

Can Western Muslims Be De-radicalized?

by Uriya Shavit and Sören Andresen

Stopping the radicalization of young Muslims has become a focal point of political and academic discussion in the West as thousands of Western Muslims have traveled to jihadist training camps in Syria and Iraq. The attacks in Paris in 2015 and in Brussels and Nice in 2016 have also heightened fears of terrorism in the West perpetrated by returning jihadists. Along with an intensification of intelligence and surveillance operations, three main courses of action have been deliberated and partially implemented by Western governments: banning or limiting the freedom of preachers who, while not endorsing violence, openly oppose liberal values and envision an Islamic future for the West; setting up domestic programs to prevent or reverse radicalization by enhancing integration of Muslim communities and persuading citizens who have joined jihadist groups to return home; and fighting the Islamic State (or ISIS) on its home turf with the aim of destroying it.

There are positive aspects to each of these courses of action, but do they significantly decrease the current threat of Islamic terror in Western countries? Is it possible that they may even contribute to increasing the very threat they aim to counter? An examination of current programs can reveal which components are useful and which are not. Such an assessment along with other ideas based, in part, on interviews with European security officials and leading radical imams in Europe offer useful policy recommendations.



While not sanctioning violence, some mosques and schools cultivate among young devotees a triumphal, supremacist, Islamic mindset, which can eventually lead to violent action. Former British prime minister David Cameron (above) set off a firestorm of protest in October 2015 when he spoke about the existence of radical “breeding grounds” for terror and vowed there would be “no more passive tolerance [to radicalism] in Britain.”

1. Closing Down “Grey Zones”

A primary thesis in political and academic counterterrorism discourse is that in some, though not all, cases, gradual, nonviolent radicalization precedes and anticipates violent actions. To combat this, some in the West have concluded that “grey zones,” places where Islamist, Salafi, and other radical ideologies are endorsed and promoted, must be closed down. While not sanctioning violence, some mosques and schools cultivate among young devotees a triumphal, supremacist, Islamic mindset, which can eventually lead to violent action. Then British prime minister David Cameron articulated this view in October 2015 when he spoke about the existence of radical breeding grounds for terror and vowed there would be “no more passive tolerance [to radicalism] in Britain.”¹

Banning the proliferation of hateful and supremacist rhetoric limits freedom of speech, but, as implied by Cameron and others, can be justified with caution. Liberal democracies have an obligation to protect their citizens and defend their very existence against those who openly use the freedoms of those democracies to extinguish those freedoms for others. However, a closer look at some of the assumptions underlying this argument should give pause.

Much attention, for example, has been devoted by authorities to the dangers of Salafi proselytizing. An influential study published in 2007 by the New York police department analyzed the backgrounds of terrorists involved in ten terror attacks in North America, Europe, and Australia, and demonstrated that individuals attending Salafi mosques (i.e., mosques that are radical yet preach against violence) are considerably more likely to become jihadist-Salafi and active in terrorism than individuals

attending other mosques.² According to another study, out of some 2,600 mosques in Germany, almost 37 percent of the 110 German Muslim jihadists whose biographies were studied and whose attendance at a specific mosque could be verified, had been attendees of just six specific Salafi mosques in the country.³

Their hostility to liberal values and intolerance of other religions notwithstanding, there are reasons to think that closing down Salafi mosques may also negatively impact the fight against terror, especially in the short term. To begin with, some Salafi mosque leaders are adamant and passionate propagators of an anti-jihadist agenda, in line with the anti-jihadist campaigns of the Saudi religious establishment.⁴ These imams argue that by

2 Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat* (New York: New York Police Department, Intelligence Unit, 2007), pp. 16-85.

3 Alexander Heerlein, “‘Salafistische’ Moscheen—Ort des Gebets oder eine Brutstätte für Dschihadistische Muslime?,” in *Gefährliche Nähe: Salafismus und Dschihadismus in Deutschland*, Michail Loginov and Klaus Hummel, eds. (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2014) p. 169. The term Salafi implies in this context adherence to the teachings of the Saudi Wahhabi religious establishment. In a descriptive-empirical sense, Salafi is understood today in the European-Muslim context as Wahhabi-oriented; not all Salafi mosques are supported financially by Riyadh, but all preach the Wahhabi version and adhere to the jurisprudence and theology promoted by the Wahhabi religious establishment.

4 See, for example, Sheikh Abdul Aziz Ibn Baaz, “al-Wala wa-l-Bara wa-Ahkam al-Kuffar,” in *Fatawa al-Balad al-Haram* (Cairo: Matktabat at-Tawfiqiya, n.d), pp. 174-5; Sheikh Uthaymin, *Muslim Minorities* (Hounslow, U.K.: Message of Islam, 1998), p. 20; Saalih bin Fouzan al-Fouzan, *Al-Wala wa-l-Bara: Allegiance and Association with the People of Islam and Eeman and Disassociation and Enmity with the People of Falsehood and Disbelief in Islam* (Ipswich: Jam’iyyat Ihya Minhaj as-Sunna, 1997), pp. 13, 24; *Ahkam at-Ta’amul ma’a Ghayr al-Muslimin* (Riyad: Dar Kunuz Ishbilya li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi, 2009), p. 20.

1 “Tory Party Conference 2015: David Cameron’s Speech in Full,” *The Independent* (London), Oct. 7, 2015.

residing in the West and being given citizenship or a visa, Muslims are party to a contract, and true Muslims never breach a contract,⁵ or that attacking civilians and committing atrocities breach Islamic norms.⁶ Salafi imams in England⁷ and in Germany⁸ have stated in interviews with the authors that their preaching is a great asset to prevention efforts because of their ability to ground opposition to jihad in persuasive religious terms. And while these claims may well be self-serving, Salafi mosques do contain more anti-ISIS and anti-al-Qaeda literature than other places of worship due to the burning hatred between Wahhabis and jihadist-Salafis.

The revised British “Prevent Strategy,” the country’s main anti-radicalization program, stated unequivocally that cooperation with radical preachers is out of the question,⁹ and German security

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officials take a similar stand.¹⁰ But some challenge the wisdom of this view, noting that police cooperation with radical

communities has proven effective.¹¹

The complicated reality is that neither side of the debate is wrong as exposure to radical ideas has varying effects on different individuals. On the one hand, there is evidence that some of those who attend radical mosques turn to jihadism. On the other, it is safe to conclude that the vast majority of Western Muslims who embrace and even articulate radical rhetoric have not turned to actual, violent jihadism. For them, provocative rhetoric appears to satisfy a need to profess anger or disrespect toward their host for whatever reason. This form of passive radicalism is still problematic, but, in terms of terror prevention efforts, it is fanciful to think that adherents of radical ideologies will choose mainstream ideologies if their radical bases are closed down; they may become angrier and go underground.

Finally, the needs of the intelligence community should be considered. As long as the “breeding grounds” of which Cameron spoke exist, security agencies have, at the very least, settings upon which to focus some of their work. When radical individuals center in one location, intelligence is more effective and easier to gather than when they disperse.

5 See, for example, Abdur Rahman Mahdi, *Martyrdom in Jihad versus Suicide Bombing* (London: Islamic Knowledge, 2010), pp. 48-9.

6 See, for example, “Combating 21st Century Violent Extremist Terrorism: ISIS, al-Qaeda in Iraq and Syria—A Must Read: The Islamic Salafi Position towards Extremist Insurgencies in Light of Quranic and Prophetic Teachings,” Salafi Publications (Birmingham, Eng.: The Salafi Bookstore, n.d.); Abdul Adhim Kamouss, “[Wer sind die ISIS?](#)” Sept. 28, 2014, accessed Sept. 15, 2015.

7 Authors’ interview, Imam Nur ad-Din Abu Abdullah, Masjid Daar us Sunnah Islamic Centre, London, Oct. 7, 2015.

8 Author interview, Imam Nasir Isa at an-Nur Mosque, Berlin, Aug. 1, 2013.

9 “Prevent Strategy,” Home Department, presentation, U.K. Parliament, June 2011, pp. 34-5.

10 Authors’ interview with Katrin Strunk and Gordon Jensen, Interior Ministry of Nord Rhine-Westphalia, Düsseldorf, Oct. 13, 2015.

11 Robert Lambert, “Empowering Salafis and Islamists against al-Qaeda: A London Counterterrorism Case-study,” *Political Science and Politics*, Jan. 2008, pp. 31-5.



Silvio K (above), a convert to Islam, is a German jihadist who has threatened to bomb a U.S. nuclear weapons storage facility located in Germany. By all estimates, thousands of European Muslims have been trained in Islamic State camps and are part of its fighting forces. According to the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization at Kings College London, these include some 1,200 French fighters and some 600 German and 600 English fighters.

2. Radicalization Prevention Programs

Over the past decade, Western governments have established multi-layered prevention programs to de-radicalize jihadists as well as those Muslims who may be on the verge of becoming violent. Stopping young Muslims from turning to terror or encouraging them to leave terror organizations has become a huge, publicly-funded industry, parallel in scope to other prevention campaigns such as the war on drugs, smoking, alcohol abuse, etc. One example is the Berlin-based, federally-sponsored Hayat (Turkish and Arabic for “life”), established in 2011 by Exit-Germany, an organization that originally specialized in encouraging individuals to leave neo-Nazi groups. Hayat’s guiding principal is that family members are the most effective influence on radicalized individuals. It counsels families on appropriate, non-confrontational approaches to de-radicalize potential jihadists or, in extreme

cases, bring loved ones home who have gone off to wage jihad.¹²

The federal program Demokratie leben (Live Democracy) supports dozens of anti-radicalization initiatives, including seminars held at youth centers in which radicalized young Germans learn to embrace a pluralistic view of Islam taught by state-hired educators, including Muslims.¹³ One criticism against the program is that, by using the term Islamism, it risks contributing to the confusion of Islamist ideology as representing Islam.¹⁴ The Wegweiser program, developed by the Interior Ministry and the Verfassungsschutz in the German state of

Nord Rhine-Westphalia, approaches young, at-risk people based on information provided by concerned parents, friends, and teachers. Its premise is that improving the social situation of young people who are being radicalized is crucial to the prevention of radicalization. Thus, it seeks to help at-risk youths find jobs and to educate them about the dangers of Salafi teachings and the manipulative techniques Salafi preachers employ.¹⁵

12 [Hayat Deutschland](#), Berlin; “[German program triggers international de-radicalization network](#),” *Deutsche Welle* (Bonn), Sept. 3, 2014; *The National Post* (Toronto), Apr. 4, 2014.

13 “[Demokratie leben!](#)” Berlin, Apr. 2015.

14 For criticism, see, Akif Sahin, “[Kampf gegen ‘Islamisten’](#)”: Bundesregierung setzt auf mehr Prävention,” Jan. 10, 2015.

15 Authors’ interview, Katrin Strunk and Gordon Jensen, Interior Ministry of Nord Rhine-Westphalia, Düsseldorf, Oct. 13, 2015; authors interview, Dirk Sauerborn, Intercultural Affairs, Nord Rhine-Westphalia police, Düsseldorf, Oct. 13, 2015.

Since 2007, the British government's efforts to prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism have centered on the Prevent program, part of the broader, national anti-terrorism program CONTEST, reformed by the Conservative government in 2011.¹⁶ Among its activities is the funding of local theater productions that raise the issue of extremism.¹⁷

A flagship program of Prevent is the Channel de-radicalization project, an initiative that identifies at-risk individuals, assesses the threat they pose, and offers them support. Since 2007, Channel has intervened in the lives of hundreds of such Muslim youths, including those who planned to travel to Syria and join the Islamic State.¹⁸ Channel encourages parents, friends, community leaders, public servants, and teachers to report possible terrorists (for the latter two groups, reporting is mandatory). Between June and August 2015, 798 individuals were reported to the program, 312 of whom were under eighteen years of age. The number of referrals found to have been justified has not been made public.¹⁹ Similar programs have been employed in other Western countries,

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including the United States,²⁰ Denmark,²¹ and Australia.²² These programs aim at redirecting youths from the path of radicalization through ed-

ucational initiatives and the interventions of trusted facilitators.

Several positive aspects of Western prevention programs are beyond dispute. Cases of de-radicalized individuals suggest that there are programs that have had an impact on some Muslims.²³ These programs have also informed parents, educators, and local religious leaders that fighting radicalization is a responsibility they share. These initiatives have also facilitated the funding of cultural and social programs for Western Muslim populations at large that may have otherwise not been funded, including Internet forums, theater productions, "safe spaces" for discussions of grievances, and matching youth at risk with role models.

16 "Prevent Strategy," Home Department, presentation, U.K. Parliament, June 2011, p. 7; Paul Thomas, *Responding to the Threat of Violent Extremism: Failing to Prevent* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), pp. 3-6, 96-117; Floris Vermeulen, "Suspect Communities—Targeting Violent Extremism at the Local Level: Policies of Engagement in Amsterdam, Berlin and London," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Nov. 2013, pp. 294-5.

17 "Prevent Strategy," p. 26.

18 *International Business Times* (New York), Nov. 15, 2014.

19 *International Business Times*, Oct. 8, 2015; *The Sun* (London), Oct. 9, 2015.

20 "[Countering Violent Extremism](#)," U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Washington, D.C., May 24, 2016; "[Safe Spaces](#): An Updated Toolkit for Empowering Communities and Addressing Ideological Violence," The Muslim Public Affairs Council, Washington, D.C., accessed May 26, 2016, pp. 8, 16-9.

21 Lasse Lindekilde and Mark Sedgwick, *Impact of Counter-Terrorism on Communities: Denmark Background Report* (London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2012), pp. 28-9.

22 Shahram Akbarzadeh, "Investing in Mentoring and Educational Initiatives: The Limits of De-Radicalization Initiatives in Australia," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Jan. 2014, pp. 455-8; "[Countering Violent Extremism](#)," Australian Attorney-General's Department, Barton, accessed May 25, 2016.

23 Authors' interview, Dirk Sauerborn, intercultural affairs officer with the Nord Rhine-Westphalia State Police, Düsseldorf, Oct. 13, 2015.

There are, however, limits to the ability of prevention programs to significantly contain the threat of terrorism. To begin with, the idea that a sense of disaffection and marginalization is the key factor underlying violent radicalization, which guides most prevention programs, is hardly borne out by reality. Many, if not most, young people lose their jobs or face the agonies of unrequited love at one point or another, but only a small percentage become terrorists. In fact, quantitative studies suggest that poor prospects for employment or economic marginalization are not predictive of potential or active jihadist affiliations. For example, the above noted biographical survey of 110 Germans involved in jihadist activities since 2001 identified a wide range of economic, educational, ethnic, religious, and migratory backgrounds.²⁴ Likewise, a study of English Muslims aged 18-45 of Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent in East London and Bradford found that university students who were U.K.-born, were in good health, and whose prospects in life were relatively promising were more likely to sympathize with terrorist causes than poor, unhealthy individuals who were not enrolled at a university.²⁵ Other than being young and



British men appear in a jihadist recruitment video. Many programs in the West consider radicalization to be the result of personal failures and assume that these issues can be addressed by family or community. Instead, Western governments should focus not on consumers of radical ideologies but on the financiers and propagators of Islamist dogma.

male, there is evidently no standard type of Western Muslim who acts on the belief that the West should be violently attacked from within.

It is unlikely that any of the prevention programs currently implemented in the West can affect the majority of those already dedicated to jihad. As interventions rely on cooperation from family, friends, or relatives (who serve as informants as well as contact-persons to the suspects) and also from the actual suspected individuals, those strongly committed to jihad are less likely to be affected by any form of intercession. Hundreds of Western recruits who have joined ISIS have remained loyal to its cause and have lost touch with their families, and are, therefore, beyond the reach of such prevention programs.

24 Heerlein, “‘Salafistische’ Moscheen,” pp. 155-82.

25 Kamaldeep Bhui, Nasir Warfa, and Edgar Jones, “Is [Violent Radicalisation](#) Associated with Poverty,

Migration, Poor Self-Reported Health and Common Mental Disorders?” *PLOS One* (San Francisco), Mar. 5, 2014.

Broadly speaking, state-funded initiatives that educate young people to distinguish between “true” Islam and “misguided” Islam have two significant pitfalls. First, massive campaigns against radical Islamic ideologies elevate the status of these ideologies, in essence putting them on an equal footing with more moderate beliefs and practices. In Germany, for example, Salafis constitute less than 1 percent of the total Muslim population,²⁶ but the volume of public-funded literature against their ideology creates, ironically, the impression that Salafiya is a dominant affiliation.

The association of anti-jihadist preaching with the state or with more moderate Islamic organizations supported by the state presents another dilemma. Just as a school nurse, who represents the establishment while speaking out against smoking risks, may actually tempt rebellious teenagers to experiment with cigarettes, so government-associated imams or teachers who preach against radicalization may make such affiliations more attractive.

Finally, the continuum between becoming a more devout Muslim and radicalization is neither clearly defined nor understood by Western authorities. Given the high level of anxiety in Western societies at the moment and the general ignorance about Islam, mistaken accusations of radicalization are almost inevitable. Such accusations, in turn, can push some Muslims toward violence.

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3. Defeating the Islamic State

In his October 2015 speech, Cameron also stated that Britain would not be safe until the Islamic State is defeated.²⁷ There are, indeed, good arguments why ISIS’s destruction would significantly decrease the threat of Islamic terrorism in Europe over the long term. The Islamic State’s strongholds in the Middle East provide radical Muslims with training, funding, and, most importantly, inspiration. Its major recruiting appeal has been its overwhelming success—unmatched in the annals of modern Arab jihadist groups—in establishing Muslim rule over a vast territory. While other radical groups have had similar visions of grandeur, ISIS actualized them through its conquests. Tarnishing its triumphal image could lessen its appeal for some.

In the short term, however, the complete destruction of the Islamic State may actually exacerbate the threat. By all estimates, thousands of European Muslims have been trained in ISIS camps and are part of its fighting forces. In 2015, the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization at King’s College London estimated that 4,000 Western Europeans have joined either the Islamic State or Jabhat al-Nusra in Iraq and Syria. One third have either died or left the conflict zone. These include some 1,200 fighters from France and some 1,200 from Germany and England.²⁸ If the Islamic

26 “[Salafistische Bestrebungen](#),” Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution), accessed Feb. 5, 2016.

27 “Tory Party Conference 2015: David Cameron’s Speech in Full.”

28 Peter R. Neumann, “[Foreign Fighter Total in Syria/Iraq](#) Now Exceeds 20,000; Surpasses Afghanistan Conflict in the 1980s,” International Center for the Study of Radicalization, Kings College London, Jan. 26, 2015.

State is destroyed, at least some of its fighters will find their way back to their homelands, armed with field experience, motivated by the same convictions that sent them to ISIS, and out for revenge. It is also possible that Libya and other countries where ISIS has established strongholds will transform into new grounds for massive recruitment of Europeans.

Even if the last European recruits to the Islamic State were somehow to be eradicated or contained, the threat of terror in the West is unlikely to disappear altogether. In ideological and operational terms, the attacks on Western soil by affiliates of the Islamic State do not constitute a novelty. They did not start with ISIS and are unlikely to die with it. For almost two decades now, well before ISIS came into existence, hundreds of young Western Muslims have considered it their duty as Muslims to violently attack the West from within. The cornerstone of this concept was encapsulated in Osama bin Laden's declaration on the establishment of The World Islamic Front for the Jihad against the Jews and the Crusaders back in February 1998, which ended with a religious edict calling upon all Muslims to kill Americans and their allies, servicemen and civilians alike, wherever and whenever possible.²⁹

It is clear that this religious edict has been largely rejected. Nevertheless, it has appealed to those who, since 2001, have conspired to attack Western targets. To plan religiously-motivated terror attacks, they did not need to meet with bin Laden personally nor be financed or trained by his henchmen. It sufficed that they were impressed with the premise that the West was at war with

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Islam, and the only way to effectively defend Muslims was to transfer that battle to Western soil.

Policy Recommendations

A troubling reality emerges from this analysis. None of the projects discussed have the potential to reduce significantly the threat of terror, and some aspects of these policies may prove counterproductive. More efforts should be exerted in learning why thousands of young Western Muslims are violently radicalized and in evaluating the efficacy of existing programs. But it is unlikely that additional studies will provide any single instantaneous remedy. And as seen in Paris, San Bernardino, and most recently Brussels, Orlando, Nice, and Berlin, the West cannot afford to wait.

In the short term, Western governments must slash opportunities by focusing on intelligence and security measures. Security operations in Western Europe have tended to oscillate between extreme reactions such as closing down entire cities in the aftermath of attacks to periods of complacent negligence. Instead, the middle-ground of a steady and calm state of alert and action should be established. This middle-ground should include, most importantly, tightening controls in public areas. The death toll and emotional effects caused by the takeover of a train, a subway, a ferry, a museum, or a theater by an ISIS cell are no different from those caused by the commandeering of a commercial airplane, but all these venues are extremely vulnerable and penetrable as are other forms of mass transportation. Soft targets of this kind must be secured by well-trained, armed guards, equipped with metal detectors and authorized to inspect personal belongings. Landmarks of great symbolic importance that attract mass crowds—for

²⁹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi* (London), Feb. 23, 1998.

example, the Eiffel Tower, or the Chiesa di Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan—must be protected by two tiers of security to minimize the risk of an effective attack (the latter, appallingly, is currently not secured at all). The Israeli experience since the 1990s has demonstrated that, while costly, such measures are economically feasible, meagerly injure privacy, and have a positive psychological effect on the public's sense of security. Besides, the cost of a crisis involving hundreds of victims will be far higher.

Over the long term, more consideration and focus should be dedicated to the deep-rooted origins of the jihadist phenomenon in the West, and new, more audacious approaches to countering it should be formulated and applied. On the political and diplomatic fronts, Western governments should turn their attention from the consumers of radical ideologies to the providers.

The Saudi religious and political establishment plays an ambivalent role vis-à-vis violent radicalization. On the one hand, it leads and inspires theologically-grounded campaigns against al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and other jihadist groups. On the other, it has served as the main financier and propagator of the notions that non-Muslims are inferior to Muslims; that Muslims are bound to segregate culturally from non-Muslims and Islamize the West; and that the liberal West is a corrupt, helpless civilization on the verge of collapse.

In strategic terms, it is astonishing that a militarily weak kingdom, whose existence hinges in substantial ways on the continued support of the United States, should serve as the main sponsor of radicalization that destabilizes Western societies. U.S. and European Union policies should, therefore, be confidently informed by



One tool to combat radicalization of Muslim youth is to present alternative role models to those contemplating jihad. Aziz Sancar (front center), a Muslim, Turkish-American professor at the University of North Carolina, won the Nobel Prize in chemistry, presented by Swedish King Carl Gustaf (right) in 2015. Stories like Sancar's can serve as inspiration for young Western Muslims for what they can achieve in liberal, pluralistic societies while maintaining their faith.

a simple truth: The West can survive without a Saudi alliance, but the kingdom will not last a year without U.S. military support. The kingdom's responsibility for breeding radicalism in the West should be underscored publicly and regularly, and the House of Saud should be pressured to reform its ways by all means possible. It must substitute its ambivalent policies for either unequivocal support for integration-minded agendas, or better still, a complete retreat from its campaign to influence the minds of Muslims in the West.

Other allies of the United States that directly and indirectly support radical affiliations in the West, including Qatar, should be treated similarly. Countries that serve as transits for terrorists must be warned that their negligence could bear harsh diplomatic consequences.

There is an equal need for clearer guidelines and for actions to match rhetoric in the West. Western governments without exception have never fully clarified what specific radical notions they deem beyond the pale of legitimacy. Authorities need to be

provided with the flexibility to address nuanced situations, but once limits on inflammatory rhetoric and teaching are decided upon and made public, they should be strictly observed and applied. David Cameron's strong rhetoric, for example, has not been matched by action. British legislators have never explicitly stipulated, for example, whether disavowing non-Muslims or teaching that they should be hated based exclusively on their religious beliefs is acceptable in the eyes of the law.

Lastly, in the ongoing battle for hearts and minds, some thought needs to be given to the implication of home-grown Islamic terrorists becoming the focus of the public discourse on Islam in the West. Islam is most often discussed in the media in the context of terror. So much is said about ISIS, and rightly so; yet so little is said about Indonesia's democratic transformation, for example, which is as important. Young people search for role models to look up to and imitate. Heroes help build their characters and motivate them for a life of positive contributions. But other than professional athletes, notably soccer players, few Western Muslims have been portrayed in the Western media as heroes and not all young people are attracted to sporting culture.

This in turn means that the violent heroes' culture cultivated by ISIS, with its promise of meaning and glory in this life and eternal paradise in the afterlife, has faced meager competition in the West. In December 2015, a Muslim, American-Turkish scientist Aziz Sancar, won the Nobel Prize in

chemistry. Sancar's story could serve as an inspiration for millions of young Muslims across Europe and the United States for what they can achieve in liberal, pluralistic societies while maintaining their faith. Sadly, he has not gained a fraction of the attention that British-born Jihadi John (Muhammad Emwazi) received before being killed in a drone attack.

To explore and trumpet the success stories of Muslim minorities in the West is not an act of political correctness. It is a reflection of a diverse reality that deserves more attention from Western politicians, journalists, and academics. In the on-going fight against jihadi-Salafi terrorism, the worst may yet be to come. It is clear that some of the main policies of Western governments are not only of limited efficacy but also, possibly, counter-productive. New long- and short-term policies should be introduced to avert catastrophe.

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