REPORT

ISLAMIC EXTREMISM IN GERMANY

Internal Security Program 2018
EUROPEAN VALUES THINK-TANK
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The challenge of countering Islamic extremism in Germany continues to vex policy makers, the security community and the wider public. The paper identifies key Islamic extremist actors in Germany and analyses the threat they pose to the German liberal-order.

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

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

1. Jihadism: political violence (e.g. terrorist attacks, violent insurgencies)
2. Islamism: non-violent political activism (e.g. extremist political parties)
3. Islamic Fundamentalism: non-political extremist activities (e.g. domestic violence inspired by an interpretation of Islam)

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

Whereas violent extremism is dealt with extensively in Germany, there seems to be a tendency to underestimate the non-violent dimension of Islamic extremism. A couple of Islamist organisations are granted broad influence in the political and public sphere, despite warnings of the Federal and various State offices for the Protection of the Constitution. Even though Islamist organisations follow a disintegrative identity and threaten the German democratic liberal basic order, they serve as official partners for representatives of the German state.

Islamic fundamentalism is typically the least visible type of Islamic extremism. In Germany, problems and threats arising with it such as the violation of individual basic rights behind closed doors widely go unnoticed. There is a severe lack of knowledge and data about Islamic fundamentalism, hindering the state and civil society in efficiently addressing the problem.

The purpose of this paper is to open the debate about aspects of Islamic extremism which are hitherto overlooked in the German debate and provide policy makers with a comprehensive set of policy recommendations to build a full-scale response to Islamic extremism, incorporating both its violent and non-violent manifestations and minimise its influence.
INTRODUCTION

Following the rise of the Islamic State and a number of high-level jihadist attacks in Europe, the challenge of countering Islamic extremism in liberal democracies continues to vex policy makers, the security community and the wider public. This is also true for Germany – a country where Islam is an important aspect of society with 4.5 million Muslims (5.5% of German population)\(^1\), including German Muslim citizens, Muslim migrants up to the third generation and a significant number of irregular immigrants from Muslim-majority countries who arrived since 2015 as part of the migration crisis. While the vast majority of Muslims living in Germany are well integrated and conform to the German democratic and liberal order, there are also well-established organisations and communities which promote an interpretation of Islam incompatible with fundamental German values.

On one hand there is the dimension of violent extremism. By taking lives of innocents and disrupting the social life in the most horrific manner, terrorist attacks clearly are one of the main challenges to Germany’s domestic security. Being the most visible and tangible, violent extremism is dealt with extensively in Germany. On the other hand, there is the less known dimension of Islamic extremism, which is characterised by its non-violent nature. There seems to be a tendency in Germany to underestimate this dimension.

Even if refraining from violence, Islamic extremism fosters disintegration of the Muslim community in Germany and threatens Germany’s socio-political order. Especially Islamic Fundamentalist ideology seems to be neglected in the overall debate. Although being focused on the private life, Islamic Fundamentalists direct their lives according to Sharia and Quran regardless of the compatibility with German laws and norms. This does not only lead to an on-going segregation from the general public but also endangers basic civil rights such as gender equality or liberty rights and serves as fertile ground for further radicalisation. Even though political decision makers are increasingly aware of the political and non-violent threats Islamic extremist actors pose to the German liberal democratic order and societal cohesion, not enough action has been taken to counter the threats.

This paper conceptualises Islamic extremism as a threat encompassing both violent and non-violent dimensions and outlines its presence in Germany. Key Islamic extremist actors are identified and the threat they pose to the German liberal-order is analysed and placed in context. Finally, policy recommendations are offered with a view to improving the current practice of countering Islamic extremism in its entirety at the national level. Thereby the focus lies strictly on the parameter of counter-extremism. Wider discussions such as the place of Islam in Europe in general, immigration from Muslim-majority countries and integration of the Muslim populations are not addressed.

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF EXISTING CONCEPTUALISATIONS

In order to adequately counter the diverse forms of Islamic extremism, a comprehensive conceptualisation of the issue is needed. Conducting a review of the existing expert debate led to the conclusion that existing conceptualisations do not address the threat emanating from Islamic extremism in its entirety.

In Germany, the term ‘Islamic Extremism’ is often confused with ‘Islamism’, even if this term is rarely conceptualised or precisely defined. Looking at the academic debate, official statements and media coverage in Germany, ‘Islamism’ is used as a broad term describing a wide range of activities, from non-violent activism to terrorist attacks. What one author refers to as ‘Islamism’ may be described elsewhere as ‘Islamic fundamentalism’, ‘Islamist fundamentalism’, ‘Islamic extremism’, ‘political Islam’, ‘Islamic Fanatism’, ‘Islamic Totalitarianism’, ‘Islamic terrorism’, ‘Jihadism’ and a host of other variations. The lack of distinction is particularly noticeable in the popular media, where the term ‘Islamism’ is often used as a broad brush to describe any objectionable activity related to Islam.²

The lack of a clear conceptualisation is also palpable in the case of official institutions. Major international institutions which Germany takes part in utilise the popular conceptualisation of ‘Countering Violent Extremism’ (CVE), which offers an expanded menu of options for dealing with those extremists who embraced violent means to achieve their strategic objectives.³ In the “National Prevention Program for Countering Islamic Extremism”, the German government acknowledges the importance of preventive measures early on to hinder radicalisation leading to terrorism; however, the focus does not venture beyond the prevention of violent extremism.⁴ Comparatively little attention is paid to addressing non-violent forms of extremism and the threats they pose to the German socio-political order.⁵

Even if non-violent extremism is recognised as problematic, the conceptualisation may not cover all aspects of the issue. For example, the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution draws a clear line between ‘Islam’ and ‘Muslims’ on one hand, and ‘Islamism’ and ‘Islamists’ on the other. ‘Islam’ is understood as directed only towards the personal life of Muslims, whereas ‘Islamism’ is regarded as a religiously motivated form of political extremism that only begins with the appearance of politically motivated behaviour and a desire to establish a societal order based on Islam.⁶ ‘Islamist’ actors are thereby distinguished by their level of violence. This conceptualisation recognises ‘legalistic Islamists’ (non-violent activities), ‘violence-oriented Islamists’ (both violent and non-violent activities) and ‘jihadist Islamists’ (primarily violent activities).⁷

The problem with the above conceptualisation is that it neglects actors driven by their extremist religious faith to conduct activities which are not political, but nevertheless unacceptable. Even if practiced behind closed doors and directed at the private life of the practitioners and their immediate surroundings, some activities may violate basic civil rights or exert a disintegrative effect at the wider society. One example of such activity is domestic violence justified in the name of Islam; another is social pressure against women to wear the Islamic head covering. It is essential to address this non-violent, non-political dimension of Islamic extremism while clearly distinguishing it from tolerant forms of Islam.

⁴ Federal Ministry of Interior, “Nationales Präventionsprogramm gegen islamistischen Extremismus”.
THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF ISLAMIC EXTREMISM

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

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

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

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

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

Some researchers and practitioners prefer the use of the term 'Islamist extremism' to describe the entire spectrum of this form of extremism. However, the term ‘Islamist extremism’ opens the doors to the argument, utilised widely by populist movements in the West, that the state refuses to correctly name the threat out of fear of sounding politically incorrect by supplanting the word ‘Islamic’ with the word ‘Islamist’ and denying any connection between Islam and extremism.

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

It should be emphasised that acting against Islamic extremists does not equate to acting against Muslims

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8 The definition of the term ‘extremism’ differs among states. The UK Counter-Extremism Strategy provides the following definition of extremism: "Extremism is the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremism." Home Office (2015): Counter-Extremism Strategy; London: Home Office. Germany has a working definition of ‘political extremism’ as “characterized by the fact that it rejects the democratic constitutional state and seeks to eliminate or restrict its democratic or constitutional component” (“Der politische Extremismus zeichnet sich dadurch aus, dass er den demokratischen Verfassungsstaat ablehnt und beseitigen oder ihn einschränken will – die demokratische Komponente und/oder die konstitutionelle.”) Federal Agency for Civic Education: “Extremismus”; Accessed at http://www.bpb.de/nachschlagen/lexika/Handworterbuch-politisches-system/202019/extremismus. For a more detailed discussion about the definition of ‘extremism’, see Schmid, Alex (2014): “Violent and Non-Violent Extremism: Two Sides of the Same Coin”; ICCT – The Hague; Accessed at https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Violent-Non-Violent-Extremism-May-2014.pdf.
merely because of their religion, much like acting against neo-Nazis in Germany does not equate to acting against those in favour of right-wing policies. The key determinant for action from the point of view of liberal democracies is whether a particular actor engages in extremist behaviour.

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

1. **Jihadism**: political violence (e.g. terrorist attacks, violent insurgencies)
2. **Islamism**: non-violent political activism (e.g. extremist political parties, parallel legal systems)
3. **Islamic fundamentalism**: non-political extremist activities (e.g. domestic violence, inspired by an interpretation of Islam)

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

### Jihadism: Political Violence

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

The contemporary Jihadist tradition was popularised by Muhammad Abdussalam Faraj in his pamphlet *The Neglected Duty*9, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi in his *This is Our Aqeedah*10, Abu Basir al-Tartusi11, Abdullah Yusuf Azzam12, Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir13, Abu Musab al-Suri14 and other theoreticians.

Their ideas were put into practice by a variety of individuals, such as the long-time spiritual leader of the Taliban Mullah Omar, the leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the American-Yemeni lecturer Anwar al-Awlaki and the Al-Qaeda leaders Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri.15 Most recently, the Jihadist tradition was continued and expanded under the banner of the Islamic State. It bears noting that some historical figures, such as the 15th century warrior and writer Abu Zakaryya al-Dimashqi al-Dumyati (Ibn Nuhaas)16, could also be considered part of the Jihadist tradition.

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Islamic extremist actors may be disaggregated by the type of activity into those who practice political violence, those who engage in non-violent political activism, and those who engage in non-political activities violating basic human rights of other individuals.
A violent Islamic extremist tradition also exists in Shia Islam, most notably in connection to Iran and the Islamic revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini. 17 Khomeini’s approach is quite distinct compared to the above ideologues, but nevertheless satisfies the key definitional components of Islamic extremism. Both Khomeini’s movement and the Iranian regime make an extensive use of political violence in support of their goals.

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

**Islamism: Non-Violent Political Activism**

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

The precise tenets and activities of Islamist movements vary across regions and nations. In the Arab world, prominent Islamist thinkers include the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) Hassan al-Banna 18, the founder of the Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT) group Taqiuddin al-Nabhan 19 and the Islamic theorist Sayyid Qutb 20. In Pakistan and wider South Asia, Islamism was championed by the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami Sayyid Abul A‘la Mawdudi 21 and others. 22

While the above figures differ in some details of their teachings, they share the desire to implant principles of Islamic religious law into the political system of their countries of residence irrespective of and often in opposition to secular and liberal democratic values. 23 For Islamists, the Islamic state should not merely impose its rule and legal system, it should also transform the mentality and spirit of the people. 24 Islam is thus perceived as a political ideology as well as a form of spiritual faith. 25 As a result, it ceases to be a matter of inner relationship between God and man and becomes also a relationship between man and society.

The Islamists’ approach to democracy differs from one actor to another, with some groups openly rejecting the concept altogether 26 and others accepting it as a legitimate form of consultation which is however subordinate to Sharia. 27 In practice, the Islamist view of Islam fosters societies where individual rights and freedoms, as conceptualised in liberal democratic constitutional systems, are suppressed if not compatible with the Islamists’ interpretation of Islamic norms. Islamism presents a totalitarian ideology where Islam is the dominant element not only in politics, but also in every sphere and every aspect of human life. For this reason, Islamist individuals and organisations present a clear risk to public order. Where their teachings delve into undermining the security of the liberal democratic order, they also present a risk to national security.

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21 For a profile, see Adib-Moghaddam, Arshin (2014): A Critical Introduction to Khomeini; New York: Cambridge University Press.
23 For a more expansive overview of Islamism, see Akbarzadeh, Shahram ed. (2012): The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West; Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
24 Some scholars point out the similarity of this tenet with the Marxist-Leninist idea of “making the new human” and “raising the consciousness” of the workers. See Hansen Henrik and Peter Kainz (2007): “Radical Islamism and Totalitarian Ideology: A Comparison of Sayyid Qutb’s Islamism with Marxism and National Socialism”; Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions, Vol. 8, No. 1.
27 For example, the Muslim Brotherhood. See Vidino, Lorenzo (2010): The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West; New York: Columbia University Press.
Islamic Fundamentalism: Non-Political Activities

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

This leads some Islamic fundamentalist actors to engage in activities which fit the definition of extremism, albeit outside of the political arena. For example, domestic violence and oppression of women justified by recourse to Islamic scripture, or promotion of hatred of a group of people with recourse to Quranic verses.

Also included in this category are groups which, while rejecting the use of violence and staying out of politics, nevertheless reject Western liberal democracy and engage in behaviour which has a detrimental effect on social cohesion in an open society. Islamic fundamentalists often reject the use of violence and may prefer religious activities to political activism. However, through their propagation of anti-democratic and anti-pluralist tenets of Islamic extremism and their legitimisation in the public and religious discourse, Islamic fundamentalists undermine the legitimacy of liberal democracy and provide a fertile soil for the growth of Islamism and Jihadism. Islamic fundamentalism thus poses a risk to public order.

The relationship between the three categories is illustrated in a pyramidal scheme (see Fig. 1). Islamic fundamentalism builds on Islamic discourse to present an interpretation of Islam that is incompatible with individual liberty, human dignity and equality before the law. Islamism applies the interpretation presented by Islamic fundamentalists in political activities. Jihadism applies Islamic extremist principles using political violence. Jihadism thus presents the most visible part of a wider threat. It should be noted that Fig. 1 presents a disaggregation of Islamic extremism by activity type, not the typical path of radicalisation.

Figure 1: Conceptualisation of Islamic Extremism
Differentiation of Type of Extremism by Primary Actor Activity

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28 For a discussion about such groups in Salafism, see Wiktorowicz, Quintan (2006): “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement”; Studies in Conflict & Terrorism; Vol. 29, pp. 207–239.

29 Although not always. Some Islamic fundamentalists may call for the use of non-political violence, e.g. domestic violence against children or women.
Individuals and groups in all three of the above categories – Jihadism, Islamism and Islamic Fundamentalism – frame their activities as legitimate practices dictated by pious adherence to the religion of Islam. While Islamic extremists draw on the same religion as the wider Muslim population, they do not represent Islam as a whole, which is practiced by millions of non-extremist European citizens in agreement with liberal democratic principles.

The diversity of non-extremist expressions of Islam is illustrated here through the bottom category of tolerant Islam. This category includes any interpretation of Islam that tolerates the existence of alternative interpretations as well as other religions and world views and is practiced in line with the principles of individual liberty, human dignity and equality before the law as conceptualised in liberal democratic constitutional systems. Tolerant European Muslims require particular protection of their safety and freedom of conscience, as they often become the target of both Islamic extremists (who seek to recruit them to their cause or else attack them as heretics) and anti-Muslim extremists (who falsely view all Muslims as potential terrorists).
Liberal democracies increasingly face Islamic extremism of all three types described above. Germany is no exception, even though non-violent and non-political forms of Islamic extremism do not receive the same level of attention as their violent counterparts in the German political and public debate. The following chapter reflects on the situation in Germany, identifies key Islamic extremist actors and assesses the threat they pose to the basic German democratic liberal order and social cohesion.

**Jihadist Actors in Germany**

The European Union at large experienced an increased number of jihadist terror attacks in recent years. The most visible occasions of jihadist violence were perpetrated by members of the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda, or individuals inspired by these organisations. The specificities range from smaller, isolated incidents like knife assaults or limited active shootings up to large, coordinated attacks with multiple simultaneous operations. These include the series of attacks in Paris in 2015, the bombings in Brussels and Ansbach in 2016 and vehicle-ramming attacks in Nice, Berlin, Stockholm, London and Barcelona in 2016 and 2017.

In Germany, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution detected a continuous shift from non-violent groups towards violent-oriented Jihadist groups. Primary concern lies with the Salafist population: out of an estimated 10,800 Salafists living in Germany in 2017, 1,600 were identified as ready to deploy violence in the name of their religion. Perpetrators of recent terrorist attacks in Germany most often underwent a radicalisation process within the Salafi scene prior to the attack.

The Jihadist threat is described as threefold, stemming from individuals inspired by the ideology behind Islamic extremism to conduct violence, groups directed by global Jihadist organisations like the Islamic State, and returning foreign-fighters from Iraq or Syria who pose a potential security threat. Furthermore, the Islamic State is suspected of having exploited the migration crisis to transfer operatives to Germany. Migrants and refugees from Muslim-majority countries are also perceived as vulnerable to radicalisation towards Jihadism.

Followers and sympathisers of jihadism can be recruited early on. One high-level case concerned the Saudi-Arabian funded King Fahd Academy in Bonn, Germany. Recordings emerged which show an imam of the school calling on parents to prepare their children for jihad. In consequence, the textbooks of the school were checked for the first time from official side, revealing strictly anti-Jewish and anti-Western views and a glorification of violence. Concepts such as tolerance towards other religions or gender equality were nowhere to be found.

The case points to a wider issue where such programs are not subject to state supervision and may therefore...
be exploited by Islamic extremists to proliferate their agenda.37

Children and youth are particularly vulnerable to the proliferation of extremist ideologies and beliefs. A survey questioning 500 Muslim pupils in Niedersachsen, Germany in 2015 reveals a spread of Fundamentalist ideology, with several children sympathising with activities that can be described as Jihadist. 37% of the interviewed understand Islam as the only true religion, with all others being of lesser value. Still 30% could imagine fighting for Islam and risking their own life. 27% agree with the statement that Sharia law, including the hard punishment for adultery or homosexuality, is better than German laws. Between one fifth and one sixth of the interviewed further agree with violent-prone statements, such as the need to fight the oppression of Muslims with violent means as well as fighting non-believers. Still 8% believe it is right to build an Islamic State in the Middle East via war and 4% agree that terrorist attacks are acceptable means to reach one’s objectives if needed. In total, approximately every ninth Muslim teenager shows attitudes that fit the definition of Islamic extremism.38 While the respondents may not actually engage in extremist activities, the survey demonstrates their level of sympathies with Jihadist activities. Such radicalisation severely affects the young Muslims’ integration into mainstream society and provides ground for further radicalisation and growth of Jihadist groups.

The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution reports an ongoing enhanced threat situation regarding the Jihadist scene, with no indications for a relaxation of the situation in the near future. Particularly terrorist groups’ calls for attacks with light weaponry appealing to radicalised individuals continue to pose a concrete threat.39

Islamist Actors in Germany

Unlike tolerant Islamic groups, Islamist organisations seek to expand their political and societal influence to implant principles of Islamic religious law into common law or secular law. The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution identifies and observes several Islamist associations active in Germany.40 The particular Islamist groups are part of a specific German landscape of Islamic associations. This landscape is fragmented, reaching from independent Mosque communities to regional networks up to national Islamic associations.41 It is estimated that around 70% of all Islamic prayer rooms and mosques are organised in regional or national associations.42

To further increase the claim of representation, several associations join together into umbrella organisations. The largest one of these is the Sunni-dominated Coordinating Council of Muslims in Germany (KRM), which incorporates four major Islamic associations: the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB), the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD), the Islamic Council for Germany (IR) and the Association of Islamic Cultural Centres (VKIZ). The ZMD and the IR are in themselves umbrella organisations for various other Muslim associations, including known Islamist organisations. The largest member of the IR is one of the most influential Turkish Islamist organisations in Germany: the Islamic Community Millî Görüş e.V. (IGMG).43 The ZMD incorporates several smaller Islamist organisations such as the Muslim Brotherhood affiliated Islamic Community Germany (IGD) and the Islamic Center Hamburg (IZH). IZH is as well a member of the Islamic Association of Shiite Congregations in Germany (IGS), a main umbrella organisation for Shiite Muslims living in Germany.44

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37 Puschnerat, “Zur Bedeutung ideologischer und sozialer Faktoren in islamistischen Radikalisierungsprozessen – eine Skizze”.
40 German Ministry of Interior, Building and Community, “Verfassungsschutzbericht 2017”.
42 “Islamische Verbände in Deutschland”, Mediendienst-Integration, September 2018.
Islamism includes theories and practices based on the desire to implant principles of Islamic religious law into common law or secular law and thus effectively turn the politics of a particular state into Islamic politics.
There are various associations in Germany following distinct interpretations of Islam, with some of them serving as representatives for different Islamist groups, movements or states.45 Several international Islamist organisations are active in Germany to recruit new members and collect donations. Hizb ut-Tahrir is an international Islamist organisation striving for a worldwide caliphate. Even though the organisation is prohibited from acting publicly in Germany, its members are said to conduct recruitment activities underground. Furthermore, the Islamist initiatives “Generation Islam” and “Realität Islam”, which are closely associated with the HuT, are still active in Germany.46 Other international Islamist organisations in Germany include the transnational mass movement “Tablighi Jama’at” urging for an Islamist State and rejecting secularisation, the organisation called “Turkish Hizbullah” which strives for an Islamic State in Turkey and its global expansion, and the better-known Lebanese Hezbollah, which openly denies Israel’s right to exist. All of these organisations have sub-groups in Germany to foster their organisational and ideological platform.47 Some organisations go beyond recruitment and actively engage in German politics. They typically present themselves as main representatives of the Muslim community in Germany.48 One of the largest of these is the IGMG, which is primarily active in the Turkish minority population and is estimated to have around 30,000 members nationwide.49 Besides 323 mosques located in Germany, the IGMG maintains various Islamic centres for the youth, students, women and communities.50 The organisation portrays itself as integrative and based on the German democratic and liberal basic order. At its webpage, the IGMG claims to strive for social harmony in Germany. However, this contradicts the organisation’s view that ‘living Islam’ embodies the ability to lead one’s lifestyle, in its entirety, according to the Quran and the Sunnah irrespective of borders and different cultural spheres.51 Such an absolutist view of religious rule may be irreconcilable with the German constitution and liberal democratic order and relativize rights and national laws in Germany.52 Several aspects show the IGMG’s narrow view on Islam. In its monthly magazine “Perspektif” for example, the term ‘liberal Islam’ is described as an artificial, empty phrase full of question marks. Regarding what is ‘proper for women’, the IGMG follows the interpretation of Islam which demands certain behaviour and dress regulations. The organisation brands the wearing of headscarves as a necessary component of identity and renders it obligatory.53 The IGMG originated within the international Milli Görüş movement. The movement was founded in the 1960s by the Turkish politician Necmettin Erbakan. For Erbakan, the world is divided into the religious-Islamic order and the Western order of violence and oppression, which must be replaced. The view of a worldwide “Islamic just order” is incompatible with the German liberal and democratic basic order and dismisses the principles of division of power, rule of law and democracy.54 After Erbakan’s death in 2011, parts of the IGMG leadership gradually disengaged from the movement, creating regional differences regarding the

45 German Ministry of Interior, Building and Community, “Verfassungsschutzbericht 2017”.
46 The Islamist initiatives Generation Islam and Realität Islam spread HuT related content and engage in political campaigns, mostly via social media with up to 65,000 followers. Whereas only 300 people are assumed to belong to the direct environment of Realität Islam, mobilization capacity is higher online. The Hessen State Office for the Protection of the Constitution further ascribes it “a high Islamist radicalisation potential”. For more information see "Radikal-islamische Gruppe agiert von Mörfelden aus", Allgemeine Zeitung, accessed at https://www.allgemeine-zeitung.de/lokales/reihen/103356649, "Experten warnen vor zwei dubiosen Islam-Initiativen, die Muslime ködern", Huffington Post, accessed at https://www.huffingtonpost.de/entry/generation-und-realitat-islam-warum-experten-vor-den-initiativen-warnen_de_5adf2321e4b0df502a4f5371; among others.
47 German Ministry of Interior, Building and Community, “Verfassungsschutzbericht 2017”.
48 It is important to note that the most influential associations combined only represent up to 20% of the German Muslim Community. (see “Was deutsche Muslime wollen sollen”, Die Zeit, accessed at https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/religion/2019-09/islam/und-der-islam-in-der-deutschen-muslime-problemen). Furthermore, a recent court ruling of the Higher Regional Court for the Land of North Rhine Westphalia of November 2017 regarding the major Islamic umbrella associations IR and ZMD found the organisations not to be religious communities according to the German Constitution”. For more information see https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article170467075/Verbaende-scheitern-mit-Klage-auf-Islamunterricht.html.
52 Poschner, “Zur Bedeutung ideologischer und sozialer Faktoren in islamistischen Radikalisierungsprozessen – eine Skizz”.
53 Baden-Württemberg State Ministry of Interior, Digitalisation and Migration, ”Verfassungsschutzbericht 2017 Baden-Württemberg”.
54 Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior and Integration, “Verfassungsschutzbericht Bayern 2017”.
IGMG’s links to the Millî Görüş movement and an apparent increase in moderate membership.\(^55\) As a consequence of this development, various branches of the German Office for the Protection of the Constitution come to different assessments of the IGMG. Whereas several offices such as in Niedersachsen stopped the observation of the IGMG\(^56\), others like the Office Baden-Württemberg stress the ongoing relevance of the Erbakan-ideology and the IGMG’s clear link to the anti-western “Saadet Partisi” Party, which serves as the political arm of the Millî Görüş movement.\(^57\) In 2013, leading IGMG officials helped the SP to establish its own structures in Germany. Thereby, the SP’s political program follows Erbakan’s ideology. Its anti-Western course and support of a society based on Islamic legal norms are openly practised. Due to the IGMG and the SP acting side by side in Germany and wider Europe, the Baden-Württemberg State Office for the Protection of the Constitution suspects them of having conducted a tactical division while sharing similar objectives. The Office doubts any credible estrangement of the IGMG from the original aims of the Millî Görüş movement and its anti-Western values.\(^58\) These strongly differing assessments highlight the importance of increased cooperation between the State Offices. It would be irresponsible to dismiss any influence and movements of IGMG across regions and the various states in Germany. Treating the same organisation as harmless in one state and hostile in another reveals a concerning incongruence, which can be exploited by the organisation.\(^59\)

A second influential Islamist organisation is the IGD. The IGD is considered to embody an unofficial German representation of the Muslim Brotherhood\(^60\), being the central organisation for Muslim Brotherhood followers in Germany with some 340 members.\(^61\)

Openly, the IGD avoids declaring their affiliation to the Muslim Brotherhood or anti-constitutional statements during public events.\(^62\) According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution however, the IGD internally follows the Muslim Brotherhood ideology and has clear links to the wider movement.\(^63\) Speakers and guest imams in various IGD events show strong connections to the Muslim Brotherhood.\(^64\) One of the IGD’s Islamic Centres in Saxony is led by Dr. Saad Elgezar. Elgezar openly considers himself as part of the Muslim Brotherhood. He further serves as the director of the Marwa Elsherbiny Cultural Centre in Dresden (MKBD). During the Germany-wide event “Open Day at the Mosque” in 2016 Elgezar and other MKBD members provided publications in its facilities promoting the suppression of women and the killing of renegades from Islam. The IGD’s claims to be apolitical and affirm to the German democratic and liberal order are thus in question.\(^65\)

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\(^{55}\) German Ministry of Interior, Building and Community, “Verfassungsschutzbericht 2017”.

\(^{56}\) Niedersachsen State Ministry of the Interior and Sports, “Verfassungsschutzbericht 2016 Niedersachsen”.

\(^{57}\) Baden-Württemberg State Ministry of Interior, Digitalisation and Migration, “Verfassungsschutzbericht 2017 Baden-Württemberg”.

\(^{58}\) Ibid.

\(^{59}\) Since the terror attacks of the right-wing extremist National Socialist Underground (NSU) in Germany in 2011, a new law was enacted for reforming the Office for the Protection of the Constitution. The centralised position of the Federal Office will be strengthened and the information flow among all relevant State Offices increased by a common information system called NADIS. (see Bundesgesetzblatt Jahrgang 2015 Teil Nr. 45, “Gesetz zur Verbesserung der Zusammenarbeit im Bereich des Verfassungsschutzes”, November 17\(^{\text{th}}\), 2015.). Nevertheless, there are still 16 different State Offices plus the Federal Office for Protection of the Constitution and the Military counterintelligence working side by side in Germany. The debate about a further centralisation is ongoing. (see “Länder-Rebellion gegen Maailiens Machtherrschaft”, Welt; March 2018 accessed at https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article174252529/Geheimeimperio-Verfassungsschützer-wehren-sich-gegen-Zentralisierung.html; “Schluss mit dem Wirrwarr beim Verfassungsschutz”, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2017, accessed at https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/innenpolitik/schluss-mit-dem-wirrwarr-beim-verfassungsschutz-1.3319662; among others.)

\(^{60}\) The Muslim Brotherhood, as all Islamist organisations, considers Islam as encompassing all areas of life, including the political and societal order. The movement opposes secularisation, considers Quran as the constitution and understands Jihad as their path. For more information see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim_Brotherhood

\(^{61}\) Sachsen State Office for the Protection of the Constitution, “Legalistischer Islamismus auf Expansionskurs in Sachsen - Die Sächsische Begegnungsstätte und ihre Verbindungen zur Muslimbruderschaft.”

\(^{62}\) Ibid.

\(^{63}\) German Ministry of Interior, Building and Community, “Verfassungsschutzbericht 2017”.

\(^{64}\) Baden-Württemberg State Ministry of Interior, Digitalisation and Migration, “Verfassungsschutzbericht 2017 Baden-Württemberg”.

\(^{65}\) Sachsen State Office for the Protection of the Constitution, “Legalistischer Islamismus auf Expansionskurs in Sachsen - Die Sächsische Begegnungsstätte und ihre Verbindungen zur Muslimbruderschaft.”
Iran also appears to have made attempts to expand its influence on Shiites living in Germany through several Islamic centres and organisations run by loyal Iranians. The largest and most influential of these is the IZH. Its leader is seen as the representative of Iran’s Supreme Leader in Germany. The IZH is under observation of the Federal as well as the Hamburg Office for the Protection of the Constitution. In 2017 and 2018, leading IZH members joined the anti-Semitic and anti-Israel demonstration in Berlin. At the same time, the organisation is a member of the national umbrella organisations ZMD and IGS, as well as leading member of the Hamburg-based umbrella association SCHURA. It thus enjoys close contact to Hamburg politics. The SCHURA and Hamburg signed a state-contract which, among other things, allows the SCHURA to actively participate in the design of religious education at school.

The Turkish-dominated umbrella organisation DITIB could also fall into the category of Islamist actors, as it follows a clear political agenda as the Turkish President Erdogan’s political arm in Germany. The DITIB enjoys far-reaching influence, with 950 mosques in Germany and over 960 formally independent member associations. Imams preaching in the mosques are sent and paid from Ankara, usually for a period of around five years. The political influence from Turkey became particularly visible through an espionage-scare. Several imams followed the request to collect information about members of the Gülen-movement living in Germany in 2016 for the Turkish Secret Service. Even prior to the spying scandal, the DITIB was known for its views reflecting Erdogan’s ideology and was accused of promoting a disintegrative discourse in Germany, spreading hatred against other religions or atheists and producing anti-democratic statements. Despite this, the organisation received official state funding from Germany until 2017, among other projects for the program “live democracy”. Furthermore, the DITIB is under reasonable suspicion for anti-constitutional behaviour. According to media reports, the Federal Office for Protection of the Constitution is currently checking a potential observation of the organisation. The IGMG and the IGD are already observed by the Federal and various State Offices for Protection of the Constitution and recognised as posing an extremist threat.

Despite awareness in the security and political sphere about the challenges and threats posed by Islamist organisations, the above organisations are often given a platform by official institutions and political representatives. Perhaps most concerningly, the DITIB, the IGMG and the ZMD (including the IGD and the IZH) are participants of the German Islamic Conference (DIK). The DIK serves as a major platform for dialogue between representatives of the German state and Muslims in Germany and is hosted by the German Federal Ministry of Interior. The underrepresentation of liberal Muslims within the prior format of the DIK was however widely criticised. Therefore, this year’s DIK in November incorporated also smaller, more liberal and moderate Muslim initiatives, experts and academics next to the known umbrella associations. The increasing wariness of the influence of known Islamist organisation is further reflected in the new format of the DIK. Instead of fixed working groups and permanent memberships of certain organisations including the DITIB, IGMG and ZMD in prior conferences, the DIK now follows a flexible format depending on the various topics.

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66 German Ministry of Interior, Building and Community, “Verfassungsschutzbericht 2017”.
In his opening speech, the current Minister of Interior Horst Seehofer addressed the challenge of how Muslim religious communities can organise themselves in compliance with the requirements of the religious constitutional law for a cooperation with the state, so that warnings of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution can be overcome. At the same time however, DITIB, IGMG and ZMD including its Islamist subgroups still remain major participants.

Similarly, the DITIB, the IGS and the ZMD were asked to join a governmental project to establish a certified study program in Germany for Islamic Theology that would educate a new generation of imams promoting tolerant interpretations of Islam. The Islamist and conservative associations constituted the working group establishing the new study program and were promised major positions in the future advisory board of the program. The project was interrupted in early 2018 because several Islamic associations cancelled their support. The first was the DITIB, for not having a veto power over decisions being made. In summer 2018 a cooperation contract between the Humboldt University and three remaining associations, including the ZMD and the IGS, was signed, paving the way for the establishment of the program.

Such influence is deeply concerning. The voices of liberal and tolerant Muslims are less well heard in a landscape where Islamist groups are well organised and part of key inter-organisational projects. Moreover, it legitimises the organisations’ disintegrative behaviour and anti-constitutional ideology. According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, officials and supporters of legalistic Islamist organisations in Germany follow the main objective “to obtain complete and permanent freedom for their members to live their lives in accordance with sharia. This, however, may lead to the development of parallel societies, which hinder integration. It is also possible that legalist Muslims promote the further radicalisation of (young) Muslims.”

Under the influence of Islamist organisations, Islamic milieus can develop into gated communities often referred to as parallel societies, which follow a way of life and legal order divorced from the wider German society. Islamist organisations develop parallel institutions for education and free-time activities, expand own economic and working areas and create room for applying Islamic jurisdiction besides state laws for their members.
Parallel jurisdiction is a closely related factor to parallel societies. Private mediations and arbitrations are not per se illegal, as extrajudicial resolution is permitted by law. Religious authorities, heads of clan families or private actors are thus approached for their perceived legitimacy and moral integrity to issue rulings based on informal religious jurisdiction. Measures are thereby carried out based on the Sharia and without the involvement of official German institutions. This practice may be in conflict with a ruling of the German Federal Supreme Court, which pointed out that freedom of religion does not incorporate the right to fully autonomous dealing with individual rights, family and inheritance law independently of German law. There is a danger that community members and particularly women can face discrimination when Islamic fundamentalist interpretations of the Sharia are applied.

The influence and provided legitimacy of known Islamist organizations in Germany undermines tolerant Muslim voices, negatively affects the Muslim community in Germany and poses a long-term socio-political problem for Germany and its societal cohesion.

Islamic Fundamentalist Actors in Germany

Islamic fundamentalism is typically the least visible type of Islamic extremism, as its adherents do not follow a political agenda and often remain unorganised. As a result, Islamic fundamentalists tend to fall out of the scope of public awareness, despite their role in suppressing basic human rights in the communities they live in.

One example is the district New Cologne in Berlin, which is reported to suffer problems from wide spread fundamentalism. Local rabbis have warned their communities not to wear the kippah in Muslim-dominated districts, and homosexual men are better off to not publicly display their sexuality.

But also the Muslim community itself is affected. One of the more visible problematic with fundamentalist lifestyles concerns religious marriages. The German state distinguishes between civil and religious marriages. It is estimated that around 40% of all Muslim marriages in Berlin occur on a purely religious basis, even though a purely religious marriage is not considered legally valid and is not subject to legal consequences in Germany. This creates opportunities for circumventing prohibitions regarding forced, child and polygamous marriages. An estimated 20 to 30 % of Arab men in Berlin have for example a second wife. In the case of polygamy, the first wife is typically duly registered, while the second and third wives are registered as single mothers, and are thereby even granted financial support by the state. At times, the first or second wives are not aware of further existing religious marriages.

Furthermore, due to the lack of legal recognition of purely religious marriages in Germany, religious authorities are the only option for Muslim women to seek a divorce. If those authorities follow a fundamentalist interpretation of the Sharia, women can face discrimination.

Forced marriages serve as another vivid example. Since forced marriages are rarely made public or reach

German institutions, it is not possible to accurately assess how many occur. However, several associations offering counselling for forced marriages reported 3,443 cases of counselling in 2008, a majority of which were having an Islamic background and 30% having been child marriages. Given the high unreported and uncounseled amount of cases, the number demonstrates forced marriages to still be a reality in Germany. Given the changing demographics of German society, an updated picture of the situation is needed.

Various community members, non-governmental organizations and state officials claim social pressure within fundamentalist communities to be a main issue. In patriarchal societies and “the culture of shame”, conflicts are dealt with internally and the protective role of the state is often neglected. Women are often uninformed or misinformed about their rights and perceive religious authorities as the only possible arbiters. Many of the reported cases appear to involve domestic violence or disregard for family obligations on part of the husband. Some cases of forced behaviour of women through family pressure were publicised, particularly cases of so-called honour killings. One of the most public cases concerned the murder of Hatun Sürücü by her brother. The 23-year-old woman sought an independent life free from her family’s pressure, such as being forced to marry her cousin or wear the headscarf. By killing her, her brother intended to regain the honour of the family. An online archive documenting reported cases in Germany claims 48 honour killings and 42 intents in 2017. Honour killings are however often not documented, since they are portrayed as accidents or suicides with the rest of the family keeping quiet. The actual amount of cases is thus considered to be higher and symptomatic of a wider problem with Islamic fundamentalism.

The lack of data about religiously-inspired law obstruction and the suppression of basic individual rights is concerning. Studies investigating potential pressure on women to follow perceived Islamic practices, wear the headscarf or get married barely exist. The lack of knowledge and data about Islamic fundamentalism hinders the state and civil society in efficiently addressing the problem and should be rectified as soon as possible, lest it erodes the state’s legitimacy as a protector of its citizens and their basic rights.

87 Ibid.
90 “Mordfall Sürücü: Bis heute keine Reue”, DW, 2017, accessed at https://www.welt.de/de/mordfall-s%C3%BCr%C3%BCc%C3%BC-bis-heute-keine-reue/a-39047911.
92 For more information about forced and child marriages in Germany see Anne Marijke Trenczek, “Muslimische Kinderehen in Deutschland”, in: GISCA Occasional Paper Series, No. 19, Göttingen, 2017. The study “Muslimische Kinder und Jugendliche in Deutschland”, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2011, looks into gender specific family education and peer pressure on children and teenagers with a Turkish or Arabic background in Germany. The study points out the concept of honour which in the orthodox understanding includes the control by men of the sexuality of the females within their closer circle. Further, the question about headscarfs is widely debated in Germany. Few studies such as “Das Kopftuch – Entschleierung eines Symbols?”, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2006, interviewed Muslim women. It is stressed that most often, Muslim women wear the headscarf out of free will - specific data on women experiencing social pressure and harm for not wearing the headscarf cannot be found. For registered cases of domestic violence see German Federal Criminal Police Office, “Partnerschaftsgewalt”, Crime statistics 2016. The report reveals a high percentage of cases committed by Turkish and Syrian men.
POLICY MEASURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The situation in Germany regarding Islamic extremism reveals a concerning influence of Islamist actors and a dangerous underestimation of Islamic fundamentalists. Problems related to Islamic fundamentalism in particular do not receive enough attention in the security, political and civil society sectors. Both violent and non-violent forms of Islamic Extremism threaten the liberal democratic basic order in Germany and lead to violations of basic civil rights.

Looking at possible improvements to existing practice to counter Islamic extremism, several policy recommendations are suggested:

1. **Adopt a comprehensive conceptualisation of Islamic extremism, including non-violent Islamic extremism.** Multiple push and pull factors play a role in radicalisation and mobilisation to extremism, and all should be addressed. However, particular attention should be paid to the ideology behind Islamic extremism, as it typically functions as an enabling force for other radicalising factors to take effect. Islamic extremism is conceptualised as encompassing Islamism, Jihadism as well as Islamic fundamentalism, and thus serves as a meta-descraptor of the wider threat. Failing to respond to any one of the three elements of Islamic extremism would undermine the effectiveness of the entire strategy. This calls for an expansion of focus from what is often referred to as ‘violent extremism’ to include even non-violent political forms of Islamic extremism (Islamism) and non-political forms of Islamic extremism (Islamic fundamentalism), which often serve as a stepping stone and platform for the violent form (Jihadism). Violent extremism is only the tip of the iceberg, the most visible part of a wider threat which must be tackled in its entirety.

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

3. **Diligently monitor Islamic extremist actors and raise public knowledge about the extent of their advancement.** The Federal and State Offices for the Protection of the Constitution monitor a number of Jihadist and Islamist groups, although there is a question whether all Islamist and Islamic fundamentalist groups are monitored in proportion to the threat they pose to society. Thereby strong cooperation and exchange among the various offices is essential. Furthermore, the intelligence community’s findings must be followed by proactive measures aimed at increasing public knowledge about the type of Islamic extremism at hand, the symbols and other content characteristic of it, the populations which are at risk of exploitation by extremists and the network of sympathisers which may aid extremist activities. At the same time, identified Islamic extremist actors must be deprived of all official legitimacy and political influence.

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

5. Build a federal strategy against Islamic extremism. Existing efforts in this field should take the form of a long-term, comprehensive strategy. This could take the form of a strategy specifically aimed at Islamic extremism, or one tackling the broader issue of extremism as such. A national counter-extremism strategy should make clear which areas are broadly relevant and which are specific for countering Islamic extremism and identify a clear leadership structure for counter-extremism matters. Counter-extremism roles and responsibilities of governmental departments and partners should be clearly defined.
CONCLUSION

The paper outlined the current situation in Germany with regard to Islamic extremism. The above conceptualisation and assessment, and the enclosed policy recommendations, should serve to open the discussion about aspects of Islamic extremism which hitherto gained only little attention in the German debate.

The presented conceptualisation addresses Islamic extremism in its entirety, including in its non-violent and non-political manifestations. Islamic extremism does not end with terrorism, but also includes non-violent activities of both political and non-political varieties. These should also be addressed.

The fight against Islamic extremism must become an integral part of counter-extremism in Germany and the wider EU. Germany would do well to improve both federal and international counter-extremism coordination, as well as to enhance its strategic communication capacities to prevent the growth of anti-Muslim hatred.

At the same time, the public debate about the issue must be open and pragmatic. It is necessary to recognise Islamic extremism for what it is: a broad threat against the lives of civilians as well as the democratic rule of law and basic human rights.