

**IMPACT:** Maajid Nawaz is a British activist, author, and critic of “Islamism.” He co-founded the controversial Quilliam Foundation. Nawaz has been closely affiliated with individuals and organizations that promote anti-Muslim views.

- Maajid Nawaz is a British activist, and **co-founder and former director of Quilliam**, billed as the “world’s first counter-extremism organisation.” Nawaz describes himself as a “secular liberal Muslim” and **a former “Islamist extremist.”** In a 2016 interview on *Fox News*, **Nawaz stated that terrorism has “something to do with Islam.”**
- A **former member of the pan-Islamic fundamentalist group, Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT)**, Nawaz calls himself a “former extremist.” In 2002, while in college studying abroad in Egypt, Nawaz was arrested alongside three other British members of HT, and imprisoned in Egypt due to his activities for and affiliation with the party. Amnesty International took up Nawaz’s case as a prisoner of conscience, and in 2006, he was released by the Egyptian authorities.
- In 2008, Ed Husain and Nawaz, identifying themselves as ex-extremists, founded the **Quilliam Foundation, which has received almost £2 million from the British government.** Since its establishment, Quilliam has been embroiled in “**several controversies for encouraging domestic spying and preparing secret blacklists of citizens and groups that it alleges share the ‘ideology of terrorists.’**”
- A former “anti-extremism advisor” to David Cameron, Nawaz was a **backer of the Prevent strategy**, a UK government program working to identify potential “violent extremists” before they resort to violence. **Britain’s Muslim religious leaders as well as human and civil rights organization have been critical of the Prevent strategy**, saying it “**creates a serious risk of human rights violations and is also counterproductive.**” The Prevent program was roundly criticized for stigmatizing Muslim students, and was ultimately rejected by the UK’s Liberal Democrats. (Nawaz ran as a parliamentary candidate for the Liberal Democrats in 2015 UK elections.)
- Nawaz has **worked with and defended Ayaan Hirsi Ali**, who has said the West should “defeat” Islam, and that Islam is a “destructive, nihilistic cult of death.”
- In a 2018 article, *Guardian* columnist Nesrine Malik, argued that **Nawaz, along with Hirsi Ali, position their “‘native’ experience” in such a way that it “should take precedence over all other liberal or progressive positions.”** At the same time, Malik argued, Nawaz and Hirsi Ali “claim that their affinity with the right-wing pundits, neo-conservatives, or habitués of the Intellectual Dark Web has nothing to do with the Islam-insider perspective they bring.” In other words, Malik writes, “**they argue against ‘the bigotry of low expectations’ in one breath, yet in the next deploy gender and skin color to deflect criticism.**”
- In 2010, Quilliam, under the directorship of Nawaz, **sent a secret list to a top British security official** which, as the *Guardian* reported, **accusing “peaceful Muslim groups, politicians, a television channel and a Scotland Yard unit of sharing the ideology of terrorists.”** The document further stated, “The ideology of non-violent Islamists is broadly the same as that of violent Islamists; they disagree only on tactics.” As summarized in a *New York Times* profile, “**Nawaz argues that the distinction between violent and nonviolent Islamism is far less rigid than many liberals would**

**like to think.”** [Academic studies](#) have noted that support for Islamist positions is not a predictor of support for violence.

- Nawaz **self-identifies as an expert on de-radicalization based on his personal experience**, and calls for Islamic reform. In 2012, Nawaz released his [autobiography](#), *Radical: My Journey out of Islamist Extremism*. **Major elements of Nawaz’s story have been [disputed](#) by former friends, members of his family, journalists, and fellow HT members**, and critics have [claimed](#) he attempts to be the “saviour of Islam.”
- In 2017, **Nawaz [stated](#) that “Britain and the rest of Europe are in the midst of a full-blown jihadist insurgency.”** He argued, “Around those 23,000 – those who are jihadists – around them will be those who sympathise with the ideology, Islamists who believe in establishing a caliphate and those who empathise with their friends – if that is not insurgency levels I don’t know what is.” A 2017 article [found](#) that **Nawaz’s claim of “23,000 jihadists” was “deliberately misleading.”**
- In a 2013 opinion [piece](#), Nawaz **argued for the banning of the face veil in public spaces**, including schools. He has [publically called](#) for an international Take Off your Hijab Day. In 2015, Nawaz penned an op-ed in the *New York Times* in which he [claimed that “academic institutions in Britain have been infiltrated for years by dangerous theocratic fantasists.”](#)
- In 2016, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) listed Nawaz as an “[anti-Muslim extremist](#).” In April 2018, Nawaz retained a legal team and took action against the SPLC for his inclusion in the list. In June 2018, the SPLC [agreed](#) to a settlement of \$3.375 million and apologized to Nawaz and Quilliam for including them on the list of “extremists.”
- In 2016, Nawaz and author Sam Harris [co-authored](#), *Islam and the Future of Tolerance: A Dialogue*. Harris has [stated](#), “Islam, more than any other religion human beings have devised, has all the makings of a thoroughgoing cult of death.” He has also [called](#) Islam the “mother lode of bad ideas” and has advocated [racial profiling](#).
- Along with Hirsi Ali and Harris, Nawaz has also “[taken up](#) with other [anti-PC agitators](#) such as [Douglas Murray](#) and [Jordan Peterson](#).” In a 2018 article by *New York Times* op-ed editor, Bari Weiss, **Nawaz, along with Hirsi Ali, Harris, Murray, and Peterson, was listed as part of the “[intellectual dark web \(IDW\)](#).”** A critique of the “IDW” by Elizabeth Nolan Brown, [described](#) the groups as “presenting themselves as brave and imperiled truth sayers facing down an increasingly ‘politically correct’ populace, they offer their fans an immensely appealing proposition: It’s not you, it’s them, and liking us is a sign that you are not like them.”