

**Creating Peaceful Societies by Countering the Phenomenon of  
Reactive Co-Radicalization**

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Published

2022

Book Title

Peace Education and Religion: Perspectives, Pedagogy, Policies

Version

Accepted Manuscript (AM)

DOI

[10.1007/978-3-658-36984-2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-36984-2)

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# Creating Peaceful Societies by Countering the Phenomenon of Reactive Co-Radicalisation

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**Pre-peer review draft - PUBLISHED VERSION HERE-** Duderija, A. (2022).

Creating Peaceful Societies by Countering the Phenomenon of Reactive Co-Radicalization. In: Hermansen, M., Aslan, E., Erşan Akkılıç, E. (eds) Peace Education and Religion: Perspectives, Pedagogy, Policies. Wiener Beiträge zur Islamforschung. Springer VS, Wiesbaden.

[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-36984-2\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-36984-2_9)

In this chapter I explore the phenomenon of reactive co-radicalisation (RCR) in form of Islamist vs. Right-Wing radicalism and offer *heuristic* and to a lesser extent *theoretical* insight into how this phenomenon can be countered through deconstructing fundamentalist mindsets, affirming the of ideas of civilizational hybridity and religious pluralism that can contribute to peaceful conflict resolution and deradicalization efforts.

## Introduction:

In the context of discussing the relationship between what here are termed Islamist<sup>1</sup> and Right-Wing radicalism several recent studies have referred to the phenomenon of reactive or

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<sup>1</sup> Due to space concerns I am unable to enter into the definitional aspects of terms used in this paper in any depth and will use the terms Islamist radicalism and Islamism interchangeably, Right-Wing and Extreme-Right interchangeably and radicalisation and extremism interchangeably. This is especially so given that I provide concrete examples of what I mean by both Islamist and Right-Wing extremism in the form of case studies of ISIS and Breivik/Tarrant propaganda materials/ manifestos. It is hoped that this will not affect the conceptual clarity of the central arguments and concepts the paper address significantly. The definitional problems with all of these terms have been discussed at length in the relevant literature. In relation to the concept of radicalisation see, for example, Bjorgo Tore and Ravndal Jacob Aasland, "Extreme Right Violence and Terrorism: Concepts,

reciprocal radicalisation (Esposito and Derya 2019; Ebner 2017; Abbas 2019, 97-106), elsewhere also termed ‘reactive co-radicalisation’ (Pratt 2018). In the same literature, it has also been argued that the basic underlying processes of reciprocal radicalisation and the binary worldview underpinning them are remarkably similar insofar that both : i.) have “deep roots in bias and discrimination, xenophobia and racism” ( Esposito and Derya 2019, p.2; Ebner 2017, p.198) ; ii.) are premised on “Fear of the ‘other’, of difference and diversity” ( Pratt 2018, 121) and iii.) thrive in the context of the climate of distrust ( Ebner 2017) .

This chapter aims to provide a *heuristic* that sheds light on the processes underpinning reactive co-radicalisation and challenge /counter the mutually reinforcing Right-Wing and Islamist radicalist worldviews through the combination of:

- affirming the idea of the civilisationally hybrid nature of civilizational relationship between the Arabo-Islamic and Western Christian civilisations
- a theoretical prism of the “phenomenon of fundamentalism’ as theorised by Pratt (2018) and
- discussion of Cornille’s conditions for constructive interfaith dialogue as anti-dote to “phenomenon of fundamentalism” (Pratt 2018).

I start by providing a brief overview of the nature of the phenomenon of RCR in the form of Islamist and Right-Wing radicalism.

### **Defining Reciprocal Radicalisation/Reactive Co-Radialisation (RCR):**

As noted by Ebner the analysis of terrorist attacks that have taken place in various parts of the Western world from 2012-2016 as, for example, collected by the Global Data on Terrorism

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Patterns and Responses" (ICCT Policy Brief, September 2019, <https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Extreme-Right-Violence-and-Terrorism-Concepts-Patterns-and-Responses.pdf>).

strongly indicates that there is a direct correlation between the Right-Wing and Islamist terrorist activity (2017, 152-153).<sup>2</sup> This process has been variously defined as reactive or reciprocal radicalisation (Esposito and Derya 2016; Ebner 2017). Ebner describes reactive radicalisation as a process whereby “far-right and Islamist extremists react to each other’s rhetoric and actions, creating a vicious circle of hate that often translates into violence” (2017, 195). Furthermore, Ebner highlights the “symbiotic relationship” element of this dynamic between the two groups in two specific respects, namely in terms of their mutually reinforcing narratives and mutually reinforcing actions that “provoke each other into more radical retaliation” leading to “an unwitting cooperation of ever-escalating extremes” (Ibid, 155). Pratt who terms this process “reactive co-radicalisation” defines it as follows:

By this I mean the phenomenon whereby, it would seem, the awareness by one party that another is fomenting a threatening extremism then precipitates, within the first party, a reactive move in the direction of a like radicalization even though, paradoxically, the perceived initial extremism of the second party is eschewed and denounced (2018, 121).

Given that Right-Wing and Islamist radicals often feed off and reinforce each other’s ideologies the basic premise of this chapter is that the best solutions to the problem of reactive co-radicalisation should aim to counter both simultaneously. How can this be achieved? What useful theoretical and heuristic insights can help counter RCR in the form of Islamist and Right-Wing extremism?

Ebner identifies the possible answers to this question by highlighting , among others, the need for stakeholders to “challenge[ing] the binary worldviews adhered to both sides” and

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<sup>2</sup> This is not to suggest that there is always a direct correlation and that all terrorist attacks come under the RCR category. It also does not suggest that there is a kind of equivalence or blame that can be attributed as a justification for resorting to terrorism by either side.

engender “a stronger sense of collective identity that reunites rather than divides our [multicultural] societies” through “adopting new, innovative approaches to politics, education, communication and activism” (2017, 198). Given that both Right-Wing and Islamic radicalism, as detailed below, are premised on, among others, the theories of strong civilizational distinctiveness, purity and incompatibility, one way to put Ebner’s recommendations into practice is to problematise the very idea of western/ Christian civilisation as something opposite to or alien to the Islamic civilisation. In order to do so, this chapter identifies and discusses the scholarship which argues in favour of civilizational hybridity as both a historical reality characterising the nature of the ‘western civilisation’ and its relationship with the Arabo-Islamic.

What additional conceptual/theoretical tools can be useful in countering RCR in form of Islamist and Right-Wing extremism?

Pratt, in the context of discussing religiously inspired extremism/radicalism suggests that strengthening the religions’ capacity to accommodate pluralism and diversity is an important component in creating peaceful co-existence and undermining processes at play in RCR. In this respect he avers:

The capacity for peaceful coexistence in a context of mutual acceptance and respect is premised on the capacity to assert some form of pluralism: to affirm diversity. Hence the possibility that religions may counter religious extremism via the route of affirming religious diversity is something that needs to be explored further and actively promoted. (2018, 158).

Islamist supremacism, extremism and terrorism in particular are *justified* in religious and theological terms ( Dawson 2017; Dawson 2018; Duderija 2018; Duderija 2019). As such to

counter its influence in one part of this chapter the theoretical work by Pratt (2018) on the link between religious fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism in challenging the worldview underpinning the Islamist side of the reactive co-radicalization equation is employed.

Finally, since both Right-Wing and Islamist radicalism can be conceptualised as manifestations of a “fundamentalist” mindset or worldview that rejects pluralism and diversity (Pratt 2018), I will utilise Cornille’s (2013) theoretical work on the constructive conditions for interfaith dialogue and demonstrate how it can be employed to counter this element of RCR.

In order to counter the worldviews underpinning Islamist and Right-Wing extremism we need to first provide a brief discussion of *master concepts* and *narratives* that feature prominently in the writings of those who best exemplify them. That is the task of the next two sections. In the case of Right-Wing extremism, I focus on the manifestos of two recent perpetrators of Right-Wing terrorism, Breivik and Tarrant. This is followed by an analysis of the Dabiq magazine, one of the so-called Islamic State’s official publications.

## **PART ONE: Drivers of Reactive Co-Radicalisation -The Worldview Underpinning Right-Wing Radicalism: Breivik and Tarrant as Case Studies**

As aptly discussed by Delanty (2019) it is impossible to outline the contours and characteristics behind the historical and intellectual relationship between western-European and Arabo-Islamic “intercivilisational constellations’ in a straightforward and continuous manner. Delanty, in fact, identifies three “modes” of western-European ways of relating to “Islam”, namely the mode of fear and xenophobia; the mode of fantasy and moral superiority; and lastly, the mode of “of borrowing, translation and adaptation.” Delanty argues further that

each of these “modes” have been co-present at various points in time at varying levels of prominence and prevalence (Ibid, 94).

The worldview underpinning Right-Wing radical groups centres squarely onto the first mode, that of fear and xenophobia and completely discards the third mode which here I will term civilizational hybridity. As noted by Hellyer, this fear is not simply to be conceptualised in terms of non-Muslim westerners’ security concerns from potential terrorist violence perpetrated by minority (immigrant) Muslims. It is a fear that runs much deeper and pertains to the question regarding “the essential nature of European culture, and what role the Muslim presence is likely to play in it” (Hellyer 2010, 3). This fear has been described elsewhere as fear of Eurabia and/or Islamisation of the West/Europe (Bangstad 2014).

These xenophobic and essentialist concepts and ideas feature prominently in the manifestos written by Right-Wing terrorist Breivik and more recently Tarrant, the perpetrators of terrorist attacks in Norway in 2011 and New Zealand 2018, respectively. I now turn to identifying and *briefly* discussing the main ideas, master narratives/concepts underpinning their ideologies with *specific reference* to what can be termed civilizational and religious essentialism and othering as a hallmark of Right-Wing radicalism.

As discussed at length by Bangstad, Breivik’s manifesto *2083 A European Declaration of Independence* “constitutes an ideology that clearly and identifiably locates itself on the extreme Right-Wing of the ideological spectrum”( 2011, 76-77). Pantucci’s (2011) analysis of Breivik’s ideology as outlined his manifesto has shown that it single-mindedly centres on the fears of Islamisation of the West/Europe and the gradual dominance of (western) Muslims over the Christian West. Furthermore, Pantucci argues that, broadly speaking, Breivik is concerned with “defending European identity” against Islam and is “captivated by the global clash of cultures and ideologies” (2011, 31) between the Christian West and Islam.

Breivik's beliefs have been described as culturally Christian (Pratt 2018, 125; Bangstad, 2014, 97) and this is how he describes himself in his declaration (Breivik 2011, 1361). Furthermore, Breivik, calls for a revival of a muscular form of pre-reformation Christianity as "the only cultural platform that can unite all Europeans" to fend off, in his view, the existential threat that European Christendom is facing from Islam (Ibid,1361).

Right-Wing radicals' worldview is also premised on a highly politicised and totalising picture of Islam and Muslims. According to this view, Islam is an irredeemably totalitarian ideology seeking world domination at every and any cost and is engaged in a permanent civilizational war with Europe and Christendom (Bangstad 2014, 96). The following description of Breivik's *manifesto* gives us a very good insight into this element underpinning the worldview of Right-Wing radicals:

...the underlying ideological logic expressed in it is clear and terrifying enough. In short, it describes an ongoing 'Islamization of Europe', which forms part of a constant 1,400-year war between Christendom and Islam, the political and social elites of Europe (the 'cultural Marxists' and the 'multicultural/ist alliance') which have entered into a 'devil's pact' with the enemy leading to the impending establishment of a Eurabia dominated and governed by Muslims."(Bangstad 2014, 72)

Disdain for multiculturalism and pluralism as avenues of Trojan Horse-like Islamic takeover of Europe is also an important master narrative underpinning the ideology of Right-Wing extremism. For example, Breivik singles out multiculturalism as the "root cause of the ongoing Islamisation of Europe which has resulted in the ongoing Islamic colonisation of Europe through demographic warfare" that is consciously and willingly endorsed and

promoted by European political leadership and elite (Breivik 2014, 9). For Breivik, multiculturalism, is “an ideology bent on the destruction of Western Civilisation and the indirect genocide of Europeans.” (Ibid, 816). As such, according to Breivik, it is impossible to “defeat Islamisation or halt/reverse the Islamic colonization of Western Europe without first removing the political doctrines manifested through multiculturalism /cultural Marxism that “has laid the foundation for the Islamisation of Europe” (Ibid,5).

Tarrant in his manifesto “The Great Replacement”, essentially names Breivik as a fellow “partisan/freedom fighter/ethno-soldier”. Tarrant endorses Breivik’s ideas fully and considers his own actions as directly inspired by Breivik (2018, 18).

Tarrant’s motivations for his actions are embedded with reference to similar narratives and motifs that can be termed Civilisational Othering. For example, Tarrant makes reference to “Islamic invaders” (Tarrant 2018 ,7) and singles out the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, as an example of civilizational overhaul of the West by Muslims by making sarcastic reference to Sadiq as the current *Muslim* representative of *Londonium* (Ibid , 39).

With respect to Tarrant’s specific motivations behind his brutal terrorist attacks, the civilizational clash narrative features prominently. For example, in the following passage the motivation for attack is described as:

an anti-Islamic motivation to the attacks, as well as a want for revenge against Islam for the 1300 years of war and devastation that it has brought upon the people of the West and other peoples of the world. (Ibid ,13)

The rejection of the idea of civilizational hybridity is particularly evident by the fact that Tarrant’s hate is not directed at Muslims who live in “Muslim” lands but only at : i.) the “invading” immigrant Muslims in the West and ii.) particularly those westerners who have

converted to the Islamic fate because they “turn their backs on their heritage, turn their backs on their cultures, turn their back on their traditions and became blood traitors to their own race”(Ibid ,12).

In both cases briefly discussed above, it is clearly evident that the worldview underpinning Right-Wing terrorism is premised on ideas that reject any possibility of civilizational cross-pollination and emphasise the need to clearly delineate between the Christian Western and the Arabo-Islamic ones.

Now, with the same aim in mind, I turn to examining the worldview of Islamic extremists as the other side of the RCR coin.

### **Drivers of Reactive Co-Radicalisation-The Worldview of Islamist Radicals: The Case of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)**

The ample literature that has examined the worldview of Islamist radical groups such as ISIS paints a picture that , in many ways, provides a mirror image of what was outlined in the previous section with respect to Right-Wing extremist worldview with its emphasis on clear boundaries demarcating what can be termed civilizational Self-Other distinction ; frequent recourse to the violent episodes between Christendom and Islamic societies to justify their own beliefs and actions and a bipolar fundamentalist worldview premised on domination and non-negotiable absolutes. For example, Heck in his detailed discussion of ISIS literature has identified three main narratives that guide the worldview of ISIS and describes them in the following manner:

The first narrative draws on the claims that the West has subjugated Muslims and the Caliphate was founded to protect Muslims and to fight back Western dominance. This narrative claims that Muslims are ‘victims’ and therefore have the right to defend themselves. It draws on commonly known ‘fight against oppression’ and taking

revenge-logic to gain legitimacy. The second narrative reveals the religious supremacy of ISIS interpretation of Islam. As a result of this, ISIS establishes a totalitarian identity which separates humanity into ‘real Muslims’ who are followers of the Caliphate and the ‘others’ who are either infidels or apostates who deserve death if they refuse to bend over and pledge allegiance to the Caliph Al-Baghdadi. The third narrative is tightly interlinked with the second as it reveals ISIS aspiration for a global dominance due to the religious supremacy of Salafi-Jihadist Sunnis (2017, 244)

Similarly, Barton, in his thematic analysis of ISIS Dabiq magazine, detects, among others, a strong jihadist element in ISIS worldview that reveals their global project of domination and imposition of Shari’a onto the West that is described as “lost in sin and opposed to true religion” (2018, 157).

Toguslu’s (2018) examination of ISIS narratives of which he identifies seven main ones, identifies reference to Crusaders, jihad and hijra<sup>1</sup> as being the three of them that are most relevant to our discussion. Toguslu argues that the way the concept of Crusaders is employed in this literature suggests that this descriptor is premised on a worldview that envisages a permanent clash between Muslims and non-Muslims and presupposes the existence of very distinct and hostile entities, namely that of Islam and West. Furthermore, jihad is defined as an individual duty of all Muslims for all times and the necessity of migration (hijra) is premised on the clear division of the world into that of above of Islam and abode of war (Ibid, 6).

Rane and Mahood also emphasise the crusader element of ISIS worldview and provide one particularly striking reference from one of the ISIS official publications, Dabiq, ( Issue 7,3) making reference to the involvement of Germany in the effort against ISIS:

What is Germany's concern in this war except kufr and crusade? It is yet another crusade just like the former crusades led by Richard the Lionheart, Barbarossa of Germany, and Louis of France. Likewise, today, when Bush raised the cross, the crusader countries immediately scrambled (2017, 23).

Furthermore, Rane and Mahmood argue that the crusader narrative found in Dabiq is particularly aimed to exploit western Muslims "frustrations with discrimination and marginalisation" ( Ibid: 33), to entice them to migrate and join the caliphate by demonising the West and those who are considered to be supportive of its interests.

Similarly, Ingram's detailed analysis of ISIS literature reveals that concepts such as jahiliyya ("ignorance"<sup>ii</sup>) and jihad form important aspects of ISIS worldview that sharply divide not only between Muslims and non-Muslims but between 'true' Muslims and the so-called hypocrites or apostates (2016, 3-4). Importantly, Ingram's analysis of ISIS style of messaging is described as "dichotomy-reinforcing" and "dominance-enforcing" aiming to bifurcate the word into two monolithic opposites with the aim of "destruction or extinction of the 'grayzone' and demands that its readers 'choose to be from one of the two camps (Ibid,14).

Hence, like in the case of Right-Wing radicals, the master narratives underpinning the worldview of Islamist radicals are clearly antithetical to the ideas of civilizational hybridity and cross-pollination.

The respective worldviews of Islamist and Right-Wing extremists can also be characterised as fundamentalist, absolutist and uncompromising as shall be discussed below.

## **Drivers of Reactive Co-Radicalisation - Right-Wing and Islamic radicalisms as Species of “Phenomenon of Fundamentalism”**

As mentioned in the introduction to understand the processes behind RCR and how they can be countered this chapter also employs the theoretical insights regarding the relationship between (religious) fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism as discussed by Pratt (2018) as these insights can provide us with important conceptual vistas for a better understanding of the worldviews that underpin both forms of radicalism under examination.

Although Pratt’s theoretical approach to the “inherent logic” of fundamentalism and its link with extremism/radicalism<sup>iii</sup> is discussed primarily in reference to religious extremism, Pratt also demonstrates that his theoretical framework applies to any kind of “fundamentalism” (Pratt 2018, 39) and hence it is also applicable to not just Islamist but also Right -Wing extremism. In the following passage Pratt outlines his definition of fundamentalism in broad terms and its links to extremism and terrorism:

A fundamentalist perspective is inherently absolutist: all other relevant phenomena are simply explained on its terms, or viewed in a relativizing, even negating, way with reference to it. Fundamentalism, as a mindset, is a mentality that expresses the modern quest for universality and coherence writ large: only one truth, one authority, one authentic narrative that accounts for all, one right way to be... Fundamentalism may do little more than express an exclusive religious identity and worldview, and to that extent amounts to little more than a passive belief. On the other hand, it may also tend towards a more active, assertive, and even an extreme perspective which, under certain circumstances, leads to violence and terrorism (Ibid, 31-32).

Moreover, Pratt also outlines a theoretical framework that sequentially explains how fundamentalism *could*<sup>iv</sup> evolve into extremism and terrorism. This theoretical framework consists of three phases. The first phase is termed “passive fundamentalism”, the second “assertive fundamentalism” and the third “impositional fundamentalism”. Each of these phases has additional *features* (between 3-4 per phase) that are further subdivided into *factors* totalling twenty. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to go into depth in terms of explaining Right-Wing and Islamist extremism with reference to *all* of the factors. In what follows I shall *briefly* refer to what I consider to be the most relevant factors given the aims, nature and scope of his chapter.

In relation to passive fundamentalism phase Pratt includes “Perspectival Absolutism” as one of the factors that constitute this phase. As noted above, he defines “Perspectival Absolutism” as a mindset based on “only one truth, one authority, one right way to be” (Pratt 2018 ,40). This “Perspectival Absolutism” can be grounded in any type of text, political or religious. As we saw in the previous section, ISIS’ condemnation of all of those who do not subscribe to their understanding of Islam is a very good case in point of “Perspectival Absolutism” factor being operative. In the case of Right-Wing radicalism this mindset is evident, for example, in Breivik’s discussion of all forms of what he calls “European Islamic Negationism” and his unyielding conviction that his totalitarian understanding of Islam as an oppressive and supremacist ideology (“Islamofascism”) is the only ‘true’ Islam. In his manifesto he words it in the following manner:

As we have seen, contrary to the widespread insistence that true Islam is pacific even if a handful of its adherents are violent, the Islamic sources make clear that engaging in violence against non-Muslims is a central and indispensable principle to Islam.

Islam is less a personal faith than a political ideology that exists in a fundamental and permanent state of war with non-Islamic civilisations, cultures, and individuals...

Those cultures and individuals who do not submit to Islamic governance exist in an ipso facto state of rebellion with Allah and must be forcibly brought into submission.

The misbegotten term "Islamofascism" is wholly redundant: Islam itself is a kind of fascism that achieves its full and proper form only when it assumes the powers of the state ( Breivik 2014, 96-97).

In the second, *assertive* fundamentalism phase, "Perspectival Absolutism" evolves into what Pratt terms "Hard Factualism" that "tightens its own grip on what is knowable, and how what is knowable is known" (Pratt 2018, 42) and further reinforces what it considers to be the truth as based on a 'literalist' and apodictic approach to text. In the case of Islamist extremism "Hard Factualism" is, for example, evident in their insistence to be following the true Islam of the Prophet and his methodology (*manhaj*) (Duderija 2018; Colas 2017). In the case of Right-Wing radicalism, "Hard Factualism" is evident in the same quote provided above in the context of discussing "perspectival absolutism" that equates Islam with form of fascism, i.e. "Islamofascism" (Breivik 2014, 96-97) .

Moreover, as part of the *assertive* fundamentalism phase Pratt identifies "Ideological Exclusivism and Polity Inclusivism" as being one of its important features. He defines these factors as follows:

Ideological exclusivism refers to the reality that, for hard- line fundamentalism, no competing or variant ideological view is granted credibility. A fundamentalist perspective will exclude, virtually automatically, anything that relative to it appears 'liberal', anything that admits limitation, provisionality, otherness, openness or

promotes change or novelty. But alongside this exclusivity there may be discerned, as a twelfth factor to fundamentalism, form of inclusion, namely polity inclusion. This is the propensity to include, in respect of considerations of the policies and praxis, or social organization of a fundamentalist movement, all others that fall within its frame of reference and worldview (Pratt 2018, 43-44).

As noted in the previous section, one of the main narratives of Islamist radicalism is its opposition to all forms of “jahiliyya” which essentially applies to anyone who has not pledged their allegiance to its leader. This is an excellent example of “Ideological Exclusivism” as defined by Pratt. ISIS literature also has a strong element of “Polity Inclusivism with its repeated emphasis on brotherhood and sisterhood among the “believers” (Toguslu 2018; Heck 2017).

With respect to Right-Wing extremism, the operative logic behind “Polity Inclusivism” can be found in Tratton’s reference to the Knights of Templar as “brother knights” (Tratton 2018, 18) as are Breivik’s mentioning of the secret meeting between the Knights in London in 2002 and his reference to the “National and pan-European Patriotic Resistance Movement” in his manifesto ( Breivik 2011 ,9) . The logic of Ideological Exclusivism also permeates Right-Wing literature by identifying groups like Cultural Marxists, Leftists, Economic Liberalists, Rightist Traditionalists as the traitors and enemy (Breivik 2014, 49).

Importantly, Ideological Exclusivism and Polity Inclusivism are the springboard for assertive fundamentalism’s transition to activism leading to condemnatory and judgemental values aimed at anyone “who would dissent from within, or oppose from without” (Pratt 2018, 44). In the literature of Islamist radicals this takes form in accusations of hypocrisy and apostasy

of Muslims who do not subscribe to their worldview<sup>v</sup> and in case of Right-Wing radicals as accusation of treachery and political correctness (Breivik 2014, 49).

The next stage identified by Pratt is Impositional Fundamentalism. It is a form of assertive fundamentalism which “is now transformed, or has evolved, into something of a distinctly radicalized or activist nature such that extreme actions, including violent behaviours and even terrorism, may be contemplated, advocated and engaged in”(Pratt 2018, 45). This phase is characterised by claims of moral superiority, devaluing, dismissal and ultimately demonization of the Other that is now considered as an openly hostile Other. Furthermore, this attitude can evolve into imposition of fundamentalist views on all individuals and polity. Moreover, “Impositional Fundamentalism” can lead to the willingness of those in its grip to use violence in order to deal with any resistance to fundamentalists’ ideological dictates. Ultimately, it can lead to the enacting of terrorist acts (Pratt 2018, 45-47).

In the case of Right-Wing radicalism “Impositional Fundamentalism” related dynamics are particularly evident in Breivik’s assimilation policy plan which he issued in form of an ultimatum to be implemented in Europe by 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2020. In the policy he outlines the conditions under which “Muslims”, i.e. Ex-Muslims, are allowed to remain in Europe. These conditions are as follows : convert to any form of Christianity; change their names to European /Christian names; demolition or conversion of all mosques and Islamic centres ; total eradication of all traces of Islamic culture such as buildings and artworks; prohibition of any kind of Islamic festivities or markers of Muslimness ; birth restrictions to that of 2 children per couple ; no correspondence with Muslims living abroad including family members; and prohibition of any travel to a country that has 20 % of more Muslim population. The length of assimilation is stipulated to being no less than 50 years in duration. As a result of this assimilation policy, we are further told that ex-Muslims will prove their

allegiance and loyalty to their “ new kinsmen, to Europe and to Christianity” and, as a result, “will be accepted as a European” (Breivik 2011, 810).

The impositionally fundamentalist nature of this assimilationist policy is very hard to overlook and the threat of violence in it is implicit. Other evidence of Right-Wing extremist activity shows that they have crossed the violence threshold on many occasions. A look at the Global Terrorism Database informs us of hundreds of Right-Wing extremist terrorism attacks in Europe, North America and Australia that occurred during the 2011- 2017 period. This unequivocally demonstrates the capacity and willingness by Right-Wing radicals to enact terrorist violence based on their impositionally fundamentalist ideology (Lebner 2017).

The evidence of Islamism’s impositional fundamentalism leading to terrorism is not hard to find. As identified by Heck (2017), one of the main narratives of ISIS is based on its “aspiration for a global dominance” that is premised on the supposed religious supremacy of their Salafi-Jihadist ideology. Similarly, the emphasis on concepts such as aggressive jihad and jahiliyya reveal the impositional nature of Islamicist radicals and claims for moral superiority alongside their frequent use of condemnations and ultimately demonizations of all non-conformists. Furthermore, as noted by Rane and Mahood, Islamist radicals’ often employ demeaning and condemnatory language and demagoguery including labels such as “ apostate, heretic, crusader and kuffar” that are “applied to Muslim and non-Muslims alike as justification for violent retribution” (2017, 32).

Hence, based on our discussion above, Pratt’s three phase theoretical model very much applies to and can shed useful light on the processes and factors inherent in both forms of extremism under examination.

Importantly, however, Pratt argues that the affirmation and promotion of a pluralist worldview that is able to accommodate robust levels of diversity is an important factor that

can help in countering the phenomenon of fundamentalism and religious extremism specifically (Pratt 2018 :128). I will explore this idea in the context of the Islamic tradition as a means of countering primarily Islamic radicalism but also the Right-Wing extremism which, as we saw above, is premised on the view that there is only one true Islam, namely that Islam of the Islamist radicals. To do so I will employ Cornille's theoretical framework on the conditions for constructive interfaith dialogue that identifies and explores principles and mechanisms which are diametrically opposed to those of phenomenon of fundamentalism as discussed by Pratt and can open up a path toward adoption of a pluralist worldview.

However, before I do this, I need to problematise the other element that is present in the RCR process, namely the idea of civilizational distinctiveness or purity by affirming the idea of civilisational hybridity in the context of the nature of the (historical) relationship between Arabo-Islamic and Western "civilizational constellations" ( Delanty 2019).

## **PART TWO: Countering Reactive Co-Radicalisation - The Case for Arabo-Islam and Christian/Latin-Western Civilisational Hybridity**

As one way of countering the narratives and the worldview of both right-Wing and Islamist extremists that are based on what I above termed Civilisation Othering in the following section I would like to highlight the works of some influential scholars who have critiqued the idea of Western/ European civilizational distinctiveness and have emphasised the symbiotic links between the formation of Arabo-Islamic and Western "civilizational constellations" ( Delanty 2019).

I have already made reference to the view of Delanty (Ibid.) that one of the three modes of western-European ways of relating to "Islam" is that of "of borrowing, translation and adaptation" or what Bulliet (2004) refers to as the history and legacy of civilizational cross-

pollination that both forms of radicalism under examination are wishing to erase or recast as based on their bipolar and totalitarian worldviews. A number of other scholars have problematised the idea of western /European and Arabo-Islamic civilizational purity, especially in the context of a discussion that could be called the history of “Islam-West” relations (Hellyer 2010; Tottoli 2015; Duderija and Rane 2019).

One of the most systematically laid out arguments in favour of this thesis is the idea of *Islamo-Christian* civilisation as advocated by Bulliet (2004). His main idea is that the Arabo-Islamic civilisation should be considered in many ways constitutive of that of a Latin/Western-Christian civilisation, because of the numerous, robust, and mutually defining cross-cultural interactions that have been taking place over a period spanning nearly a millennium and a half between the two. For Bulliet these linkages are multifaceted and are evident at historical, scientific, cultural, philosophical, doctrinal, and scriptural levels (Bulliet 2004, 6, 45). As such Bulliet avers that:

The past and future of the West cannot be fully comprehended without appreciation of the twinned relationship it has had with Islam over some fourteen centuries. The same is true of the Islamic world (2006, 45).

Furthermore, Bulliet provides evidence that there are stronger arguments for the conceptual viability of idea of an *Islamo-Christian* civilisation rather than just that of a Judeo-Christian one. The latter is nowadays taken largely as self-evident and unproblematic in the West, although for a very long time this was not the case (Ibid., 5–6). Bulliet argues that in addition to having strong scriptural and doctrinal commonalities, the Arabo-Islamic and Latin/Western-Christian civilisations have had a long history of civilisational cross-

pollination without which our present (post-) modern would not have been/ be possible. In Bulliet's own words:

Common scriptural roots shared theological concerns, continuous interaction at a societal level, and mutual contributions to what in modern times has become a common pool of thought and feeling give the Euro-American Christian and Jewish communities solid grounds for declaring their civilizational solidarity. Yet the scriptural and doctrinal linkages between Judaism and Christianity are no closer than those between Judaism and Islam, or between Christianity and Islam; and historians are well aware of the enormous contributions of Muslim thinkers to the pool of late medieval philosophical and scientific thought that European Christians and Jews later drew upon to create the modern West. (Ibid., 6).

Importantly, Bulliet uses this shift in consciousness about thinking in terms of Judeo-Christian civilisation that occurred only in the post Second World War context, to further argue that historical *legacies* of long-standing periods of antagonisms between the Christian West and the Arabo-Islamic civilisations ( Duderija and Rane, 2019) , must not be considered as being tantamount to historical *destinies* (Bulliet 2004, 5-6).

Similarly, Delanty (2019, 91) forms the view that “Islam is a part of the European civilizational heritage.” Although duly acknowledging the great significance of Christian cultural history in the making of European heritage, Delanty also challenges the idea that Europe has in the past been “purely Christian”. He argues that the Islamic tradition like the Greco-Roman one should be considered as part of the European civilizational tapestry and asserts that

The place and role of Islam in Europe need to be evaluated in the light of the notion of a European inter-civilizational constellation as opposed to a narrow notion of a Western Civilization based exclusively on the Christian tradition. (Ibid, 91-92)

Furthermore, to add weight to the idea of Arabo-Islamic and Christian-Western civilizational hybridity, Hellyer cites the works of contemporary French Philosopher Roger Garaudy ( d. 2012) and the influential German scholar of history, culture and politics Claus Leggewie who have respectively stated that Islam is a “third forgotten pillar of Europe ” and that “ modern Europe should thank Arab/Islamic civilisation for assistance in its very birth” ( Hellyer 2010 , 177).

As a concrete manifestation of contemporary civilizational hybridity between the Arabo-Islam and Christian -Western Civilisations we should also take stock of the various agents, process and discourses which over the last two to three decades in particular have led to the emergence of a strong western specific forms of Muslim identity , institutionalisation of Islam in the West and the idea of a conceptually , theoretically and culturally Western or European Islam ( Duderija 2015; Hashas 2018). These developments have led Delanty to conclude that “a European Islam now exists and can be viewed as the latest expression of a long history of European-Islamic links” (2019, 91).

Given what was outlined in this section above, the bipolar worldviews of both Right-Wing and Islamist radicals can be challenged on the basis of interpretations and conceptualisations of the history, present and the future between “Islam” and “West” that emphasise their civilizational co-constitutiveness and hybridity as opposed to them being inherently hostile, and mutually exclusive civilisational entities as the adherents to the two forms of extremism want us to believe.

## **Countering Reactive Co-Radicalisation - Employing Cornille's Constructive Conditions for Interreligious Dialogue**

As mentioned above one element that drives radicalisation-based processes in both forms of radicalism under discussion stems from their subscription to what Pratt terms “the phenomenon of fundamentalism” that in extreme cases can lead to terrorism. I have already established that the processes associated with and factors underpinning the three phases of fundamentalism apply to both Right-Wing and Islamic radicalism. Moreover, Pratt (2018,128) forms the view that affirming diversity is one important avenue of counteracting the fundamentalist mindset. Given that our contemporary global condition is very much characterised by diversity and that rejection of diversity is the “the main plank of religious extremism” (Pratt 2018, 29) embracing anti-fundamentalist narratives and concepts that affirm diversity, interconnectedness and perspectivism are important in countering the fundamentalist mindset. With that in mind I discuss the scholarship of Cornille on the constructive conditions for interfaith dialogue as providing us with important insights into how to cultivate this diversity and oppose the phenomenon of fundamentalism underpinning Right-Wing and Islamist extremism. Although Cornille's framework is directed specifically at cultivating constructive conditions for interfaith dialogue, its principles and implications go well beyond that and in my view, for reasons explained below, are particularly useful in providing an effective counter narrative to processes and factors underpinning the fundamentalist mindset as outlined Pratt. Moreover, not only do the proponents of Right-Wing radicalism, such as Breivik and Tarrant, use religious tropes in their ideology, both Right-Wing and Islamist radicals are premised on totalitarian and fundamentalist view of Islam . This is where the ideas of Cornille's become relevant.

Cornille identifies five major factors that are said to play an important role in creating constructive interreligious dialogue with specific reference to the teachings and practices of

the major world religions. These factors include epistemological humility, commitment to a particular religious tradition, and recognition of their interconnection, empathy, and hospitality. In what follows I will succinctly explain what is meant by each of these conditions and how they help in countering the fundamentalist mindset that is underpinning the radicals' worldview as theorised by Pratt.

Cornille defines epistemic humility as a process of “recognition of the very possibility of change or growth within one’s own tradition,” (2013, 20-33) which presupposes a particular understanding of the nature of and approach to ultimate truth, namely, the inevitability of its “perspectivity” and thus humility with respect to one’s religious tradition’s ability to grasp the truth completely and objectively. Epistemic humility, she argues further, can apply to the realm of doctrines, ethical systems, or rituals. Moreover, epistemic humility can express itself in different ways, such as in the belief in “the relativity of all historical and cultural expression and/or in terms of a progression toward final clarity and understanding at some future point in time,” (Ibid, 21) both of which, in turn, assume that understanding of truth’s fullness or completeness is non-absolute and non-final. This element of epistemic humility counters and speaks directly to a number of factors and process identified by Pratt that underpin both the passive and assertive forms of fundamentalism as outlined above, especially “Perspectival Absolutism” and “Hard Factualism”. As such, embracing epistemic humility would constitute an important strategy in countering passive and assertive forms of fundamentalism and, therefore, the two forms of radicalism under discussion.

The second condition necessary for constructive religious dialogue identified by Cornille is commitment. By this Cornille means that one is not in a position to engage in constructive dialogue unless one is committed to a certain religious tradition , because it is on the basis of this criterion that one is able to delineate between “a purely personal exploration of the teachings of different religious traditions for spiritual enrichment” and the one that is

based on one's adopting a position of a spokesperson or representative of a particular tradition by dialoguing from the perspective of "submitting one's judgment to" (Ibid, 23) it. This idea of being a spokesperson for one's religious tradition is significant in terms of constructive dialogue for two reasons. First, it instils confidence in the dialogue partner that the views expressed are not merely a matter of opinion but are, at least partially, reflective of the broader tradition she or he represents. Second, it is only by this means that religious traditions as a whole, rather than specific individuals, can undergo growth and change (Ibid, 23).

The commitment condition is relevant to our discussion of fundamentalism and radicalism particularly in the context of Polity Inclusivism element of assertive fundamentalism that is premised on what Pratt terms strong "communitarian intent"<sup>vi</sup> and, as a corollary, "individual constraint" alongside its emphasis of the importance of membership to a like-minded community. Hence, any attempt to counter these communitarian and polity inclusivist elements of radicalisation dynamic must be based on approaches to the worldview and narratives of radicalism that are internal to the broader traditions in which they are situated. In the case of Right-Wing radicalism, this would entail alternative approaches to European Christian Cultural history premised on civilizational hybridity as outlined above. In the case of Islamist radicalism, this would mean appeals to the Islamic tradition itself rather than approaches that are not faith-based (Duderija 2018). The merits of such an approach is confirmed by the scholarship of Halverson, Goodall and Corman who in their in depth analysis of major Islamist master narratives emphasise the importance of, among others, providing alternative conceptualisations and interpretations of the major concepts and ideas and the 'logic' that inhere in these narratives as one way of countering their influence ( 2011, 203-205).<sup>vii</sup> Therefore, facilitating the commitment condition can assist in undermining some of the processes inherent in the process of radicalisation and violent extremism.

The third element identified by Cornille is interconnection. By this concept Cornille points to the acceptance of the idea on behalf of the participant in interfaith dialogue that religions are interconnected or related to each other by having a common object of focus or study. Put differently, this constructive condition presupposes that all religions or religious traditions are related in one way or another. For instance, the quality of interconnectedness can manifest itself in the acceptance of the premise that all religions are concerned with the same or similar existential questions and/or the belief in the existence of an Ultimate Reality in contrast to just a common mystical experience (Cornille 2013, 25). Different religions have different understandings of this quality of interconnection which is the very basis of entering into dialogue. Importantly, without the recognition of this element, constructive religious dialogue would not be possible (Ibid,26).

This interconnection element is relevant to countering the radicalisation related processes not only in the sense explained in the context of discussing epistemic humility condition above but also in countering the worldview underpinning radicalism that views the Other as a perversion, an aberration or an anti-thesis of the Self as evident in our discussion of Right-Wing and Islamist radical's view of the (civilizational) Other presented above. Therefore, nurturing and developing this sense of interconnection either in theological and/or civilizational terms, can contribute to the weakening of the fundamentalist mindset and processes associated with RCR.

The fourth element identified by Cornille is empathy. It relates to the requirement of conceptual and experiential understanding, to some degree, of the religious Other that could enable the Self “to stretch one’s religious imagination beyond the categories of one’s own religion and gain some understanding of, and resonance with, religious teachings and practices other than one’s own” (Ibid, 27). Hence, constructive dialogue requires empathy in terms of understanding— or what Cornille termed “affective resonance

with the other” (Ibid.) whose benefits pertain to a more profound understanding of the meaning of particular teachings and practices as well as acting as the actual basis for engaging in constructive dialogue in the first place. In this regard Cornille opines:

It is only insofar as one is able to resonate positively with particular beliefs and experiences in another religion that one will be disposed to entertain the possibility of integrating such teachings in one’s own religion (Ibid,27).

However, for empathy to take place, argues Cornille further, it is not necessary for the dialogue partner to empathize with *all* elements of religious belief or practice associated with the religious Other but only *some*. This implies, among others, that one does not need to subscribe to robust forms of (religious) pluralism in order to attain and embody this condition. As I outlined above, Right-Wing and Islamist radicals’ views of the Other are premised on totalitarian and entirely negative views of the Other and are underpinned by a worldview that is diametrically opposed to the description and the meaning of empathy as defined by Cornille. Moreover, it should be recalled that Pratt’s assertive fundamentalist phase is characterised by the presence of strong condemnatory stance and judgementalist values that are antithetical to the requirements of empathy. Hence, cultivating this concept /condition of empathy can counter this aspect of the fundamentalist mindset and, therefore, the processes underpinning RCR.

The last element identified by Cornille is hospitality to truth. This condition is premised on the receptivity to the process that recognises truth in another religious tradition and accepts the ability to integrate that truth into one’s own tradition. Cornille asserts that this condition is

the most critical, or solely sufficient condition, for constructive dialogue since it integrates or presupposes the recognition of the other four conditions discussed. In her words:

This condition may be seen to include or presuppose most of the other conditions for dialogue: the recognition of truth in another religion presupposes some humility about the truth of one's tradition, commitment to a tradition which exercises hospitality, a general sense of the interconnectedness between religions, and genuine understanding of the other (Ibid).

As such, it also speaks to all of the elements of fundamentalism in the context of the first four conditions discussed above. In this respect, it is important to note that there exist approaches to the Islamic tradition that are fully inclusive of the constructive conditions as theorised by Cornille, including the hospitality to truth element (Duderija 2017) and that these approaches can and do offer important counter narratives to Islamist radicalism on scriptural reasoning grounds.

In summary of this section we can conclude that the principles underpinning Cornille's conditions for constructive interfaith dialogue can be brought into a fruitful conversation with Pratt's detailed description of the phases and factors underpinning fundamentalism in its various manifestations, including those that lead to enactment of terrorist activities. As such these principles underpinning constructive conditions for interfaith dialogue, alongside those emphasising civilizational hybridity discussed in the previous section, can be effectively utilised in countering the fundamentalist worldviews characterising both forms of extremism *simultaneously* and therefore, have the potential to break the vicious cycle behind RCR.

**Conclusion:**

This aim of this chapter was to shed light on the processes underpinning RCR (Ebner 2017; Pratt 2019) in form of Right-Wing and Islamist radicalism and to identify and discuss how the worldviews and metanarratives that are embedded in these processes can be countered at the theoretical level. In order to do so, the article provided a brief outline of the worldviews and metanarratives of the two forms of extremism using ISIS and the manifestos written by Breivik and Tarrant as case studies. On that basis, I identified and discussed ideas and concepts which can be employed to counter such views and metanarratives. In this respect it was argued in the chapter that, contrary to the views of Right-Wing Extremists and Islamist radicals, the Arabo-Islamic and Western Christian civilisation share many civilisational affinities and have developed as a result of and are marked by deep civilisational cross-pollination that has lead scholars like Bulliet (2004) and Delanty (2019) to , in this author's mind, convincingly argue in favour of the conceptual viability of term of the Islamo-Christian civilisation that directly counter the worldviews and metanarratives espoused by those who adhere to the two forms of extremisms discussed in this chapter. Moreover, by relying on the work of Pratt and his concept of “phenomenon of fundamentalism”(Pratt 2018) that is based on the strong rejection and condemnation of (religious/cultural) diversity and pluralism at ideological level, the chapter explained why both forms of extremisms belong to this phenomenon . I also demonstrated how we can use ideas of the interfaith theory scholar Cornille to counter the specific metanarratives and concepts that inform the anti-pluralist/ diversity element of the Right Wing and Islamist extremists' worldview. Finally, it is hoped, that a combination of the above discussed approaches does not only provide a useful *theoretical* and *heuristic* intervention in understanding and countering RCR in form of Right Wing and Islamist extremism but can also be used to develop concrete educational resources, and policies aimed at prevention and countering of these two forms of violent extremism and hence positively contribute to peaceful conflict resolution and deradicalization initiatives.

## Notes:

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- <sup>i</sup> i.e. migration to Muslim majority lands
- <sup>ii</sup> in theological and ethico moral sense that has concrete socio-political implications
- <sup>iii</sup> Pratt uses these terms more or less interchangeably, e.g. Pratt (2018 39, 119)
- <sup>iv</sup> Pratt asserts: “I do not suggest this construct implies that all stages, or phases, are passed through, nor necessarily in the way I lay them out in terms of the features and factors, by a religious group or movement on the way to becoming radicalized and so extremist. Nevertheless, it is likely that any religious extremism will manifest most, if not all, of the factors and features I have identified, for what I attempt to identify is the inherent logic of the fundamentalist ideology whereby a religion or religious group becomes extreme to the point of violence and terrorism” (Ibid : 39).
- <sup>v</sup> Especially Dabiq Issues 9 and 14 . They can be accessed here: <https://clarionproject.org/islamic-state-isis-isis-propaganda-magazine-dabiq-50/>
- <sup>vi</sup> “set of normative community values and expectations” (Pratt 2018, 43)
- <sup>vii</sup> They refer to this process as ‘recasting archetypes’ (Halverson, Goodall and Corman 2011,203).

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