprisonment in Canada, the first person convicted using the Canadian Anti-terrorism Act of 2001. The six men had met at a training camp in Pakistan in 2003 and while there decided to carry out an attack in the UK. The plot was foiled after an extensive surveillance operation by British Security Service MI5.

Hofstad network The Hofstad network was a loose collection of Dutch-based alleged violent Islamists engaging in planning a number of bomb-plots and assassinations against Dutch targets, including the Parliament, the national airport and a nuclear reactor. The group had been under surveillance by Dutch intelligence since 2002, and 14 suspected members were charged on 5 December 2005. On 10 March 2006, nine members were convicted of belonging to a proscribed organisation. A further member, Mohammed Bouyeri, was already serving a life sentence for the murder of Theo Van Gogh at the time and could not be punished further. It is important to state that in 2008 five members of this cell were acquitted on appeal, on the basis that the cell itself was too loose to be considered an organisation. However, in 2010 the High Court decided that the acquittal was

incorrect, as the formal definition of a criminal terrorist organisation as used by the court in The Hague was too narrow. The case has been referred to the Amsterdam court for a retrial. Therefore, the term ‘Hofstad network’ is used with caution.

Ressam cell or ‘Montreal ’99 Cell’ A cell of terrorists operating in Canada between 1994 and 1999. The group aimed to carry out attacks in North America as part of the wider Millennium Plot planned by al-Qaeda. Eleven members were eventually arrested, with many deported before they could stand trial. The cell’s namesake, Ahmed Ressam, was arrested attempting to enter the USA with components necessary for constructing explosives and detonators.⁵⁶⁰

Toronto 18 cell The 18 people arrested on 2 June 2006 on suspicion of plotting attacks against targets in Ontario. The government alleged that the group planned to detonate truck bombs, to storm the Canadian Broadcasting Center, Canadian Parliament building and the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service headquarters, and to behead a number of leading Canadian political figures, including the prime minister. Charges against seven of the individuals originally arrested were stayed, while the other 11 individuals have been convicted. Therefore, the term ‘Toronto 18 cell’ when mentioned in general terms refers to all the individuals arrested, but where terrorist claims are made, it only refers to the individuals who have pleaded or been found guilty.

Vollsmose cell The nine people arrested in the Vollsmose suburb of the Danish city of Odense on 5 September 2006 on suspicion of planning a terrorist attack against undisclosed targets within Denmark. The Danish security service presented evidence that there were ammonium nitrate, metal splinters and TATP explosive at the suspects’ houses.⁵⁶¹ Four of the nine originally arrested were charged, and three were convicted to serve prison terms: two for 12 years, one for five years.

Groups

‘Al-Qaeda inspired’ terrorism Under intense pressure since 2001, al-Qaeda no longer possesses a global organisational network. Its role is, instead, as ‘inciter in chief’ – *al talia al ummah* – the vanguard of the ummah. This report therefore uses the phrase ‘al-Qaeda inspired’ to describe the various cases of terrorism that may have had negligible or no logistical or tactical interaction with al-Qaeda, but which have, nonetheless, bought into al-Qaeda’s narrative of global jihad, and affiliate themselves with al-Qaeda’s strategic objectives.⁵⁶²

Hizb ut-Tahrir Hizb ut-Tahrir (‘the Liberation Party’), founded in 1953 in Jordanian-ruled Jerusalem by Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, is committed to the goal of uniting the Muslim ummah under a single caliphate. Officially, it disavows violence, and is committed to overthrowing non-Islamic governments through peaceful means. However, many critics argue that Hizb ut-Tahrir implicitly endorses violence.⁵⁶³ The group is banned in all Arab countries excluding Lebanon, Yemen and the UAE. It was banned in Russia in 2003 and has faced considerable accusations of supporting and facilitating terrorism in Central Asia, especially Uzbekistan. In Europe it is banned only in Germany. Despite political pressure, the group has not been banned in the UK.

Jamaat-e-Islami (the ‘Islamic Party’) A Pakistan-based Islamist Party, which was founded in Lahore in 1941 by Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi. Jamaat-e-Islami is committed to ‘*iqamat-e-deen*’ – the establishment of a political entity governed by the precepts of Islamic law. The party’s rhetoric is strongly structured around the presentation of a West–Islam dualism to present a deep scepticism of a Western model of modernity and it strongly opposes the encroachment of Western social, political and economic systems of organisation into Central Asia. The party is explicitly committed to achieving these aims through non-violent means.⁵⁶⁴ However, analysts have linked Jamaat-e-Islami with the violent group Hizb-ul-Mujahideen. Some have even described Hizb-ul-Mujahideen as its ‘military wing’.⁵⁶⁵

Muslim Brotherhood A Sunni Islamist organisation, which was founded in 1928 by Hassan Al Banna⁵⁶⁶ to oppose social injustice and British imperial rule. The Muslim Brotherhood has developed into a powerful social organisation and a popular religious–political ideology. Ideologically, the Muslim Brotherhood operates on the foundational credo that Islam be ‘given hegemony over all matters of life’.⁵⁶⁷ This Islamic spiritual revivalism has an explicitly political emphasis, and aims to install Islam as a political entity. The Muslim Brotherhood is thereby committed to the vision of the state as one founded on and guided by the precepts of Islamic law. Organisationally, the Brotherhood has relied on a strong grassroots organisation and local philanthropic, spiritual and social initiatives to evangelise its ideological message.

Radicalisation According to the UK’s Contest strategy, ‘radicalisation is one of the four strategic drivers for terrorism identified in the first part of this strategy: in the context of this strategy radicalisation refers to the process by which people come to support terrorism and violent extremism and, in some cases, then to join terrorist groups’.⁵⁶⁸

Terrorism This report recognises that there is no uncontested or uncontroversial definition of terrorism. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in *Definitions of Terrorism*, argues that ‘the question of a definition of terrorism has haunted the debate among states for decades’.⁵⁶⁹ Noting that there has been no terminological consensus between the 12 international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, the UNODC’s exasperated conclusion is that terrorism is ‘the Gordian definitional knot’.⁵⁷⁰ In a widely cited treatment of the definition of terrorism, Alex Schmid and Albert Jongman analysed 109 definitions, containing 22 definitional dimensions.⁵⁷¹

Scholars and ideologues

Abdullah Azzam (1941–1989) A Palestinian theologian, Azzam was both an influential scholar and a key practical organiser of

the Afghan Mujahideen's resistance of the Soviet military occupation. Intellectually, Azzam was influential in constructing a narrative of a global struggle in defence of Islam. Practically, Azzam fought with the Afghan resistance groups, and actively recruited for, and funded, the Mujahideen resistance.⁵⁷² He is considered a key mentor and teacher of Osama bin-Laden.

Ibn Taymiyyah (d.1328) 'A prominent and controversial Syrian thinker, theologian, Hanbali jurist, and political figure. His intellectual activities, preaching, and politics resulted in persecution and imprisonment.'⁵⁷³

Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966) An Egyptian author, educator and thinker. A prominent figure within the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s and 1960s, Qutb wrote widely on the social and political role of Islam. Qutb's work, especially his criticism of Western materialism and violence, has been influential in the formation of al-Qaeda's dualistic West v Islam narrative, and the presentation of a Western attack against the Muslim world. Senior AQ strategist Ayman al-Zawahiri was especially influenced by Qutb's work.

Notes

- 1 F Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*.
- 2 C McCauley and S Moskalenko, 'Mechanisms of political radicalization: pathways toward terrorism'.
- 3 RCMP, *Radicalization: A guide for the perplexed*.
- 4 For example, the 2007 Environics poll found that Muslims aged under 30 held more 'radical' views on a range of subjects than those over 30.
- 5 19 in Canada, 39 in Europe. In a few cases, these numbers included individuals who are still at large, have been deported, have been convicted in other countries or in absentia. In respect of the 19 in Canada, this includes individuals convicted who somehow played a role in the two Canadian plots – a small number of whom were not Canadian citizens.
- 6 Throughout the paper we use the terms 'terrorist', 'radical' and 'young Muslims' for the different categories within our sample group (see Annex 1 for definitions). Where terrorists, radicals or young Muslims are discussed who were not part of our sample group, we take care to distinguish clearly between them.
- 7 36 in Canada and 39 in Europe (there were also a small number of follow-up interviews with the same individuals).
- 8 R Jackson, 'The core commitments of critical terrorism studies'.

- 9 G Picot, F Hou, S Coulombe, 'Chronic Low Income and Low-income Dynamics Among Recent Immigrants', Statistics Canada, Business and Labor Market Analysis, 2007, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2007294-eng.htm>.
- 10 As described in Will Kymlicka's 'Immigrants, multiculturalism and Canadian citizenship'.
- 11 See Kymlicka, 'Immigrants, multiculturalism and Canadian citizenship', for a characterisation of these arguments.
- 12 D Gruending, 'Will Kymlicka on multiculturalism', <http://dennisgruending.ca/pulpitandpolitics/2009/06/02/will-kymlicka-on-multiculturalism/> (accessed 1 Mar 2010).
- 13 M Moore, 'In France, prisons filled with Muslims'.
- 14 Office for National Statistics, *Labour Force Survey*, 2009.
- 15 M Levitt, *The Radical Dawa in Transition: The rise of Islamic neo-radicalism in the Netherlands*.
- 16 Figures are from the Danish Ministry of Integration, 2006. The total population of Denmark on 1 January 2006 was 5.4 million, of which 463,235 (8.4 per cent) were immigrants or their descendants. According to estimates of various research institutions and the Ministry of Integration think tank there are about 175,000–200,000 immigrants and their descendants from Muslim countries living in Denmark today (3.7 per cent of the total Danish population).
- 17 Statistics Canada, *2001 Census of Canada*.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 J Jedwab, 'Canada's demo-religious revolution: 2017 will bring considerable change to the profile of the Mosaic'.

- 20 J Barou, 'Les immigrations africaines en France au tournant du siècle'.
- 21 In Canada the median age of Muslims is 28 compared with a national median age of 37. See Statistics Canada, *Religions in Canada*, 2001 Census: analysis series. In the UK, the average Muslim is 28, 13 years below the national average, and there are more Muslim children of school age than in other groups. See Y Samad and K Sen, *Islam in the European Union*, chapter 1.
- 22 According to the 2001 Census, 42 per cent of British Muslims are of Pakistani descent and 16 per cent are Bangladeshi, largely a result of the British Nationality Act 1948, which initiated a wave of migration from South Asia. In France, Muslim migration began with Berbers in the 19th century but significantly expanded after the second world war. Recent estimates show 43 per cent of French Muslims are of Algerian descent, 28 per cent Moroccan and 10 per cent Tunisian. During the 1960s, the Dutch government concluded recruitment agreements with Turkey and Morocco for economic migrants. In Denmark, unskilled migrants came from Turkey and Yugoslavia, with a smaller number from Pakistan and Morocco.
- 23 H Khan, 'Unite but follow me: the tragic comedy of Muslim representation'; H Khan, 'Portfolio: who speaks for British Muslims'; and S El-Hassan, *A Report on a Consultation with Individuals from the Muslim Community*.
- 24 Statistics Canada, 'Growth in Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism'.
- 25 Statistics Canada, 'Canada's population'.
- 26 LF Seidle, *Canada – Country Profile*.
- 27 Department for Citizenship and Immigration Canada, *Departmental Performance Report for 2008–2009*.

- 28 Open Society Institute, *Muslims in Europe: A report on 11 EU cities*.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 A Mujahid and A Egab, 'A profile of Muslims in Canada'.
- 31 Open Society Institute, *British Muslims and Education*.
- 32 C Dargent, 'Les Musulmans déclarés en France: affirmation religieuse, subordination sociale et progressisme politique'.
- 33 R Schriemer, *Analytical Report on Education*; Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, *The Education System in the Netherlands 2006*.
- 34 Mujahid and Egab, 'A profile of Muslims in Canada'.
- 35 National Literacy Trust, *Literacy and Education Levels by Ethnic Group and Populations*.
- 36 Open Society Institute, *British Muslims and Education*.
- 37 Open Society Institute, *Muslims in Europe*. Also see <http://www.forum.nl/pdf/factbook-islam-en.pdf>
- 38 INSEE, *Les immigrés en France*.
- 39 A Lopez and G Thomas, *L'insertion des jeunes sur le marché du travail: le poids des origines socioculturelles*; INSEE, *Les immigrés en France*.
- 40 Open Society Institute, *Muslims in Europe*.
- 41 European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia, *RAXEN National Focal Point for Denmark*.
- 42 J-F Amadieu, 'Enquête testing sur CV'.

- 43 Open Society Institute, *British Muslims and Education*.
- 44 Open Society Institute, *Muslims in Europe*. For the Canadian example see <http://www.arts.ubc.ca/research/single-page-news/article/613/1241.html>
- 45 Statistics Canada, *2001 Census of Canada Topic Based Tabulations: Selected cultural and labour force characteristics*.
- 46 S Rahnema, H Moghissi and M Goodman, *Muslim Migrants and Religious Multiculturalism in Canada*.
- 47 Statistics Canada, *Ethnic Diversity Survey*, 2002.
- 48 See the Foreign Credentials Referral Office, www.credentials.gc.ca (accessed 1 Mar 2010).
- 49 Open Society Institute, *British Muslims and Education*.
- 50 In Britain, Muslims are also more likely than all other faith groups to live in socially rented housing (28 per cent v 20 per cent for the general population) and to experience poor housing conditions: 32 per cent of Muslim households live in overcrowded accommodation, compared with 22 per cent of Hindu, 19 per cent of Sikh and 6 per cent of Christian households. They also report the highest rates of illness of all faith groups, and have the highest rates of disability.
- 51 Open Society Institute, *Muslims in Europe*.
- 52 Rahnema, Moghissi and Goodman, *Muslim Migrants and Religious Multiculturalism in Canada*.
- 53 Islamic Human Rights Commission, 'Oldham riots symptomatic of Islamophobia'.
- 54 I Herbert, 'Oldham officials attack riot report'.

- 55 There are eight criteria for determining ghettoisation: a number of immigrant families; strong associative community; presence of ethnic commerce; multiplication of places of worship; outward habits; anti-Semitic and anti-Western graffiti; and difficulty to retain the presence of the people of French origin. The major characteristics of these ghettos are violence, non-respect of order or republicanism, and the growth of radical Islam.
- 56 Open Society Institute, *Muslims in the European Union: Cities report, Denmark, preliminary research report and literature review*.
- 57 B Palameta, 'Low income among immigrants and visible minorities'.
- 58 K Dib and B Sriraman, 'The Myth of Ghettoization in Urban Canada and le Ghetto Français', Canadian Metropolis, 2007, http://canada.metropolis.net/pdfs/ghetto_myth_e.pdf; J Myles and F Hou, 'Changing colours: spatial assimilation and new racial minority immigrants'.
- 59 M Blom et al, *Crime Suspect: A closer look at immigrants and nations*.
- 60 F Guessous, N Hooper and U Moorthy, *Religion in Prison 1999 and 2000, England and Wales*; Moore, 'In France, prisons filled with Muslims'.
- 61 Moore, 'In France, prisons filled with Muslims'.
- 62 Home Office, *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System -2005*; D Barrett, V Iyer and E Pennink, 'Stop and search leap hits Asians amid terror fears'.
- 63 Runnymede Trust, *Who Cares About the White Working Class?*
- 64 S Fanshawe and D Sriskandarajah, *You Can't Put Me in a Box*.

- 65 National Equality Panel, *An Anatomy of Economic Inequality in the UK*.
- 66 S Saggar, 'The one per cent world'.
- 67 Pew Global Attitudes Project, *The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims view each other*.
- 68 J Esposito and D Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam? What a billion Muslims really think*.
- 69 Seidle, *Canada*.
- 70 Ipsos Reid Public Affairs, *Representation of Muslims in the News*.
- 71 J Geddes, 'What Canadians think of Sikhs, Jews, Christians, Muslims...'
- 72 A Lawrence, 'Hate crime motivated by intolerance of selected religions'. For 2007–08 figures see <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/100614/t100614b1-eng.htm>
- 73 G Bouchard and C Taylor, *Building the Future: A time for reconciliation*.
- 74 C Attwood et al, *2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey: Peoples, families and communities*.
- 75 A Frean and R Syal, 'Community divided on terrorism and security'.
- 76 CMO has a following of over 500,000 mainly Sunni members, and aims to present a common standpoint on issues related to integration. Shiites and other non-Sunni groups were excluded when the CMO was created, and went on to establish the CGI, which has a following of 115,000 members with Alevite, Lahore Ahmadiya, Sunni and Shia backgrounds.

- 77 Expert interview 50, 21 Nov 2007.
- 78 M Bright, *When Progressives Treat with Reactionaries*.
- 79 H Blears, 'Our shunning of the MCB is not grandstanding'.
- 80 Although Abu Laban claimed in February 2006 that he had no intention of making the Jyllands-Posten cartoons anything more than an internal Danish conflict, a 2006 paper by Anders Rudling documents how Abu Laban and Akkari contributed to the internationalisation of the controversy by circulating a 43-page manifesto to political and religious leaders and media in the Middle East (see Rudling, 'Widening and deepening the EU').
- 81 P Ammitzbøl and L Vidino, 'After the Danish cartoon controversy'.
- 82 K Quist, 'Labans mange løgne'.
- 83 E Sebian, 'Islam in Denmark'.
- 84 B Hutchinson, 'Rights proceeding missing the point'.
- 85 N Kohler, 'Good morning Mrs Hashmi'.
- 86 M Mirza, A Senthilkumaran and Z Ja'Far, *Living Apart Together: British Muslims and the paradox of multiculturalism*.
- 87 Expert interview 50, 21 Nov 2007.
- 88 RCMP, *Radicalization*.
- 89 Notably PK Davis and K Cragin (eds), *Social Science for Counterterrorism*.
- 90 D Noricks, 'The root causes of terrorism'.

- 91 Ibid.
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- 93 B Bognar et al (eds), *Psychology of Terrorism*.
- 94 M Phillips, *Londonistan*; M Stroink, 'Processes and preconditions underlying terrorism in second generation immigrants'.
- 95 For a useful summary, see H Lownsbrough, R Briggs and C Fieschi, *Bringing it Home*.
- 96 P Bramadat and S Wortley, 'Religious youth radicalization in Canada'.
- 97 Stroink, 'Processes and preconditions underlying terrorism in second generation immigrants'.
- 98 Seidle, *Canada*; Myles and Hou, 'Changing colours'.
- 99 S Amghar, A Boubekour and M Emerson, *European Islam*.
- 100 For example: M Crenshaw, 'The logic of terrorism: terrorist behaviour as a product of strategic choice'.
- 101 O Roy, *Globalised Islam: The search for a new Ummah*.
- 102 Ibid.
- 103 Q Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim extremism in the West*.
- 104 Expert interview 9, 3 Nov 2009.

- 105 E Denécé, *Le développement de l'islam fondamentaliste en France*; D Taylor and W Louis, 'Terrorism and the quest for identity'; D Hussain, 'Identity formation and change in British Muslim communities'.
- 106 W Laqueur, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the arms of mass destruction*.
- 107 LP Bremer, 'A new strategy for the new face of terrorism'.
- 108 J Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why religious militants kill*.
- 109 M Crenshaw, *The Debate Over 'New' vs 'Old' Terrorism*.
- 110 Stern, *Terror in the Name of God*; M Jeurgensmeyer, 'Religion as a cause of violence'.
- 111 J Githens-Mazer, 'Casual processes, radicalization and bad policy'; M Jeurgensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The global rise of religious violence*; R Gunaratna, 'Ideology in terrorism and counter terrorism: lessons from combating al Qaeda and Al Jemaah Al Islamiyah in Southeast Asia'.
- 112 See the glossary of terms in Annex 2 for specifications of usage.
- 113 P Sookhdeo, *Understanding Islamic Terrorism: The Islamic doctrine of war*.
- 114 Ibid.
- 115 M Taarnby, 'Understanding recruitment of Islamist terrorists in Europe'.
- 116 A Travis, 'MI5 report challenges views on terrorism in Britain'.
- 117 For more information see EN Muller and K Opp, 'Rational choice and rebellious collective action'.

- 118 A Merari, 'Terrorism as a strategy of insurgency'.
- 119 Crenshaw, 'The logic of terrorism'.
- 120 F Devji, *Landscapes of Jihad*.
- 121 R Pape, *Dying to Win: The strategic logic of suicide terrorism*.
- 122 M Crenshaw, 'Decisions to use terrorism: psychological constraints on instrumental reasoning'; Crenshaw, 'The causes of terrorism'.
- 123 Travis, 'MI5 report challenges views on terrorism in Britain'.
- 124 E Bakker, *Jihadi Terrorists in Europe: Their characteristics and the circumstances in which they joined the jihad*.
- 125 M Silber and A Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West: The homegrown threat*.
- 126 F Moghaddam, 'The staircase to terrorism: a psychological exploration'.
- 127 A Glees and C Pope, *When Students Turn to Terror: Terrorist and extremist activity on British campuses*.
- 128 McCauley and Moskalenko, 'Mechanisms of political radicalisation'.
- 129 L Richardson, *What Terrorists Want: Understanding the enemy, containing the threat*.
- 130 J Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism*.
- 131 A Dalgaard-Nielsen, 'Studying violent radicalization in Europe II'.
- 132 M Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*.

- 133 Bakker, *Jihadi Terrorists in Europe*.
- 134 Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*.
- 135 Q Wiktorowicz, 'Joining the cause: Al-Muhajiroun and radical Islam'.
- 136 AG Smith, 'The implicit motives of terrorist groups: how needs for affiliation and power translate into death and destruction'.
- 137 Githens-Mazer, 'Casual processes, radicalization and bad policy'.
- 138 Davis and Cragin (eds), *Social Science for Counterterrorism*.
- 138 Ibid.
- 140 BBC News, 'Thousands pose UK terror threat'.
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- 142 Europol, *EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report TE-SAT*; Home Office, *Statistics on Terrorism Arrests and Outcomes in Great Britain, 11 September 2001 to 31 March 2008*.
- 143 RCMP, *Radicalization*.
- 144 J Burke and I Traynor, 'Fears of an Islamic revolt in Europe begin to fade'.
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- 147 Levitt, *The radical Dawā in transition*.
- 148 Ibid.
- 149 Ibid.
- 150 National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb), *Salafism in the Netherlands*.
- 151 S Lacroix, 'Al-Albani's revolutionary approach to the Hadith'.
- 152 Ibid.
- 153 Levitt, *The radical Dawā in transition*.
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- 155 R Lambert, *The London Partnerships: An insider's analysis of legitimacy and effectiveness*.
- 156 J Leclerc, *Le rapport des RG sur les convertis à l'Islam*.
- 157 Hizb ut-Tahrir, *Britain, Afghanistan and Pakistan: The unwinnable war*.
- 158 Global Security, 'Hizb ut-Tahrir', www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/hizb-ut-tahrir.htm (accessed 1 Mar 2010).
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- 160 European expert interview 50, 21 Nov 2007.
- 161 'France, Benelux'.
- 162 L Vidino, 'Europe's new security dilemma'.
- 163 European expert interview 33, 30 Oct 2009.

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- 166 Levitt, *The Radical Dawā in Transition*; testimony by L Ongerling, Deputy National Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Home-Grown Terrorism and Radicalization in the Netherlands: Experiences, explanations and approaches*.
- 167 M Malik, 'Engaging extremists'; International Crisis Group, 'Understanding Islamism'.
- 168 E Brown, 'After the Ramadan affair: new trends in Islamism in the West'.
- 169 Lownsbrough, Briggs and Fieschi, *Bringing it Home*.
- 170 R Leiken, 'Europe's angry Muslims'.
- 171 See A Boubekeur, *From Violence and Conflict to Models of Integration*.
- 172 Davis and Cragin (eds), *Social Science for Counterterrorism*.
- 173 S Saggat, 'Boomerangs and slingshots: radical Islam and counter terrorism strategy'.
- 174 Gallup World Poll, *Muslims*.
- 175 J Slack, 'Almost a quarter of Muslims believe 7/7 was justified'.
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- 179 Association of Chief Police Officers, *Police PREVENT Strategy*.
- 180 Audit Commission, *Preventing Violent Extremism: Learning and development exercise*.
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- 184 General Secretariat of National Defense, *La France face au terrorisme*.
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- 189 Testimony by Ongerling, *Home-Grown Terrorism and Radicalization in the Netherlands*.
- 190 European expert interview 52, 15 Dec 2009.
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- 193 A Merari, 'The readiness to kill and die: suicidal terrorism in the Middle East'.
- 194 T Precht, *Home Grown Terrorism and Islamist Radicalisation in Europe: From conversion to terrorism*.
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- 199 European expert interview, 20 Nov 2007.
- 200 They are: apply principles of good corporate governance; ensure that services are provided by suitably qualified and/or experienced personnel; have systems and processes in place to ensure that there are no impediments to the participation in the activities, including governance, for young people; have systems and processes in place to ensure that there are no

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- 204 Audit Commission, *Preventing Violent Extremism*.
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- 206 Expert interview 32, 27 Oct 2009.
- 207 Kundani, *Spooked!*
- 208 See for example, G Owen, 'Anti-terror cash spent on football coaching and fashion shows'.
- 209 Audit Commission, *Preventing Violent Extremism*.
- 210 Bakker, *Jihadi Terrorists in Europe*.
- 211 One example comes from a workshop organised and led by two Somali Canadian women in Ottawa in the 1990s about female genital mutilation (FGM), which was taking place in Canada. They invited members of the Ottawa Somali community, and measured their attitudes toward FGM. Most agreed with the

practice and saw it as a requirement of Islam. The workshop included a lawyer, a doctor, a government official and an Imam. The latter stated that FGM was a cultural practice with no root in Islam, and was not a requirement of the religion. When the organisers measured attitudes after the workshop, only one person still supported the practice. Participants were asked what convinced them the most, and the overwhelming majority said it had been the Imam's clarification of FGM in relation to Islam.

- 212 See V Hartwich, 'Professors should not be police informants'; A Singleton, S Tombs and D Whyte, 'We won't collude with efforts to use the academy to police immigration'.
- 213 Expert interview 32, 27 Oct 2009.
- 214 Expert interview 34, 6 Dec 2008.
- 215 Expert interview 31, 30 Oct 2009.
- 216 Mirza, Senthilkumaran and Ja'Far, *Living Apart Together*.
- 217 Expert interview 33, 6 Dec 2008.
- 218 JS Nye, *Soft Power: The means to success in world politics*.
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- 225 Here, we are only counting those of working age or older.
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- 229 Interviews 71–81, 5 Nov 2009.
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- 234 *US v Mokhtar Haouari*, testimony by Ahmed Ressam, 3 Jul 2001.

- 235 D Gardham, 'Terrorists turned kitchen into bomb factory'.
- 236 Leiken, 'Europe's angry Muslims'.
- 237 *R v Khawaja*.
- 238 Interview 2, 28 Oct 2008.
- 239 Interview 44, 4 Nov 2009.
- 240 Interviews 62–70, 22 Sep 2009.
- 241 Interviews 71–81, 5 Nov 2009.
- 242 Interview 20, 26 Jun 2008.
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The path into terrorism in the name of Islam is often described as a process of radicalisation. But to be radical is not necessarily to be violent. Violent radicals are clearly enemies of liberal democracies, but non-violent radicals might sometimes be powerful allies. This pamphlet is a summary of two years of research examining the difference between violent and non-violent radicals in Europe and Canada. It represents a step towards a more nuanced understanding of the behaviour of radicalised individuals, the appeal of the al-Qaeda narrative, and the role of governments and communities in responding.

The Edge of Violence suggests that government policy must distinguish clearly between radicalisation that leads to violence and radicalisation that does not: ways must be found to ensure young people can be radical and dissenting without violent consequences. The pamphlet argues that the best way to fight radical ideas is with a liberal attitude to dissent, as silencing radical views can create a taboo effect that inadvertently makes such ideas more appealing.

The threat of violent radicalisation can never be 'solved' or completely neutralised, it can only be managed. The process of radicalisation to violence still eludes complete understanding: any response will entail controversial decisions and unintended consequences. Therefore, governments must focus on the things they can realistically change, while the lead role in prevention must be played by society: individuals, groups, organisations and communities.

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