Introduction
Norms in the Global Struggle against Extremism
"rooting for" normalization vs. "rooting out" extremism?

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Introduction
This is a review of some of the challenges arising from the reframing of the "global war against terrorism" as a "global struggle against extremism" -- or as a "global struggle against violent extremism".

Curiously, in July 2005, US officials indicated that the phrase "global war on terror" (known by the acronym GWOT), used by the Coalition of the Willing for four years and predicted to last one or more decades, was to be "phased out in favor of more nuanced language" (cf Tom Regan, The 'rebranding' of the war on terror, Christian Science Monitor, 28 July 2005). The newly preferred phrase was indicated as being "struggle against violent extremism" [more] -- presumably to be known by the acronym SAVE as a natural reflection of "faith-based" strategic thinking.

The strategic transition from "war" to "struggle", and from "terrorism" to "extremism", was variously articulated in July 2005 by the Bush regime and in August through the legislative proposals of Tony Blair (Blair vows to root out extremism, The Guardian, 6 August 2005). It could be considered an extremely farsighted proposal that anticipates constraints that citizens and consumers may need to impose on their behaviour as the challenges of society (global warming, scarcity of resources, social unrest, etc) become more acute.

Tony Blair's announcement was however made on the occasion of the largest arts festival in the world, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, and the World Science Fiction Convention (Glasgow, August 2005) -- both celebrations of extremism. It also immediately followed London's winning of the highly competitive bid for the Olympic Games in 2012 -- surely an extremist process in support of the ultimate celebration of extremism. It also coincided with a moment of reality TV described by editorialists as the nadir of British TV [more].

Unfortunately recent years have also seen admiration for anything "extreme" as an admirable lifestyle choice by which people affirm their identity and enhance their status in society -- being extreme has become a lifestyle frontier. Many commercial enterprises are as a result glorifying "extremism" by promoting their initiatives with "extreme" in the name of their company or product.
In Britain these moves against extremism are being proposed and taken in response to a very limited number of deaths, resulting from a particular form of violent crime, a number that is a small fraction of the number of deaths associated with road traffic, alcoholism, drugs, suicide, murder, etc. It is an even smaller fraction of the number of deaths associated with political and economic positions maintained by the UK over long years in relation to developing countries.

It might be asked whether the "struggle against extremism" is a consequence of the binary logic that has characterized the strategic leadership of the Coalition of the Willing: "If you are not with us, you are against us". Do we now have a case of the "Norms" vs the "Extremists"?

Rooting out extremists

Tony Blair has announced a 12-point plan on new security measures (5 August 2005). Given the switch in terminology from "terrorism" to "extremism", the following summary of the original plan has been adapted to reflect more accurately that switch:

1. New grounds for deportation and exclusion of extremists.
2. New anti-extremist legislation -- including an offence of condoning or glorifying extremism. But this will also be applied to justifying or glorifying extremism anywhere, not just in the UK
3. Refusal of asylum to anyone who has participated in extremism
4. Extending powers, to be applied to naturalized citizens engaged in extremism, and making the procedures simpler and more effective.
5. Setting a maximum time limit for all future extradition cases involving extremism
6. Meeting the police and security service request that detention, pre-charge of extremist suspects, be significantly extended.
7. Extension of the use of control orders on extremists, any breach of which can mean imprisonment.
8. Expand the court capacity necessary to deal with extremism and other related issues.
9. Widen the grounds for proscription of extremist organizations
10. Ensure better integration of those parts of the community who may represent or harbour extremism
11. Power to order closure of a place of worship which is used as a center for fomenting extremism.
12. Compilation of an international database of individual extremists whose activities or views pose a threat to security. Anyone on the database will be excluded from entry with any appeal only taking place outside the country.

Given the switch in emphasis from "terrorism" to "extremism", it is curious how the legislation subsequently proposed will be able to distinguish between the two. For example, emphasis has been placed on a new offence of "glorification" which may well be interpreted to apply to any form of extremism as indicative of incitement to terrorism (cf Clarke's draft bill proposes new offence of glorification, The Guardian, 16 September 2005). How is glorification of extremism to be distinguished from glorification of terrorism within such legislation?

Concept of "extremism"

Connotations: Although the strategic replacement for terrorism is clearly stated, what exactly constitutes "extremism" is not. For example, Butler Shaffer (What the 'Struggle' Is All About, LewRockwell.com, 1 August 2005) argues:

But what is meant by "extremism," against which the government announces its current "struggle?" One prominent dictionary offers the definition: "exceeding the ordinary, usual, or expected" with an additional meaning "situated at the farthest possible point from a center." Extremism, in other words, amounts to a pronounced deviation from an established norm or point of reference.

There do indeed exist bodies and sources that address the issues of "extremism", such as:

- Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, California State University
- ECPR Standing Group on Extremism and Democracy
- Extremism: Information Sources

It may be assumed that such groups are concerned with particular forms of extremism, but the question of what is included and why, is not well articulated. As Shaffer points out:

You will note, at once, that neither violence nor destructiveness - which go to the essence of terrorism's meaning - is implicit in the concept "extremism." In terms of destructiveness, Joseph Stalin represented an extreme deviation from ordinary human behavior. If creative genius is being considered, Thomas Edison was likewise an extremist. Without knowing anything more, the concept of "extremism" tells us absolutely nothing about the desirability of a particular course of conduct.

The context in which the Bush/Blair proposals take place may well ensure that "extremism" is readily assumed to be Muslim extremism -- carefully excluding any reference to the extremism of other religions, notably Christianity and Judaism -- or indeed to any other forms of extremism, whether or not they have political dimensions. But the general terms in which "extremism" is to be defined by legislation may also be deliberately used as device to design many minority beliefs and practices out of British life -- and thereafter, presumably, out of European life through appropriate European directives. Ironically it may be the British who seek to use directives to transform Europeans into the "straight bananas" they had previously scorned [more].

The big danger is that, with "extremism" defined so loosely, many other unforeseen behaviours and beliefs may fall under interpretations
of legislation regarding "extremism". Under the guise of what many assume to be a legitimate response to a very specific form of "extremism", power will be given to prohibit other forms of behaviour -- which may in fact be the hidden agenda of those formulating strategy in this way whatever the denials of such intentions. Also problematic is the extent to which people perceived by some to be "extremists" may well be appointed to high positions by governments who claim to be acting rigorously against "extremism" (notably as in the USA).

The European Parliamentary Assembly is more precise in its definition of "extremism", focusing on its conflation with "political extremism":

Extremism, whatever its nature, is a form of political activity that overtly or covertly rejects the principles of parliamentary democracy, and very often bases its ideology and its political practices and conduct on intolerance, exclusion, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and ultra-nationalism. [Resolution 1344 (2003)]

A website of research links on extremism (Michael McFarland. The Rhetoric of Extremism: A research page of links on extremism, anti-extremism, or sites that are considered outside the mainstream) noted:

- Extremism is a term used to describe either ideas or actions thought by critics to be hyperbolic and unwarranted. In terms of ideas, the term extremism is often used to label political ideology that is far outside the political center of a society.
- In terms of actions, the term extremism is often used to identify aggressive or violent methodologies used in an attempt to cause political or social change.
- Political radicals are sometimes called extremists, although the term radical originally meant to go to the root of a problem. "Radical" is a somewhat less negatively-connoted label sometimes used by people or groups to label themselves. In terms of the use of violence, the terms "extremist" or "radical" are generally used to label those who use violence against the will of the larger social body, rather than those who believe in violence to enforce the will of the social body.
- The terms "extremism" or "extremist" are almost always applied by others, rather than a group labeling itself such -- the term connotes using illegitimate means such as subterfuge or violence to promote one's agenda.
- The act of labeling a person, group or action as "extremist" is often a technique to further a political goal -- especially by governments seeking to defend the status quo, or political centrists.

These suggest that radical efforts at "rooting out" might themselves be construed as a form of "extremism". More challenging to simplistic definition is the insightful argument that:

Ideas should not be judged on the basis of whether they are "extremist" or "moderate" but on the evidence and arguments used to support them. There is no reason to believe "middle of the road" positions are inherently better than "extremist" ones. In some cases the "extremist" position is vastly superior to the "moderate" one. (The Moderate as Extremist)

Peter T. Coleman and Andrea Bartoli (Dealing with Extremists, 2003) offer a measured approach to defining extremism, noting:

Extremism is a complex phenomenon, although its complexity is often hard to see. Most simply, it can be defined as activities (beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, strategies) of a person or group far removed from the ordinary. In conflict settings it manifests as a severe form of conflict engagement. However, the labeling of activities, people, and groups as "extremist," and the defining of what is "ordinary" in any setting is always a subjective and political matter.

However they too avoid the basic challenge of how to define unambiguously the question of "how unlike us" does a group have to be to be legitimately defined as extremist. This is curious because there are excellent statistical approaches that point to the possibility of such precision.

Statistical distinctions: An excellent discussion of the possibility, in relation to the war on terrorism, is provided by Harry Rosenberg (Counter Extremism: population characteristics and the sigma tool for change, Roadtopeace.org, 2004) in the light of the discipline of psychometrics. He focuses on the standard deviation of a whole population (known as sigma, symbolized by the Greek letter σ) which is the most commonly used measure of statistical dispersion. It is a measure of how dispersed are the values in any set with respect to a mean, or normal value. In a normally distributed population then:

- about 68.27% (namely 2/3) of the population are within 1 standard deviation away from the mean (sigma 1),
- about 95.45% (namely 1/20) of the population are within 2 standard deviations (sigma 2)
- about 99.73% (namely 1/370) of the population are within 3 standard deviations (sigma 3)
- about 99.99966% of the population are within 4 standard deviations (sigma 4)
- about 99.999994% of the population are within 5 standard deviations (sigma 5)
- about 99.99999964% of the population are within 6 standard deviations (sigma 6)

### Degrees of "extremism" in terms of a Gaussian normal distribution

By dividing the distribution up into standard deviation (σ) units, a known proportion of "extremists" lies within each portion of the curve (either to the right or the left of the norm).
For Rosenberg, as applied to ethnic attitude for example: "anyone in the 2/3 group might be considered typical, because they are indeed typical. The 1/370 group might well deserve the label of being extreme, simply because they are so rare and far removed from the rest of us".

In the UK there are approximately 1.6 million Muslims (namely 3 per cent of the population). According to the above, if "extremism" were understood as

- referring to those outside 3 standard deviations, some 4320 individuals should be considered "extremists"
- referring to those outside 4 standard deviations, some 101 individuals should be considered "extremists"
- referring to those outside 5 standard deviations, some 1 individual should be considered an "extremist"

Extremism as a quality control problem (Six Sigma methodology)

Such an approach raises the question whether "extremism" is to be associated with those outside 3 standard deviations from the norm, rather than 4, 5 or 6. Many corporations have adopted the so-called Six Sigma methodology for quality control (cf Pete Pande, Larry Holpp, What Is Six Sigma? 2001) [more | more]. Six Sigma aims to have the total number of failures in quality, or customer satisfaction, occur beyond the sixth sigma of likelihood in a normal distribution of customers. GE Aircraft Engines operates at Nine Sigma levels of quality.

Six Sigma tries to achieve a defect rate of 3.4 per million units, namely a 99.99964% quality level for the sample [NB see comment below on sigma shift correction]. Six Sigma is a methodology designed to reduce defects in products and processes and has been hailed as a critical business tool for the 21st-century -- professionalized through Black Belt Certification. Six Sigma processes are executed by Six Sigma Green Belts and Six Sigma Black Belts, and are overseen by Six Sigma Master Black Belts. The skills are acquired at a Six Sigma Academy and those involved are grouped within the International Society of Six Sigma Professionals. Clearly analogous qualifications may be needed to ensuring the rooting out of extremists -- although some would see unfortunate historical associations that are well explored in Umberto Eco's Name of the Rose.

There is some irony to the possibility that "extremists", like suicide bombers, might come to be viewed as the social equivalent of "defects" for which a Six Sigma approach is called for. Six Sigma is indeed a tool in what is known as Total Quality Management -- now to be understood as a form of "Total Quality Governance". Extremism is in this sense a quality control problem focusing attention on the defects that have to be rooted out. Given the statistical terminology of standard deviation, such extremists might come to be viewed as 6-Sigma "deviants", by contrast with the acceptable "norms" as "standard deviations".

| Estimate of number of Muslim "extremists" according to different definitions of "extremism" |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Sigma 1 ("normal")                | 1,104,000                       | 4,485,000                       | 1,104,000,000                  | 68.268957%                     | 1                               |
| Sigma 2                            | 492,800                        | 2,002,000                      | 492,800,000                   | 4.55003%                      | 2                               |
| Sigma 3                            | 106,880                        | 434,200                        | 106,880,000                   | 0.26998%                      | 3                               |
| Sigma 4                            | 9,936                          | 40,365                         | 9,936,000                     | 0.00634%                      | 4                               |
| Sigma 5                            | 368                            | 1,495                          | 368,000                       | 0.00009%                      | 5                               |
| Sigma 6                            | 5.4                            | 22.1                           | 5,440                         | 0.000036%                     | 6                               |

With respect to the Muslim population of the UK:

- extremism beyond the Sigma 6 level, suggests that there would be of the order of 5 such extremist individuals in the UK Muslim population. This might well be seen as corresponding to the number of "radical clerics" which it is planned to exclude from the UK.
- extremism beyond the Sigma 5 level, would presumably correspond to the number of individuals with a propensity for active terrorism against the UK and its citizens.
- extremism beyond the Sigma 4 level, would presumably correspond to the number of individuals providing some form of active support for those playing a more active role.
- extremism beyond the Sigma 3 level, would presumably correspond to the number of individuals providing some form of passive support for those playing a more active role. These would presumably correspond to the Daily Telegraph's survey results show, for example, that 6% of British Muslims -- 100,000 people -- believed the London bombings were fully justified.
• extremism beyond the Sigma 2 might correspond to the numbers with a **sympathy for extremist action**. A poll in the UK (22 July 2005), indicated that around a quarter of British Muslims (namely of the order of 400,000) have some sympathy with the motives of the London bombers, if not their methods while a third believe Western society is "immoral" [more]
• the average Muslim (Sigma 1), representing some 68% of the UK Muslim population, would not have tendencies defined as extremist. It is primarily they who are being challenged to root out the "death cult" in their midst. It is however they who are experiencing the consequences of profiling by the new policing and surveillance policies, and the scapegoating by other groups in the British population.

Similar comments could be made with respect to the Muslim population of the USA, as with supporters of the IRA in the USA.

The standard deviation might be considered an indication of the **confidence level** with which it can be predicted that a given Muslim is an "extremist" of a given degree.

**Sigma shift correction: distinction between "short-term" and "long-term" Sigma**: To the extent that "extremists" are to be considered as generated by processes within their community, there is a case for learning from the recognition of a long-term corrective measure built into the above calculation of sigma in the light of experience with manufacturing processes.

In Six Sigma parlance, z-score (a common statistical way of standardizing data on one scale) and process sigma are used interchangeably. Strictly speaking, the process sigma and z-equivalents are loosely tied to the statistical z-score based on the strict definition derived from that of a normal distribution. For most Six Sigma applications the differences are not significant.

Sigma (with a capital "S"), as used in Six Sigma Methodology, is therefore not the same thing as the standard deviation of a process, referred to as sigma (with a lower case "s" or as the Greek letter σ). The sigma calculation in the above table takes account of a dynamic process factor discovered in manufacturing:

- from a purely statistical perspective, 6 sigma actually corresponds to about 2 "defects" per 1,000 million "opportunities".
- in manufacturing processes, the term 6 Sigma is applied to situations of 3.4 "defects" per million "opportunities" -- although from a purely statistical perspective this actually corresponds to a sigma value of 4.5.

This difference of 1.5 sigma (typically between 1.4 and 1.6) is due to the fact that processes vary and drift over time - otherwise known as Long-Term Dynamic Mean Variation. The long-term corrector (whose value continues to be the subject of debate [more]) is based on experience with particular processes. In any definition of extremism, it therefore allows for common and special causal variation that may be characteristic of a particular community. The adjustment takes into account what happens to every process over many cycles of manufacturing -- the kind of adjustment that is required in assessing extremism in a dynamic community. The reporting convention of the Six Sigma methodology requires the process capability to be reported in short-term sigma -- without the presence of special cause variation.

Long-term sigma is therefore determined by subtracting 1.5 sigma from the short-term sigma calculation to account for the process shift that is known to occur over time. The 1.5 Sigma shift is based on the "conservative" assumption that over time, and with a sufficiently large number of samples, a realistic Sigma value is 1.5 Sigma less than that calculated to report "optimistically" on the success of the project -- such as the rooting out of "extremists" from any community. [more more]

### Social deviance as extremism

In a study of *Thinking about Psychopathology*, James E. Maddux *et al* (*Conceptions of Psychopathology: A Social Constructionist Perspective*, 2004) argue that:

Subjectivity also influences the determination of how deviant a psychological phenomenon must be from the norm to be considered abnormal or pathological. We can use objective, scientific methods to construct a measure such as an intelligence test and develop norms for the measure, but we are still left with the question of how far from normal an individual's score must be to be considered abnormal. This question cannot be answered by the science of psychometrics because the distance from the average that a person's score must be to be considered abnormal is a matter of debate, not a matter of fact. It is true that we often answer this question by relying on statistical conventions such as using one or two standard deviations from the average score as the line of division between normal and abnormal (see the chapter on cognitive abilities in childhood). Yet the decision to use that convention is itself subjective. Why should one standard deviation from the norm designate abnormality? Why not two standard deviations? Why not half a standard deviation? Why not use percentages? The lines between normal and abnormal can be drawn at many different points using many different strategies.

One of the challenges in the political debate is whether efforts should be made to ensure that "extremists" are either "integrated" or "assimilated" into the "mainstream" of any national culture -- presumably prior to "rooting out" those for which this process is not successful. Here "mainstream" is presumably to be understood as one standard deviation -- namely the population of "norms" who have the same "way of life" to which both Bush and Blair make reference. The question is whether those like Muslims, Druids, or nudists should abandon their "way of life" within such a national culture or be declared to be "extremists" (cf Roy Hattersley, *End This Chorus of Intolerance*, The Guardian, 12 August 2005)

### Other possible understandings of extremism

**Mental disorders**: The incidence of disease, especially mental disorder, could be presented in terms of a binomail distribution. One form of mental disorder, namely learning disability may be defined as those performing two standard deviations away from the mean, or the
bottom 2.5% -- namely an "extreme" which has evoked the attention of those favouring eugenics. Any such discrepancy of actual language or math performance below that expected for a given intelligence level may be considered significant [more]. Tests can also be divided into nine levels of performance or stanines with results typically following a binomial distribution.

The challenge of extremes is however more evident in subtler disorders to which the population as a whole may be significantly susceptible. According to Stuart A. Kirk (Are we all going mad, or are the experts crazy? LA Times, 14 August 2005), psychiatric researchers recently estimated that half of the American population has had or will have a mental disorder at some time in their life -- in comparison with only a small percentage a generation ago.

Kirk argues that because there are no biological tests, markers or known causes for most mental illnesses, who is counted as ill depends almost entirely on frequently changing checklists of behaviors that the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (published by the American Psychiatric Association) considers as symptoms of mental disorder. An estimated 22.1 percent of Americans ages 18 and older -- about 1 in 5 adults -- suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. When applied to the 1998 US Census residential population estimate, this figure translates to 44.3 million people. [more more more] One percent of the population (more than 2.5 million Americans) has schizophrenia (Schizophrenia Bulletin, 1998). Given the consequences of such disorders, the question is who then should be considered an "extremist".

Perhaps matching such disorders on a normal distribution are the peak and flow phenomena, notably as experienced by the cultural creatives. Paul H. Ray and Sherry Ruth Anderson (The Cultural Creatives: how 50 million people are changing the world, 2001). They claim to have found out that 50 million adult Americans (slightly over one quarter of the adult population) can now be identified as belonging to this group -- also "extremists" to a certain degree.

**Mutation and mutants**: Any given biological species is subject to a degree of genetic mutation. Some mutations may survive, others may be essentially non-viable in comparison with the prevailing norm. Two standard deviations from the norm are considered significant. By analogy, this points to the possibility of a form of memetic mutation with which psychological or ideological extremism might be associated. The Memetic Lexicon indicates the phenomenon of memetic drift as: Accumulated mis-replications; (the rate of) memetic mutation or evolution. Written texts tend to slow the memetic drift of dogmas. To what extent is a suicide bomber a memetic mutant?

**Risk**: Assessment of risk is of vital significance to the financial markets and to insurance of every kind (health, life, accident, etc). Typically extreme risk is recognized analytically in terms of standard deviations, with two standard deviations being a significant cut-off point beyond which any risk may be considered extreme. The new approach to extremism and its elimination will favour tendencies towards risk aversion and should minimize exposure to extreme risk.

**Anomalies / Abnormalities**: There is a particular challenge to detection of the anomalous and the exceptional because it is of necessity a very low frequency, if not unique occurrence. It may well be non-repeatable and as such any observation cannot be effectively confirmed. One consequence is that, in order to sustain the coherence of explanations that would be undermined by any such evidence, there is a marked tendency simply to deny that the anomaly occurred or to explain it in terms of erroneous observation. The process of rooting out extremism may then be understood as an institutionalization of the exclusion of such anomalies. There is however a challenge in that inexplicable anomalies may constitute significant indicators of system failure [more] and may be vital to the identification of new lines of research and the development of new technologies [more]. Anomaly research is then a discipline of particular importance. But, as with the need of the Vatican to continue confidential research into esoteric domains whose significance to others is denied, a special research context and methodology is required to maintain research into "extremism" to ensure that it can be effectively rooted out -- if the existence of such phenomena is not simply to be denied. For the Catholic Church, "miracles" also call for particular methods of investigation. Anomaly research is also significant in relation to cult phenomena such as UFOs, paranormal phenomena, etc [more | more].

**Error conditions**: The challenge of detecting "extremism" may be usefully seen in terms of the kind of error associated with observations and their interpretation:

- **Type O error**: If an observed phenomenon is outside the confidence interval, making a mistaken observation may be simply a matter of the population value being outside the confidence interval. I call it a Type O error. Thus for a 95% confidence limits, the Type O error rate is 5%, by definition. [more]
- **Type I error**: A false alarm or Type I error, would arise if data interpretation resulted in a false alarm regarding the identification of a person as an "extremist" or a "terrorist" -- for example, opportunistically "crying wolf" with respect to terrorists in the absence of adequate evidence. Type I errors, perceiving significance where there is none, may occur with a certain frequency -- the rate of false alarms and false positives. This may result because data indicate relationships merely by chance.
- **Type II error**: A failed alarm is a consequence of having bias in the estimate of an effect such that an "extremist" is missed even though one is really there. This is the rate of failed alarms or false negatives. Again, the alarm will fail sometimes purely by chance even though the "extremist" is present, perhaps because of the size of the sample [more]

The dilemma in identifying "extremists" is that whilst it would be nice to completely eliminate both Type I and Type II error types, in practice reducing one causes the other to increase. This is because the appearance of "extremism"'t and "normality" are not clear-cut. "Norms" can appear to be "Extremists" and "Extremists" can appear to be "Norms".

**Coherence**: A quite different approach is also interesting because it reflects the "extreme" perspective of a group, the Maharishi University of Management, which many would readily label "extremist". David W. Orme-Johnson (Quantifying the field effects of consciousness: from increased EEG coherence to reduced international terrorism, 2002) reviews the methodology and results of nine key studies from a body of 50 studies demonstrating field effects of consciousness (notably a form of EEG coherence) associated with the Transcendental Meditation (TM) technique. Through collective meditation by groups of a critical size the research is claimed to offer evidence for a stress reduction effect (the "maharishi effect") for a larger surrounding population. Thus for any population of 10,000,
just 1% meditating would achieve that effect in the case of regular TM meditators. For the same population, the same effect would be achieved by the square root of 1% meditators if they were advanced TM meditators. The work predicted decreased international conflicts and terrorism on a global scale, using data from independent scholars who were in no way connected with this research programme. Ironically this suggests that "extremists", possibly several standard deviations from the norm, can provide a remedial response to the conditions giving rise to "extremism".

Unsaid: There is an assumption that "extremism" is necessarily a detectable manifestation. Given the importance of religious beliefs -- which may not be detectable -- in the issue of "extremism", some attention could usefully be given to the nature of the unsaid (cf Varieties of the Unsaid in sustaining psycho-social community, 2004).

Methodological reservations regarding a statistical approach

The apparently rigorous statistical approach to identifying degrees of extremism is based on a questionable assumption regarding the "normality" of distribution as highlighted by Steven Rose (Lifelines: Biology, Freedom, Determinism, 1997):

Improper quantification argues that reified and agglomerated characters can be given numerical values (Example: the IQ scale which reifies 'intelligence', agglomerates many different processes within the term, and then claims to be able to provide a single number which defines where an individual lies in the intelligence hierarchy). Belief in statistical normality then assumes that in any given population the distribution of such behavioural scores takes a Gaussian, normal distribution. Yet such curves are a product of the test design. There is no biological necessity for such a unidimensional distribution, nor for one in which the population shows such a convenient spread. Yet the power of this reified statistic is that it conflates two different concepts of 'normality'; it has normative implications, and to lie more than two standard deviations from the mean is to be abnormal (Example: The Bell Curve).

In considering the statistical approach to determining extremism it is worth reflecting on the intimate relationship of any statistical norm to the democratic elected majority of a population. Where at least 50% of a vote is required to achieve such a majority, this may be described as 1.5 Sigma, namely 1.5 standard deviations. Any political opposition is thus positioned as a form of extremism -- an exception to the democratically elected norm. Efforts to root out extremism may therefore be understood as efforts to institutionalize the rooting out of opposition -- if only in its more extreme forms. In these terms a satisfactory (and honourable) opposition in parliament would be that proportion of the population between 1.5 and 2.0 Sigma -- provided that those beyond 2.0 Sigma could be successfully marginalized. This is one justification for the avoidance of proportional representation -- it gives an unwelcome voice to extremists.

In commenting on the above arguments, statistician Peter Collins notes (in a personal communication):

Therefore it seems to me that when we seek to cut out -- what we deem as -- negative extremes as some kind of unacceptable abnormality, we fail to recognise the shadow of our society (which is based so much on the pursuit of "extremist" desires). So the attempt to deal with extremism as if somehow unrelated to conventional norms both good and bad is then deeply misguided (as they are interdependent). This then leads to a serious problem in the attempt to use statistical techniques (such as the normal distribution) to measure and predict social "abnormality" (such as a propensity for terrorist activity).

The normal distribution can best be used in situations where events are independent. So if the chance of obtaining a defective component in any trial on an assembly line is not influenced by the results of other trials, then in statistical terms precise measurement as to the probability of such an event can in principle be made. However even here many problems can arise. The assumption that the population of components (with respect to defects) is in fact normally distributed may be unwarranted. In addition, statistical inaccuracies may arise from choosing unduly small samples. Also there may be many practical factors to consider such as clearly defining what constitutes a defective component (and then accurately categorising it). Thus the 1.5 sigma shift... appears as a somewhat arbitrary way of taking account of the possible predictive limitations of this statistical model in any practical context. Thus in the context of terrorist propensities -- where these are considered independent of conventional norms -- predictions using the sigma shift would perhaps be more realistic. However the big problem here is that once we accept that such propensities are inextricably linked to conventional behaviour -- though in no easily defined manner -- then statistical predictions become much less valid. So for example the manner in which the Internet can easily market terror creates just one potentially important factor that could readily facilitate the growth of an international Al Qaeda franchise network!

One of the other problems of a statistical approach is that however much the "extremes" are successfully "rooted out", any subsequent analysis of the distribution will still have "extremes" beyond 2, 3, or more standard deviations. This situation can only be avoided when every aspect of human activity and belief is normalized.

Other cautions are evident in criticism of analyses of degrees of deviance associated with extremes of disability -- or, more generally, from the totalizing norm. David T. Mitchell (Institutionalising Disability Studies: Research Methodologies and the Quandary of Over-Analysed Populations):

While the power inequities that mark race, gender and sexuality often occur with respect to a lack of attention to the particularities of marginalized bodies and their unique cultural circumstances, the oppression of disabled people has occurred in the midst of their perpetual identification as an object of research. This distinction points to the significant divergences that characterize disability as a minority unlike others...As a result, disabled people have been objectified within classifications of deviance; however, this objectification, we would argue, is neither the sole nor perhaps even the primary source of disability...
oppression at the hands of the diagnostic sciences....Rather than charting bodies as diverse entities interacting with and adapting to their external and internal environments, medicine developed an increasingly abstract notion of the "ideal" body founded upon the statistical evaluation of norms. In addition, science sought to measure and monitor bodies as discrete materialities divorced from their social, historical, and environmental contexts.

Mitchell notes that Michel Foucault spent his research career arguing that excessive diagnosis and the evaluation of bodies within categories of pathology proved to be the characteristic form of oppression in the modern period. He then cites the physician and medical historian, Georges Canguilhem (The Normal and the Pathological, 1991):

A norm, or rule, is what can be used to right, to square, to straighten. To set a norm (nommer), to normalize, is to impose a requirement on an existence, a given whose variety, disparity, with regard to the requirement, present themselves as a hostile, even more than an unknown indeterminate

The subtle consequences of a normative mindset have been the subject of extensive comment in relation to racism. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, 1980/1988) argued that racism operates "by the determination of degrees of deviance in relation to the White-Man face", namely the deviance from the physiognomy of whiteness [more]. Racism thus endeavors to integrate nonconforming traits into increasingly eccentric and backward waves. Studies of faciality argue that it is based not on a negative dialectic of identities but degrees of deviance, and that although it does not function through exclusion it nonetheless establishes a hierarchy of types (cf Benjamin Hoh, Humanoid Perception: politics at the arrival of the figure, 1996) [more]. Such perspectives are particularly relevant when a prime response to terrorism is profiling to detect extremists. Typically those sought are facially deviant in relation to the White-Man facial norm -- although ironically Deleuse and Guattari focused on the normative function of representations of the face of Christ when now it might be said that that of Osama bin Laden bears a striking resemblance to them. Both are of course "extremists" by any measure.

In contrast to the forms of extremism that are modelled by a normal distribution, a quite distinct model may be associated with what is termed a power law. Such a distribution does not have a peak at its average value. It starts at its maximum value and decreases to infinity. Furthermore the rate at which it decays is much slower than the rate of decay for a normal distribution. This implies a much greater probability of extremism. Extreme differences that are inconceivable in a normal distribution are in fact normal for a power law. For example, very few people in any population possess enormous wealth, whereas very many possess relatively little wealth, making the significance of any average to be very misleading. In this light extremism inducing might be understood either as associated with the very few with the high order of determination prepared to engage their lives in suicide bombing, for example, in contrast with the very many of such low self-esteem as to be inspired by it -- the "breeding grounds" of terrorism.

A power law perspective on extremism might be illustrated by the castes in Aldous Huxley's classic dystopian novel Brave New World (1932):

- Alpha caste consists of those destined for leadership positions,
- Betas filling professional and administrative posts requiring higher education, but without the leadership responsibilities of the Alphas, followed in descending orders of intelligence by
- Gammas,
- Deltas, and
- Epsilons, being so stupid as to be described as "semi-morons", and trained to perform the most menial tasks without complaint.

In power law terms, it is the alphas that might be viewed as extremists necessitating "rooting out" -- but in terms of the normal distribution it would be both alphas and epsilons that would be viewed as extremists.

Terrorizing others by extremism

It is important to be clear about the ways in which the extreme behaviours or beliefs of one group can be fundamentally terrifying to those in another group. Any encounter between different groups may have this terrifying characteristic in some measure. The All Blacks rugby team has a preliminary routine -- the haka -- that is deliberately designed to terrify and intimidate.

Such perspectives are discussed at length elsewhere (Varieties of Terrorism: extended to the experience of the terrorized , 2004)

Condoning extremism and its potential for terrorism

Many practices and behaviours, possibly perceived as extreme, may be experienced as terrifying by those exposed to them. Although not necessarily considered acceptable, the practices may be condoned as "normal" and characteristic of their context by the responsauthorities. Examples include:

- bullying in institutionalized environments: the terror this causes may lead to suicide
- maltreatment: this is characteristic of domestic and other forms of violence
- starvation: the processes whereby people are be placed under extreme conditions that prevent then from acquiring adequate food may be condoned as unfortunate, but "normal", even those suffering may be terrified for themselves or their dependents
- torture: extreme forms of interrogation, possibly by proxy (through rendition), are now condoned, whatever degree of terror they cause
- neighbourhood gangs: the extreme behaviour of gangs may be tolerated in neighbourhoods even though this may be the cause of terror to many
**Physical manifestations of extremism**

- **dangerous driving**: although such extreme behaviour is a common feature of modern roads, often terrifying to those exposed to it, such behavior is condoned and subject to minor sanctions even when it leads to death
- **proxy terrorism**: the extreme actions of security and military forces, used by governments and their allies against perceived threats, tends to terrify others in the vicinity in ways condoned as acceptable collateral damage

**Struggle against extremism: the ultimate global challenge for norms**

In endeavouring to clarify the nature of extremism it is easily forgotten who it might be that is engaged in the struggle against it. Who exactly is it that it is challenged by extremists? The answer would appear to be a majority group perhaps best labelled as the "norms". It is they who constitute the normal human populations -- within one standard deviation of the norm.

In the USA their perspective is partly reflected in the work of the National Social Norms Resource Center. This is an independent center that supports, promotes and provides technical assistance in the application of the social norms approach to a broad range of health, safety and social justice issues, including alcohol-related risk-reduction and the prevention of tobacco abuse. Also based in the USA is the The Norms And Preferences Network in which, as might be expected, economists constitute the norm -- within one standard deviation!

Chris Lucas (*The Abnormal Normals*) provides an insightful commentary on the effort to construct a society based on norms:

> Human societies are all about norms, correct ways to behave, standard ways to look, socially acceptable attitudes to all things. To be judged abnormal is to be rejected, to be regarded as faulty, in need of repair. Entire medical industries have grown up in a bid to put right those unfortunate members of society that are not normal - the deviants.

> But it's all a myth ! There is not, nor ever was, such a thing as 'normality'. This invented idea is all about conformity, about averages, about absolute measures of reality -- a concept that seen from the viewpoint of complexity thought is nonsensical. Here we will look at what it could mean to be normal and contrast it with the actual human condition of diversity. We shall see that many of society's problems stem from the mismatch between what we really are and the social myths that we have unwittingly adopted.

Lucas concludes:

> The craving to be normal is a craving to be average, to be a nonentity. A society of nonentities seems a strange group to worry about, but worry we do. We have seen that such a 'normal' doesn't in any case exist so we are all abnormals in most senses. Recognising this multidimensionality can release us from the social pressure to conform to static values and allow us to demand instead that our society conforms to our needs. This isn't a selfish demand but a commitment to dissolve the barrier between what we 'are' already as humans and the rather different social 'belief' that constitutes our norms.

Coincidentally in relation to the newly declared struggle against extremism, and partly in response to UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/59/2502 of December 2004, the United Nations Evaluation Group -- UNEG (*Norms for Evaluation in the UN System*, 2005) has recently published a report that clarifies the role of the norms:

> The norms seek to facilitate system-wide collaboration on evaluation by ensuring that evaluation entities within the UN follow agreed-upon basic principles. They provide a reference for strengthening, professionalizing and improving the quality of evaluation in all entities of the United Nations system, including funds, programmes and specialized agencies. The norms are consistent with other main sources and reflect the singularity of the United Nations system, characterized by its focus on people and respect for their rights, the importance of international values and principles, universality and neutrality, its multiple stakeholders, its needs for global governance, its multidisciplinarity, and its complex accountability system. Last but not least, there is the challenge of international cooperation embedded in the Millennium Declaration and Development Goals.

That the norms have every justification for feeling threatened is evident from reports of campaigns against them (cf *Shell Leads International Business Campaign Against UN Human Rights Norms*, 2004).

**Human quality control: activities susceptible to extremism**

Careful consideration needs to be given to practices that can be considered as extreme and to the possible need to:

- shut down the contexts within which they are advocated (organizations, meeting spaces, festivals, websites, etc)
- prosecute their advocates and practitioners
- place constraining orders on their former practitioners
- ensure wiretapping and other forms of appropriate surveillance on their practitioners

**Physical manifestations of extremism**

**Physical abnormality**: The forms of extremism typical of this case are those which are notably the preoccupation in health and beauty magazines, and more fundamentally with the concerns of geneticists in avoiding abnormality and ensuring improvement of the body. In government policy this may take the form of national health programmes, possibly extended to include *eugenics* (as in the case of Germany, Sweden, Canada, Australia, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Estonia, Switzerland and Iceland). However the
emphasis now, in contrast with past programmes, is on producing an average rather than seeking to achieve excellence or the promotion of some ideal extreme.

However, in seeking to root out extremism in this domain, it is vital to recognize that the extremes may be expressed as polarities, both of which are to be avoided in seeking a healthy norm:

- **beauty / ugliness**: this tends to imply that the preoccupations of beauty parlours and cosmetics should be constrained by legislation to avoid promoting extremes of beauty; they should however be encouraged to remedy extremes of ugliness (cf. *extreme cosmetics*)
- **intelligence / stupidity**: extreme manifestations of intelligence should be discouraged by legislation, consistent with media policies to progressively "dumb down" content; the focus should be rather on avoiding extreme manifestations of stupidity
- **strong / weak**: the extreme forms of body building and exercise programmes should be discouraged by legislation; rather the focus should be on avoiding extremes of weakness, notably among the young and the elderly
- **tall / short**: extremes of height should be avoided by suitable legislative measures, notably in the case of the extremely tall and any manifestations of dwarfism
- **thin (underweight) / fat (overweight, obese)**: extreme manifestation of obesity should notably be the subject of legislative measures, as with anorexia
- **young / old**: extremes in this connection raise particular issues in developing appropriate legislation to ensure that they are rooted out, especially given the aging of the population and efforts to prolong life
- **light / dark skin colour**: these extremes pose particular legislative problems given the efforts of the light coloured to use skin lightener to achieve a tan, and the efforts of the dark coloured to use skin lighter

Extreme forms of body modification (such as cosmetic surgery) should be the subject of legislation, except when it is designed to remedy physical extremes. This notably relates to efforts to achieve genitalia (breasts, penises) of extreme size. It would also preclude any form of body piercing or extreme tattooing [more]. Careful consideration would need to be given to sex change operations, given that they respond to a psycho-behavioural extreme but seek to recover a degree of normality. A particular concern would be with the elimination of any form of physical abnormality. This could be done by at birth or when such abnormalities are detected prior to birth. Any genetic abnormalities would require careful attention, possibly through legislation to prohibit child-bearing.

**Sex / Reproduction**: Here the forms of extremism to be eliminated are primarily behavioural but which nevertheless give rise to extreme physical, social or psychological consequences:

- sexual deviation, whether in the form of homosexuality or trans-sexuality necessarily constitutes an undesirable extreme
- deviant sexual practices ("kinky sex"), whether in the form of sado-masochism, or those forms of sex which deviate from the so-called "missionary position"
- extremes of sexual performance, whether excessive frequency or minimal frequency need to be addressed
- extremes of fertility, exceeding or failing to meet the replacement rate, should also be the subject of legislation
- extremes of fecundity, namely differences in the physiological ability to have children (notably as constrained within in the period between menarche and menopause in women) also calls for legislative attention

**Health**: There are risks associated with bodily health and care. Under certain conditions, as determined by risk analysis [more], such risks may be extreme and should be rooted out.

**Sport**: Careful legislative attention is required in addressing extremism in sport (cf. The Extreme Sports Channel), whether in the form of excess or unhealthy failure to engage in a minimum of sport

- extreme exertion of any kind is to be avoided, notably in training regimes
- the pursuit in sport of extremes of speed, height, duration, or stamina should be prohibited
- dangerous (motor racing, hang-gliding, mountaineering) or "extreme sports" (such as extreme skiing, wrestling, extreme mountain biking, bull riding or extreme ironing) should be prohibited. Unfortunately high adrenaline extreme sports are now being advocated in the UK as a way of encouraging young people to take up exercise and reverse a tendency towards indolence (*Fitness campaign goes to extremes*, The Guardian, 30 August 2005)
- extreme competition as promoted by the Olympic Games and other venues should be prohibited, as with the pursuit of records (catalogued in the *Guinness Book of Records*)

**Extreme weather and natural disasters**: In seeking to root out extremism, it is appropriate to consider extremes of weather, such as hurricanes, especially since they cause damage on a far greater scale than terrorism, or even nuclear weapons.

### Cultural manifestations of extremism

**Cultural traditions**: Unusual cultural practices should be prohibited as a celebration of extremism. Examples include:

- blood sports: bull fighting, cock fighting, badger baiting, fox hunting
- curious and unusual practices

**Festivals / Fairs / Exhibitions**: Events which promote extremes of exhibitionism of any form should be prohibited. Examples include:

- the annual *Edinburgh Fringe Festival* is clearly an example of an event that encourages extremism within the context of the
Edinburgh International Festival
- the annual Glastonbury Festival is a clear example of a celebration of extremism that should be rooted out
- the annual Notting Hill Carnival is another clear case of celebrating extremism
- fairs and amusement parks with "rides", "tunnels" and oddities of various kinds also encourage extreme experiences which are no longer to be tolerated
- certain forms of exhibition, possibly presented for their supposed aesthetic or curiosity value, effectively constitutes celebrations of extremism and should necessarily be prohibited

Theatre: Experimental theatre, notably drama presenting extreme perspectives (as at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival), should be the subject of legislation

Media / Television / Film / DVDs: There is a long-standing debate regarding the extremes to be tolerated or forbidden. Clearly in seeking to root out extremism, the barrier must be raised even further -- with the advice of fundamentalist religious groups -- as illustrated by the following examples:
- reality TV: coincidentally, as noted above, Blair's initiative against extremism came at what was described by a Guardian editorialist in the following terms: "Future historians may note the precise moment when the nadir of mainstream broadcasting in Britain was plumbed as occurring at 10.57pm on August 2 2005. That was the moment Channel 4 broadcast 'highlights' of events in the Big Brother house that included a drunken 20-year-old woman appearing to masturbate with a wine bottle..." [more].
- violence: extremes of violence in the media have long been a topic of concern and now appear to call for even more drastic levels of control
- "adult periodicals" ("girly magazines") have long been presented by feminists as an extreme form of entertainment and should therefore be forbidden
- "adult movies", as with periodicals, clearly represent an extreme form of entertainment which have long been considered questionable and should therefore be forbidden

Music: There is a long history of identifying extreme forms of music which should now be the subject of legislation. Examples include:
- the Catholic Church's concern with the diabolus in musica ("the Devil's interval") or through evocative music perceived as excessively appealing to the senses -- to the point of dangerously obscuring any relation to the divine.
- more recently Christian fundamentalists have vigorously articulated their concerns with regard to extreme forms of music ("Christian" Rock Music: Christian or Satanic? 1999) [more]
- terrifying music: "extreme music" is a focus of a number of groups and has a popular audience with a specialist magazine (Terrorizer: Extreme Music, No Boundaries). Subjecting terrorist suspects to such music for long periods is one of the modern techniques of interrogation. It is also used in certain forms of urban warfare to intimidate opponents.

Literature / Lyrics / Language: There is a long history of concern with the expression of extremes, or sympathy for them, through literature and the lyrics of songs. Their role in incitement to any form of extremism should therefore be reviewed, possibly with the objective of burning such books and prohibiting the use of such lyrics. Examples include:
- books: the Catholic Church developed an Index Librorum Prohibitorum (an Index of Prohibited Books), to signify the exact list books, the reading of which was once forbidden to Catholics by the highest ecclesiastical authority [more]. Consideration should be given to the publication of an equivalent list for extremist books. Books typically considered to express extremist perspectives include:
  - Guinness Book of Records
  - [more] [more]
- lyrics understood to extoll extremist perspectives or which are considered extremely offensive
- offensive language: use of extreme forms of obscene, offensive and abusive language of any form has also been the subject of considerable debate which could be used to considerable tighten the rules against extremes -- notably the use of the f*** word on the BBC
- jargon: use of extremely abstruse jargon, notably by bureaucrats and in legislation, should also be prohibited
- minority languages reflecting extreme minority groups should also be prohibited through the manner in which they provide a necessarily supportive context for extremism; historical precedents include the criminalization by the British government of the use of Gaelic, Welsh, etc

Travel and tourism: There are various forms of "extreme travel" and "extreme tourism" (cf Extreme Road Trip), notably including travel to places where climatic or socio-political conditions are extreme (to the point of constituting extreme levels of risk) [more] [more]. This preoccupation could usefully be seen in the light of the legislative challenge of extreme environments (cf Society For Human Performance In Extreme Environments) in rooting out such extremism. These should be more clearly prohibited by legislation, beyond the guidance provided by travel advisory notices.

Education of the challenged and the super-gifted: It is clear that both the intellectually challenged and the super-gifted constitute examples intellectual extremes which call for prescriptive legislative measures:
- super-gifted: extreme intelligence and creativity clearly call for restrictive measures because of the abnormal insights to which they may give rise -- and which may well terrify others. Legislative measures should notably ensure that such exceptional intelligence is rooted out and not allowed to affect the thinking of government or the intelligence services, or the think tanks on which they depend
super-challenged: extreme lack of intelligence, including exceptional degrees of stupidity, should also be the subject of legislative measures -- as previously envisaged in eugenic programmes by a number of countries.

In the search for extremists, it is appropriate to recognize the extent of extremism in universities as reported in September 2005 by Anthony Glees of the Centre for Intelligence and Security Studies of Brunel University. One comment (cf Extremist groups active inside UK universities, The Guardian, 16 September 2005) noted:

> Extremist organisations are operating on university campuses across the country and pose a serious threat to national security, according to a new report. Yesterday the education secretary, Ruth Kelly, ordered vice-chancellors to clamp down on student extremists in the wake of the July terror attacks in London.

Given the range of strange student organizations characteristic of any campus, often pursuing the weirdest enthusiasms, it is clear that many will have to beware, especially those with abnormally low memberships. Curious bodies such as Yale University's Skull and Bones Society would be prime candidates for such a crackdown [more]. Such extremist groups might be usefully characterized, notably in the fraternities and sororities of American educational institutions, by the use of hazing rituals to terrorize neophytes [more]. The more terror evoked by seniors, the more fun it is for them -- what better preparation for the Abu Ghraibs of the future. Eliminating their use of hazing, as advocated by the StopHazing.org, might go far to eliminating the culture of violence that induces other forms of terrorism, whether by those so educated or by others in reaction to the terrorism perpetrated by that culture.

Psychological, religious and ideological manifestations of extremism

Abnormality: The extreme forms of abnormality characteristic of psychological and behavioural disorders should be prohibited by appropriate legislative measures. Whether it is sufficient to incarcerate and/or medicate the individuals merits careful attention, in comparison with more drastic measures if such such extremism is genuinely to be rooted out. Criteria for developmental disabilities can be psychological, social, or administrative.

- **extreme arrested intellectual development**: Psychologically, developmental disabilities mean an arrested intellectual development, primarily the development which is usually measured by an intelligence test. As a critical boundary, international praxis has set two standard deviations from the average score on the intelligence scale (100), that is to say an IQ under 70-75. Slightly more than 2% of a large tested group fit into this category. WHO sets the boundary for mild mental retardation disability at IQ 50-70. [more]

- **extreme intelligence**: many groups have been proposed or formed to promote or celebrate extreme intelligence. A helpful summary is provided by Darryl Miyaguchi (A Short (and Bloody) History of the High I.Q. Societies, 2000) who provides several tables covering active, defunct and only envisaged. That for active Societies follows (with links to descriptive history in his report). In terms of the earlier statistical approach, it is clear that members of all these bodies are necessarily an exemplification of extremism that it is now required to root out.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Society Name</th>
<th>Admission Requirement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thinkers International</td>
<td>ability to write well, civil behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mensa</td>
<td>98 %-ile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intertel</td>
<td>99 %-ile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOPS</td>
<td>99 %-ile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colloquy</td>
<td>99.5 %-ile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetic Geniuses</td>
<td>99.5 %-ile + published poetry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerebrals.com</td>
<td>99.7 %-ile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESPE</td>
<td>99.9 %-ile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triple Nine</td>
<td>99.9 %-ile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OATHS</td>
<td>99.9 %-ile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quadrivium</td>
<td>99.9 %-ile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gila</td>
<td>99.9 %-ile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prometheus</td>
<td>99.997 %-ile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ultranet</td>
<td>99.997 %-ile</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mega</td>
<td>99.9999 %-ile</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pi Society</td>
<td>99.9999 %-%ile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giga Society</td>
<td>99.99999999 %-%ile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **extreme behaviours: ***

Religious practices: In this case the concern is to identify practices that constitute extremism, or encourage extreme perspectives, and should therefore be subject to legislative measures. Noteworthy is the Beyond Extreme focus of the Campus Crusade for Christ International. Examples include:

- **extreme prayer**: this is widely held to be necessary by "extreme Christianity", as an "extreme measure" necessary to turn the world upside down [more]. For some, regular prayer five times a day, as practiced by Muslims, is perceived as extreme.

- **extreme pilgrimage**: pilgrims, such as in Tibetan, follow extensive circuits, prostrating themselves on the ground every
couple of metres. Some engage in the extreme endeavour to prostrate themselves over hundreds of kilometres.

- **extreme meditation**: in some forms of Buddhism extreme processes of study and physical training are required; extreme meditation is considered necessary to achieve "self-understanding".
- **extreme fasting**: there is a long history of this practice, known as anorexia mirabilis or holy anorexia was motivated by religious devotion; current advocates have been condemned as inciting suicide. The Buddha is alleged to have decided that extreme fasting was not the path to enlightenment.
- **extreme mortification of the flesh**: this may range from denying oneself certain bodily pleasures, through deliberately choosing an impoverished lifestyle (exemplified by vows of poverty), to extremes of self-inflicted pain (beating, whipping, flagellation, or other means). [more] It is notably practiced by Opus Dei [more].
- **extreme devotional practices**
- **extreme isolation**: monasticism (ashrams, hermitage)
- **extreme dietary practices**: these may include such as: fasting, and use of laxatives, diet pills, and vomiting to induce spiritual experiences
- **extreme medical practices**: blood transfusion (Jehovahs Witnesses)
- **extreme conversion practices**: posthumous conversion (Mormons); criminalization of conversion from Islam (Malaysia)
- **extreme social practices**: Plymouth Brethren
- **extreme indulgences**: the remission before God of the temporal punishment due for sins already forgiven as far as their guilt is concerned. [more]
- **extreme unction**: this is a sacrament instituted by Christ to give spiritual aid and comfort and perfect spiritual health, including, if need be, the remission of sins, and also, conditionally, to restore bodily health, to Christians who are seriously ill; it consists essentially in the unction by a priest of the body of the sick person, accompanied by a suitable form of words. [more]

**Religious and other beliefs**: In this case the concern is to isolate forms of extremism exacerbating violent discrimination against individuals or peoples. In seeking to root out extremism, the question might be asked whether there is any more hard evidence for the existence of al-Qaida than there is for the existence of God. There is a firm and widespread belief in the existence of both, sustained by the assertions of many interested parties through appropriate media. Both beliefs are associated with terrifying acts of violence of disastrous proportions -- whether "Acts of al-Qaida" or "Acts of God" -- similarly handled in the fine print of insurance policies (cf Is God a Terrorist: Definitional game-playing by the Coalition of the Willing? 2004). But the actual existence in either case of a coordinating entity remains purely a matter of belief articulated by those with vested interests.

Given the nature of this belief, whatever the explanatory satisfaction it offers to individuals in terms of their particular understanding of the evidence to which they have access, it must be concluded that such beliefs are examples of extremism in their own right. This is particularly so in the case of religions whose representatives historically have the greatest difficulty in agreeing on the evidence that they have for any supreme being (cf Justin Cartwright, Beyond Belief, The Guardian, 13 August 2005). Nevertheless the nature of such beliefs in the paranormal merit treatment as extremism, notably in the light of those repeatedly documented by the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (The Skeptical Inquirer):

- **extreme religious beliefs**: most religions typically consider the beliefs of other religions and sects as extreme and worthy of corrective measures. This was recently exemplified by the religious perspectives underlying Mel Gibson's highly controversial movie, The Passion of the Christ [more]. These are to be contrasted with the rejection by the Buddha of extreme perspectives in favour of a Middle Way -- itself to be considered extreme by other religions.
- **belief in God**: any belief in God may be considered as a manifestation of extremism, especially when those who hold such an extreme belief are unable to reconcile their understanding in a non-violent manner with others who share that belief, but are of a different denomination. However the historically marked tendency to even more violent behaviour towards those holding a belief in some alternative understanding of deity is a clear indication of the inherent extremism of religion. Careful attention should be given to corrective measures to prohibit any institutionalized religion that has demonstrated this propensity on the part of its followers and with the complicity of its leaders.
- **belief in demonic force**: (Devil, Satan, etc):
- **belief in angels and miracles**: in the absence of acceptable proof, this extreme belief defies all rational explanation
- **superstitious belief**: superstitions, such as concern with the evil eye, are unacceptable extremes
- **belief in literal interpretation of sacred texts**: Karen Armstrong (Unholy strictures, The Guardian, 11 August 2005) points to the dangers of the extreme belief that literal truth can be found in religious texts.
- **belief in extraterrestrials**: crop circles, UFOs
- **unusual beliefs**: rapture, flat earth, hollow earth
- **exclusivist beliefs**: in this case typical extremes range from belief that one's leader is a reincarnation of a deity (or that one is oneself), to the status of one's people as Chosen People. This form of extremism occurs in both religious and nonreligious contexts. Many slaveholders, a largely Christian group, saw themselves as chosen to keep and sell slaves. The Abolitionists, who were also largely Christian, considered themselves chosen by God to bring freedom and equal rights to the slaves; other charities see themselves as chosen by God to care for the suffering. The Nazis held the extremist view of the superiority of the Aryan race to be superior. Americans were driven by a belief in Manifest Destiny across the continent, irrespective of the impact on indigenous peoples.
- **belief in human incarnation of divinity**: a number of religions are inspired by the extreme belief that their founder, or a current representative, is an incarnation divinity or a specially endowed messenger. Ironically Jesus would now have as much difficulty as Osama bin Laden in passing though airport security -- especially given the criminal record of both of them for damage to property in the financial district. Both would in all probability be strip searched. On any system of public transportation people would avoid sharing a compartment with him -- especially in the USA or the UK. Jesus, like
Mohammed, was both an extremist and a "radical cleric."

- **extreme Christianity:** this is claimed to require a complete change in habits, relationships and priorities. It is a life not to be understood from without and does not make worldly sense. **Extreme Christianity** has its own language and physical risks. Extreme Christians take risks (professional, physical, social, financial, etc) to pursue what they do. For others, the risks do not seem to justify the reward. There seems to be a disconnect between rational thought and the actions of an Extreme Christian. The test of extreme Christianity is whether one is doing what the world is not willing to do, living in a way the world does not, and living a life that is transformed and renewed by the power and presence of Christ. Extreme Christians are those allowing God to work in their lives and follow Him where He leads, be it to the corner of the block or the corner of the world. [more] It should not be forgotten that the Ku Klux Klan is also of Christian inspiration -- and is presumably also to be rooted out. The leading US tele-evangelist Pat Robertson, exemplified extreme Christianity when he recommended, on the **Christian Broadcasting Network**, to his 7 million viewers the assassination of the president of Venezuela:

> "We have the ability to take him out, and I think the time has come to exercise that ability... It's a whole lot easier to have some of the covert operatives do the job and then get it over with." [more more more]

Reverend Robertson, a former US Presidential candidate, is founder of the **Christian Coalition of America** -- a prime supporter of George Bush. Neither George Bush nor the US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, condemned such incitements with any vigour. Robertson subsequently attempted to deny that he called for the assassination [more].

Incitement of this extreme kind will need to be handled with the same rigour as that applied to the "radical clerics" of Islam. Evangelists have claimed that Reverend Robertson does not represent the views of evangelical Christians [more]. This clearly implies that, those whose views he does represent should be "rooted out" in the spirit of eliminating "death cults" from the body of the Christian community.

- **extreme Islam:** Adam Parfrey (**Extreme Islam: Anti-American Propaganda of Muslim Fundamentalism**, Feral House, 2001)
- **extreme Judaism** [more]
- **extreme Greek orthodox** [more]

**Expression of ideas / Freedom of speech:** Although freedom of speech is a provision of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** ("and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief... has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people"), there is concern that it may not adequately provide for the need to root out extremism and the expression of extremist views [more]. New legislative measures "clarifying" such instruments, and providing for appropriate forms of censorship (cf **Index on Censorship**, founded in 1972), may, for example, need to be developed with respect to:

  - **religious ideas:** expression of extreme religious beliefs may need to be prohibited, notably regarding any form of deity or afterlife, that do not reflect the average pattern of beliefs
  - **political ideas:** expression of extreme political beliefs may need to be prohibited, notably regarding the integrity of the democratic processes and their leadership, that do not reflect the average pattern of beliefs
  - **social ideas:** expression of extreme social beliefs may need to be prohibited, notably regarding alternative forms of social organization and the equitable distribution of resources
  - **aesthetic ideas:** expression of extreme aesthetic beliefs and preferences may need to be prohibited
  - **humour:** extreme forms of humour may need to be prohibited, notably that critical of democratically elected leadership, or in anyway condoning terrorism

**Lifestyle manifestations of extremism**

**Food / Diet:** The concern in this case is the identification and prohibition of extremes in the access to food, the manner in which it is used, or the extreme varieties of foodstuffs. Examples include:

  - **over-eating:** this form of extreme consumption is well-recognized as conducive to obesity. As bulimia, it may also be associated with psycho-behavioural disorders
  - **under-eating:** this extreme is well-recognized in the form of the extreme hunger of the impoverished, notably in developing countries where it frequently leads to death. As anorexia, it may also be associated with psycho-behavioural disorders
  - **malnourishment:** this is the pursuit of unhealthy dietary extremes, whether out of preference or for lack of access to any alternatives
  - **extreme dietary regimes:** whether in response to obesity, other health concerns, or ethical considerations, there may be a questionable preference for extreme diets
  - **exotic consumption:** this extreme form of consumption focuses on exotic foodstuffs, including endangered species
  - **extremely expensive food products:** food miles ***

**Use of addictive substances:** Use of addictive substances has long been subject to condemnation by religious authorities. Extreme patterns of such consumption now merit more severe sanction, despite the major loss of tax revenue to government.

  - excessive alcohol consumption:
  - smoking
**Dress**: Extreme forms of dress have long been subject to condemnation by religious authorities. The laxity permitted in the modern secular society needs to be reviewed (as pioneered in the Singapore dress code). Areas of concern include:

- **modesty**: clearly extremely revealing clothing needs to be prohibited because of the inappropriate thoughts and behaviours that it evokes. A particular concern is the length, cleavage and transparency of garments (notably exemplified by thongs), or such extremes as nudism
- **hairstyles**: extreme hairstyles, whether male or female, will also need to be prohibited
- **religious dress**: use of clothing and accessories with religious significance should be seen as a form of extremism in a sexual society (notably following the legislative leadership of France with regard to the *hijab* and analogous accessories). An especially challenging extreme is the preferred form of dress of bearded radical clerics who closely resemble representations of historical Jesus -- raising the issue of whether Jesus would be able to pass through security check points without being strip searched.
- **accessories**: extreme use of accessories such as jewelry, chains, or equivalent items (especially requiring body piercing) also calls for prohibition

**Design**: There is continuing debate regarding appropriate architecture, decor and design, and the necessity to avoid extremes.

- extreme design
- extreme decors
- unusual

**Transportation**: distances between home and work, and the costs of transdportation, have given rise to the phenomeon of **extreme commuting**.

**Working conditions**: A major long-term focus of the International Labour Organisation and its partner trade unions has been extreme working conditions under which people sustain their livelihoods. Many international conventions are designed to curtail such extremes. Related to that issue is the choice that people may make to working extremely long hours under abnormal working conditions [more](#) [more](#)

**Exotica**: Interest in exotica represents a particular form of extremism which needs to be prohibited. Variations include:

- exotic plants are obtained for decoration (notably as features of gardens) or experiment, notably by importing species that may well be endangered
- exotic animals are obtained as pets, for zoological gardens, or for experiment, notably by importing species that may well be endangered
- cultural artefacts are obtained for decoration, or for museums, notably including ritual objects (skulls, etc) which may be highly valued by the cultures from which they were obtained, often by theft
- erotica

**Socio-political manifestations of extremism**

**Behaviour**: this includes extreme forms of behaviour, typical described as anti-social, all of which call for legislation:

- extreme noise, notably in urban environments
- extreme odours are a typical concern in high density urban environments (cooking smells, etc). This concern may extend to the use of perfumes and deodorants, as pioneered by directives in the city of Halifax [more]
- violent behaviour is a form of extremism characteristic of urban environments, notably in relation to consumption of alcohol
- abusive behaviour is an extreme form of verbal violence
- extreme crowd behaviour
- extreme driver behaviour, notably includes dangerous driving, and the extreme attitudes to which it gives rise [more]
- extreme indulgences: debauch, lassitude, self-delusion, etc
- extreme charity
- extreme kindness

**Social experiments**: these includes forms of collective organization which, in challenging the appropriateness of the norm, necessarily constitute extremism:

- intentional communities
- communes
- cooperatives
- local exchange trading systems (alternative currencies)
- non-nuclear family arrangements possibly involving forms of homosexual relationships, polygamy, polyandry, or children born out of wedlock

**Incarceration**: use of incarceration is one extreme response to the control of extremism in society, and raises questions about how it is itself to be rooted out. Examples include:

- penal institutions: these are necessarily environments in which extreme forms of punishment are carried out, with or
without the knowledge of the authorities. There is also the concern with extreme periods of incarceration (5 lifetimes**) and use of the death penalty as the extreme sanction

- **hospices**: these are environments in which those in extremis may be cared for, notably as a consequence of age and/or disability. Arguably it is the fact that they have to be cared for in such environments that is the essence of the extremism that needs to be rooted out
- **mental institutions**: these are environments in which persons exhibiting extreme forms of behaviour are held; they may be subject to systematic abuse, with or without the knowledge of the authorities or their relatives

**Organizations and groups**: many organizations, some of them secret, are created to promote or sustain views that are perceived by some to be extremist in relation to those of the population in general. Examples include:

- **extremist organizations**: The *Encyclopedia of Modern Worldwide Extremists and Extremist Groups* (2004) lists some 290 of the most active and influential extremists and extremist groups in operation around the globe -- highlighting the point that people of all ideologies, religions, regions, and races share a readiness for violence. [more](http://extremism.com) [more](http://extremism.com) [more](http://extremism.com)
- **secret societies**: considered to operate under extreme secrecy (Freemasons, Opus Dei, etc), possibly with their degrees and initiations effectively defining those who are most extreme.
- **gangs**

**Training and education**: some practices in this respect are extreme in comparison with normal approaches to training or education and call for corrective legislative measures. Examples include:

- military training in general uses extreme measures (especially in the case of special military or security forces) which may endanger recruits, or result in their death (cf [extreme self protection](http://extremism.com))
- athletics training may involve extreme levels of exertion which call for collective measures
- management training and team building in some cases involves bonding exercises of an extreme nature that need to be more effectively constrained
- remedial education camps ("boot camps") use military style techniques that call for corrective measures
- religious education may, in some contexts, involve extremely high levels of discipline that call for corrective measures, especially in the light of the recent spate of sexual abuse scandals
- outward bound

**Injustice**: There is long-term concern with extreme injustice in many countries which invite new action to root out such evidence of extremism which is recognized as a breeding ground for terrorism [more](http://extremism.com)

**Inequality**: extremes of inequality, typical of the class structure of societies and encouraging sympathy for terrorists, call for corrective legislative measures.

- impunity
- privileges
- grace-and-favour

**Legislation**: Those responsible for the articulation or implementation of extreme legislation may themselves be perceived to be extreme in their views. For example, the website *Extreme Ashcroft* calls for US Attorney General John Ashcroft "to leave office because of his extreme views" [more](http://extremism.com). Examples of extreme legislation include:

- **criminal extremists**: Documents obtained by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) determined that labels such as "extremist" and "criminal extremist" were freely used to falsely label many peaceful activist organizations as "criminal extremist" (for which no definition was provided). The terms are widely used among law enforcement agencies that collect and disseminate political intelligence (notably the Law Enforcement Intelligence Network) [more](http://extremism.com).
- **foreign extremists** [more](http://extremism.com)
- **solitary extremists**: In the USA a "classified" intelligence bulletin generated for local law enforcement agencies warns of "individual extremists" perpetuating "acts of anti-American violence in the United States." Such lone extremists may operate independently or on the fringes of established extremist groups, either alone or with one or two accomplices. [more](http://extremism.com)
- **extremist websites**: Further to Blair's initiative against extremists consideration is being given to interpreting or supplementing the Public Order Act in the UK which currently specifies that it is an offence to use threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour or distribute material which is threatening or abusive so that another person believes that immediate unlawful violence will be used against them or they will be caused harassment, alarm or distress. These welcome measures will preclude any criticism of government issues -- such criticism being effectively criminalized. [more](http://extremism.com)

**Political dissidence**: extremism is a well-recognized phenomenon in politics. *Extreme democracy* is itself a focus of attention. Jimmy Carter (*Carter calls on Americans to repudiate 'extremist doctrines*', CNN, 27 July 2004) said the primary issue in the November election was whether "America will provide global leadership that springs from unity and integrity" at home, "or whether extremist doctrines and manipulation of the truth will define America's role in the world." In 2003, the European Parliamentary Assembly recognized "remains concerned at the resurgence of extremist movements and parties in Europe, and considers that no member state is immune to the intrinsic threats that extremism poses to democracy" [more](http://extremism.com).

Careful attention is required to set up indicators of right-wing and left-wing extremism so that the parties expressing those political views can be effectively rooted out. The core challenge is how to distinguish acceptable dissidence from unacceptable dissidence, given that parties in opposition frequently label each others' views as extremist. In the UK, examples of extremist
groups, if only in terms of percentage of the popular vote, would necessarily include:

- **British Nationalist Party**
- **Monster Raving Loony Party**, founded by Screaming Lord Sutch [more]
- **Natural Law Party**, Based on the ideas of His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and the Transcendental Meditation movement
- **Green Party**

Some 198 forms of nonviolent forms of political protest have been identified by Gene Sharp (198 Methods of Nonviolent Protest and Persuasion), many of which could be considered extreme. Some extreme forms of protest may include:

- suicide bombing
- picketing and vigils
- sit-ins, love-ins
- demonstrations and marches: as exemplified by the Israeli settlers, protesting their expulsion from Gaza by the Israeli government. Given the Israeli hardline position against extremism, this might perhaps be rationalized as a case of "defensive extremism", by analogy with "defensive military action"
- displaying banners on tall buildings
- dumping products: such as in front of government buildings, or corporate HQs
- protest disrobing
- rude gestures and taunting officials
- renouncing honours, notably those celebrating any form of extremism
- wearing of symbols: exemplified by the wearing of the Star of David by Danes in protest against the Nazi edict that Jews identify themselves in this way. It is to be expected that as part of the process of rooting out Muslim extremists, Muslims may be required to wear a crescent symbol.
- hunger strikes: this is a method of non-violent resistance in which participants fast as an act of political protest or to achieve a goal such as a policy change. Mohandas Gandhi was a leading exponent of this form of extremism [more]

Military action: A variety of issues need to be carefully considered as contexts or exemplars of extremism:

- **weaponry**: there is a clear case for recognizing the development, manufacture and deployment of weaponry as exemplifying extremism. Any form of arms race, or aspirations to develop and acquire bigger and more powerful weapons clearly constitutes a form of extremism that merits rooting out.
- **indiscriminate use of force**: weapons such as thermonuclear devices, cluster bombs, thermobaric weapons, and other so-called inhumane weapons should clearly be rooted out. The timing of the Blair/Bush proposals to coincide with the 60th Anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagaskaki was particularly appropriate.
- **military involvement in extremist activities**: this has been a matter of continuing concern to the US Department of Defense. In the 1990s the concern focused on white supremacist groups (especially in the light of their tattoos on soldiers) [more]

Crisis:

- **military crisis**: "in extremis" is defined by the US military as a situation of such exceptional urgency that immediate action must be taken to minimize imminent loss of life or catastrophic degradation of the political or military situation. Given the need to root out extremism, it is unclear how this should be applied to the assessment of Rep. Ellen Tauscher, a ranking Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, who indicated that: "There's no policy to deal with the fact we have a military in extremis." (Sidney Blumenthal (A military in extremis, 27 January 2005) [more]
- **legal crisis**: the use of torture in response to terrorism has created a crisis in law, notably addressed by Michael S. Moore (Terror and Torture: Ethics and Law in Extremis, 2003) [more]. Again this raises the issue of how such extremism should be rooted out.

Scientific and technological manifestations of extremism

**Research**: Extreme science is a contemporary focus. Given the crises of the planet, it is readily argued that the preoccupations of some of the sciences are necessarily extreme distractions, especially given the disproportionate resources allocated to them:

- physics through its concern for the extremely small and infrequent
- astronomy through its concern for the extremely large and distant, and also infrequent (eg Extreme Universe Space Observatory)
- biology through its concern with extremely rare species (including extreme eukaryotes) and its extremely questionable experimentation on animals and on humans. Extreme eukaryotes, otherwise known as extremophiles, are a biological curiosity on Earth, but could represent the most frequent form of life in the universe [more | more]

**Technology**: Given the crises of the planet, it is readily argued that some of the technological preoccupations are extreme distractions of questionable benefit, especially given the disproportionate resources allocated to them:

- aerospace through the development of extremely high-tech vehicles to travel to other bodies in the solar system
- defence technology through the development of extremely high-tech offensive weaponry and surveillance technology of
Every higher degrees of invasiveness
- Vehicle technology, notably through the preoccupation with development of high fuel consumption SUVs
- **Extreme programming** is an approach to software engineering beyond the limitations of object oriented methods. [more]
- **Extreme engineering**

### Technopoles and networks of excellence:
- **Networks of excellence**: the promotion of centres and networks of excellence, notably by intergovernmental programmes (such as those of the European Commission), should be considered as effectively promoting a form of intellectual extremism
- **Technopoles and incubators**: the promotion of technopoles and "incubators", notably through the collaboration of business, industry and universities, should be considered as effectively promoting or condoning a form of intellectual extremism

### Economic manifestations of extremism

#### Resource consumption patterns:
- Energy
- Non-renewable resources

#### Economic risk:
- **Extreme debt**: individuals and collective entities may continue to operate at extreme levels of indebtedness. This kind of financial extremism will no longer be permissible.
- **Financial risk**: venture capitalists typically specialize in extremely risky investments. Such undertakings will now need to be subject to legislative prohibition.
- **Investment risk**: certain types of mortgage bonds carry extreme risk because of prepayments and sensitivity to interest rate changes. One of the statistical measures of investment risk is standard deviation. This measures a stock’s volatility, regardless of the cause. In statistical terms, 68% of the time the stock’s range of returns will fall within one standard deviation of the average return, while 95% of the time the stock’s range of returns will fall within two standard deviations. Clearly extreme investment risk, even greater volatility, is to be associated with yet higher standard deviations. Such extremism will now require legislative attention.
- **Insurance risk**: standard deviation is also a valuable measure of risk in any industrial sector [more]. It is now important to eliminate extreme levels of risk associated with higher standard deviations.
- **Business and industry risk**: independent of purely financial risk, some undertakings may be exposed to a range of levels risk against which they may seek insurance. Industries such as nuclear power and aerospace, may involve extreme levels of risk associated with the failure of a complex series of engineered systems resulting in highly undesirable outcomes. "Broadly acceptable" levels of risk may now have to be re-considered by regulatory bodies and new steps undertaken to avoid such business and industry extremism.
- **Occupational risk**: from a health and safety, and a related insurance perspective, many occupations carry an identifiable degree of risk. There are some occupations involving extreme risk which now need to be prohibited.
- **Accounting**: a concern beyond that raised by "creative accounting" is the emergence of a new phenomenon **extreme accounting**

#### Trade:
Various forms of aggressively extreme trade are now a common phenomenon. Policies in the form of various kinds of subsidy (such as the Common Agricultural Policy) are now perceived as extreme trade distortions. Extreme trade imbalance is a major concern in international economic policy. It may be associated with extreme trade dependency. Extreme trade depression is a concern in some sectors.

- Competition: the forces of globalization, technology, and economic liberalization are combining to make competition much more extreme, even for established companies [more]. This must necessarily be eliminated.
- Nuclear proliferation (heavy water Dimona)
- Weaponry, small arms
- Endangered species

#### Income:
Extremes of income disparity, long recognized as a major social issue, clearly need to be rooted out -- especially since it is acknowledged to be a factor in encouraging terrorism:

- **Extreme salaries**: in 2005 it was estimated that the highest paid CEOs of companies in the UK earned 113 times the salary of the lowest paid worker. The salary extremes of those associated with the "gravy train" of intergovernmental institutions have also been the subject of criticism. As President of the European Union, Tony Blair could usefully focus his attention on the extreme salaries of the Members of the European Parliament.
- **Extremely low incomes**: More than one in five of the world’s population, well over one billion people, live on less than US$1 per day, and more than half of the world’s people make do on less than US$2 per day. Extremely low incomes are matched by deprivation in numerous other areas. This form of extremism, a long term preoccupation of development agencies, calls for much higher priority action.

#### Corruption
Possible implications

Through this extreme approach to "extremism", it is possible that we are now witnessing a repetition of historical processes associated with the centuries-long conflict between religions. Each religion knows what is best for the world in the light of its unique revelation and manifest destiny -- each is deeply concerned at the horrendous condition which unbelievers are in, and their consequent influence on the rest of society. Given the complicity of religions in violent conflict, which they sanctimoniously regret, it is unfortunate that the learning capacity of such religions seems to be extremely low. History suggests that further violence is to be expected as a consequence of the failure of religions to deal with extreme perspectives, whether within their own community, or in their perception of each other. In some cases it might even be said that they are acting in self-fulfilment of prophecies of their own sacred literature.

In scoping out their anti-extremist policy as Christians, Bush and Blair may choose to be inspired by the eugenic perspectives of Adolf Hitler, also a Christian, in seeking to improve the quality of the Aryan norm in Germany. In 1933 approximately nine million Jews lived in the 21 countries of Europe that would be occupied by Germany during the war. By 1945 two out of every three European Jews had been killed as a result of the Final Solution -- effectively eliminating those beyond 3 or 4 standard deviations? [more] This is an example of a radical approach to the rooting out of extremism by Christians, with the complicity of other Christians. Such an approach had been previously employed by Christians through the processes of the Inquisition in an effort to root out "heresy" across Europe, notably by those suspected of practicing witchcraft and consorting with demonic forces -- terrorizing local populations. "Protestants" -- also considered the "extremists" of the time, left Europe for the USA as a consequence. It is only logical that Christians, ironically now allied with Jews, having failed to learn from those processes, should endeavour to repeat the exercise in relation to Muslim "extremists".

Given the way in which "extremism" is practiced or tolerated by the state, it would appear that an exemption to the rooting out of extremism will be made in the case of what might be termed "defensive extremism", by analogy with "defensive military action". This would include:

- the capacity to intervene militarily in other countries in defense of one's own extreme needs for resources and to impose one's own extremist perspective -- to undermine the threat to one's own culture of the extreme perspective cultivated there.
- the capacity to wall off communities (physically, legally, economically or economically) to sustain the extreme perspectives cultivated there and to exclude the extreme perspectives outside such gated communities

The approach to rooting out extremism is however long overdue, and much to be welcomed, in certain areas of human activity to which international institutions have long drawn attention. These include policies sustaining extremism in the following sectors:

- economic sector: extreme imbalance of trade, extreme income disparities, extreme protectionism
- environment: extreme exploitation of non-renewable resources, extreme pollution, extreme destruction of wildlife and endangered species, extreme destruction of rainforests
- social sector: extreme social injustice, extreme forms of elitism
- health sector: extreme ill-health, extreme inadequacy of health services
- military sector: proliferation of extremely dangerous and inhumane weapons
- law and order: extremely invasive surveillance
- education: extreme ignorance, extreme stupidity

For every individual, it is worth considering which of their activities or beliefs may be exceptional, unusual, original, or even eccentric, in some way -- to the point of placing them several standard deviations outside the norm. It is such extremism which is scheduled to be rooted out -- and it is on such propensities that more normal neighbours will be encouraged to report.

In considering the envisaged struggle to root out extremism, it is worth recalling a quotation made famous by Martin Niemöller:

> First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out -- because I was not a communist;
> Then they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out -- because I was not a socialist;
> Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out -- because I was not a trade unionist;
> Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out -- because I was not a Jew;
> Then they came for me -- and there was no one left to speak out for me.

One example of an "extremist" speaking out, is a mother of a soldier killed in Iraq who is camped in protest outside George Bush's ranch in Texas -- where he claims to return to his roots. Cindy Sheehan makes the point that it is not whether or not one is an extremist, but what kind of extremist one is.

Moderation as extremism -- norms as extremist?

Reference was made earlier to an extremely insightful comment on extremism in an anonymous note entitled The Moderate as Extremist. The comment argues, for example:

- The usual argument in favor of the "moderate" position is to take a situation, argue that moderation is best in that situation and then pretend that this applies universally to all situations.... The "extremist" positions would be to either have lots of slavery or no slavery at all. On this issue an "extremist" position is undoubtedly correct -- we should have no slavery at all.... Not everything
should be in moderation…. We should not have genocide in moderation.

• Moderates are actually extremists, and far worse than many of the "extremists" they denounce. The idea that one should always take the "middle of the road" position on all issues is itself quite extreme…. By demanding a "middle of the road" position on everything the "moderate" is actually practicing a form of extremism. Moderate ideology is thus is self-refuting.

• A further problem with moderate ideology is that with the proper manipulation of the political spectrum one can make almost any political position the moderate one.

• In practice the moderate believes whatever happens to be the mainstream position(s) of the time…. Rational analysis is thrown aside and instead whatever is most popular is believed regardless of how wrong it may be. Anyone who does not go with the most popular ideas is denounced as "extremist." "Extremist" is essentially a derogatory term for any idea that is unpopular.

• Most moderates rely as much on stereotypes and anti-"extremist" prejudice as on rational arguments…. One common stereotype is that of the "violent extremist" who uses atrocities and terror to impose his/her way. While there have been "extremists" (people with unpopular views) who have used force, this stereotype is simply wrong. There are also "extremists" who are (theoretically) opposed to all use of violence under all circumstances. They are called pacifists. Moderates, on the other hand, have historically used extreme amounts of violence.

Such arguments point to the danger of associating norms with moral superiority and occupation of the moral highground. This is not an appropriate interpretation of the central peak of the Gaussian normal distribution !

Conclusion
Curiously, one of the principal allies of Bush and Blair in the Coalition of the Willing in "rooting out" extremism is the government of Australia. Being in a different hemisphere, on the other side of the world, Australians use an insightful alternative interpretation of "root" that may help understand the preference for this metaphor. Curiously Australians pride themselves on "rooting for underdogs" -- an interpretation shared by some Americans. Underdogs must necessarily now be perceived as "extremists", however much this exacerbates psychological contradictions and value conflicts. More importantly, however, it is clear that a most valuable distinction can now be made between:

• "rooting for" underdogs (whether "extremists" or not): this would appear to have been effectively the position of the international community in promoting concern over many decades for the various forms of extremism noted above (extreme ignorance, extreme poverty, extreme injustice, extreme income disparities, etc) -- without requiring that anything effective be actually done about them. "Rooting for" is actually a form of armchair engagement that implies no physical action whatsoever, except cheering the efforts of the underdogs and deploring their difficulties. Ironically much has been made in the USA about Osama bin Laden "rooting for" George Bush and his foreign policy [more more]

• "rooting out" extremists: finally, through Bush and Blair we finally have concrete legislative action to root out extremism of every kind. As yet the focus is narrowly on religious extremists, and of only one religion, but with such a precedent it should be possible to extend this to all religions and to the many other forms of extremism identified above.

In this connection it is worth asking whether many of the "virtual wars" in which humanity is currently engaged: "war on want", "war on corruption", "war on drugs", etc (cf Review of the Range of Virtual Wars: a strategic comparison with the global war against terrorism, 2005) have to date been effectively framed in the "rooting for" mode -- and not in the "rooting out" mode. With the new Bush/Blair approach to extremism, perhaps some tangible outcomes of these wars may finally become evident.

Given the propensity of both Bush and Blair to reframe what they have previously said in such a way as to deny that they ever said it or intended it, it is important to seize their insight of the moment in order to understand their underlying intention if it is likely to manifest in some other form. An excellent example is the declaration by Bush that America was engaged in a "crusade" -- without consciously reflecting on all its historical, political and cultural associations for those against whom the crusade is directed.

Institutionalized religion could be understood as being at the root of the current problems of terrorism -- as it has been through centuries of history in engendering and sustaining wars between peoples. It is no wonder that there is concern to avoid dialogue at any cost. In this sense religion itself could be usefully understood as a form of extremism in a secularized society. It might be asked whether its practice should therefore be severely constrained by law given the violence to which it demonstrably gives rise.

It is perhaps the extreme position taken by the major religions -- with respect to maximizing population growth through unrestrained reproduction -- that is doing most to aggravate the problems of human society and ensure maximum suffering in their present and near future (cf Spontaneous Initiation of Armageddon -- a heartfelt response to systemic negligence, 2004). It would appear that this is being done as a device to maximize disruptive pressures on society and on the natural environment in order to provoke a level of disaster that would necessitate divine intervention -- like a young arsonist perversely seeking to attract parental attention. This process is glorified as fulfillment of divine prophecy -- to which the leadership of the Coalition of the Willing subscribe.

In their extremism, religions are fundamentally irresponsible in failing to reconcile their existential insights through their extreme reliance on apparently irrefutable scriptures. The extremism of each in promoting its particular worldview is further marked by the effort to stereotype the others as extremist. This promotional effort of each to proselytize the world to their perspective -- "rooting for normalization" -- is therefore complementary to their promotion of efforts to "root out" extremism, namely those whose "heretical" worldview does not conform to their own.

Clearly the feature of most concern in rooting out extremism, is the severe reduction in cultural diversity. Aside from the refreshing features of diversity, a justification for much tourism, there is the concern at the inhibition of creativity. As consecrated in Ross Ashby's cybernetic "Law of Requisite Variety", such loss of diversity may severely constrain capacity to govern a complex system -- unless the undeclared strategy is to reduce the system to a level of complexity that makes it governable.
Such a simplification strategy might be understood as a means of "managing" a number of intractable complex issues by avoiding them or handing them simplistically:

- endemic inequality: by reducing extremes and making everyone average, the norms will come to exemplify the triumph of equality
- malnourishment and starvation
- extreme poverty
- proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
- increasing shortage of non-renewable resources
- unchecked spread of disease and potential for epidemics

What amounts to a "dumbing down" of a complex society may indeed be seen as an incapacity to deal with complexity. The focus is on distraction ("bread and circuses"), whether in the form of a worldwide witch hunt to once again eliminate heretics, or through the investment in complex toys more amenable to the binary limitations of the human mind -- such as sending rockets to Mars. Under the circumstances, perhaps for an extraterrestrial cultural psychoanalyst, this would appear to reflect the mindset of a culture much challenged in the penile dimension (cf *The Coalition of the Willy: musings on the global challenge of penile servitude*, 2004). "Rooting" also has sexual connotations!

Despite remarkable conceptual insights into "complexity", "chaos" and the strange multidimensional frameworks of fundamental physics and cosmology ("anti-matter" etc) not an iota of this is considered relevant to reconciling the fundamentally anti-thetical worldviews of religions (cf *And When the Bombing Stops? Territorial conflict as a challenge to mathematicians*, 2000). Despite the "three-body" skills of aerospace navigation, there is not even an adequate "two-body" solution on offer for reconciliation between religions -- hence the demonization of "extremists" and the reliance on divine intervention. Hence the religious support for simplistic binary thinking: "You are either with us, or against us" -- "normal" or "extremist".

Rooting out extremism could in this sense be seen as an indication of a culture committed to its own emasculation, and providing an appropriate rationale for doing so -- in order to become as boring as possible. The consequences of such policies on indigenous cultures, whose "extremes" have been rooted out by Christian missionaries, have been documented by Darrell A. Posey (*Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity: a complementary contribution to Global Biodiversity Assessment*, Intermediate Technology, 1999) for the United Nations Environment Programme. There is therefore a curious irony to the representation of a resolution of the three-body challenge from a pre-historic symbol dating back some 5,000 years.

![Pre-historic representation of a pattern of relationships indicative of a potential relation between the fundamentally anti-thetical Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism)](image)

It is likely that the avoidance of dialogue with extremists of any kind severely inhibits the emergence of any strategic skills to counter the violence that exemplifies the most brutal form of dialogue.

The struggle of the norms against extremism may perhaps be modelled in an interesting way by the process of achieving zero gravity through the parabolic flight of an aircraft (cf Alok Jha, *The unbearable lightness of flying*, *The Guardian*, 11 August 2005). To do this the aircraft follows a flight path that corresponds in many ways to a normal distribution, starting and finishing at extremes, but rising into the parabola, during which zero gravity is experienced, within what is effectively one standard deviation of the turnover point. In this model "gravity" corresponds to "extremism". The goal of "rooting out extremism" is therefore the social analogue to achieving zero gravity. Aspirations to freedom from extremism are there consonant with aspirations to zero gravity. This would also be consonant with descriptions of peak experience states of consciousness, also to be understood as freedom from the gravity of mundanities. Such a framework suggests a reason for the human "yearning for the stars".

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