

# Bonner Querschnitte

## Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

Phone: +49 / 4106 / 804806; Fax: +49 / 4106 / 804807  
E-Mail: [bq@bucer.de](mailto:bq@bucer.de); <http://www.bucer.org/bq.html>

Released for free complete or partial reproduction

## BQ 347 – No. 11/2015

### Religion and Politics in a free society

(Bonn, 26.03.2015) Since the terror attacks in Paris at the beginning of the year, themes such as integration and Identity, the relation of foundational democratic values with religions, as well as religious fundamentalism and violence, have increasingly moved into the center of public discussion. In the framework of a public discussion in Brussels on March 19, 2015, held jointly by the Robert Schuman Foundation, the Forum Brussels International, and the Hanns Seidel Foundation, a group of experts and advisors offered their insights. The German professor of Sociology of Religions/Comparative Religions, Dr. mult. Thomas Schirmmacher, explained how fundamentalism develops. Dr. Khalid Hajji, author and General Secretary of the European Council of Moroccan Ulema (Conseil Européen des Ouléma Marocains), went into aspects and consequences of violence and radicalization in the context of migration into postmodern Europe. Katharina von Schnurbein, coordinator for dialogue with religions and worldviews of the European Commission, presented an overview of the contributions of European institutions toward overcoming extremism, while Prof. Agdurrahman Mas'ud, general director of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in the Republic of Indonesia, reported on the experience of his country with fundamentalist movements. Isabel Guzmán, Brussels correspondent of the German Protestant Press Service (Evangelischer Pressedienst), served as moderator.

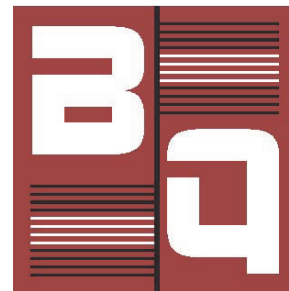


**Hanns  
Seidel  
Stiftung**

**FONDATION ROBERT  
SCHUMAN**

### Foundations for overcoming religion-based violence

Prof. Schirmmacher identified intolerance and absolute truth claims, when paired with the willingness to use force or psychological manipulation to enforce those truth claims, as the primary causes of violent fundamentalism. It is not religion itself, he said, that is the problem, rather the tendency to use violence as a means to attain religious goals, in place of convincing people by means of persuasive arguments regarding religious matters. The early recognition of such tendencies is a duty of every individual in their respective communities. An immediate and unmistakable reaction within the respective faith communities is essential both to protect their own values and to restore the credibility of the faith community. For Dr. Hajji, the battle against political radicalism is no less indispensable than the battle against religious radicalism.



A joint platform for the following Bonn organizations on the basis of the Evangelical Alliance:

Commission for Religious Freedom of the German and the Austrian Evangelical Alliance  
[www.ead.de/akref](http://www.ead.de/akref)

Culture and Science Publ.  
[www.vkwonline.com](http://www.vkwonline.com)

Giving Hands – International Charity  
[www.gebende-haende.de](http://www.gebende-haende.de)

Help Worldwide – International Charity  
[www.hilfe-weltweit.de](http://www.hilfe-weltweit.de)

Institute for Pro-life and Family Studies  
[www.bucer.de/ilfw](http://www.bucer.de/ilfw)

International Institute for Islamic Studies of the World Evangelical Alliance  
[www.islaminstitute.net](http://www.islaminstitute.net)

International Institute for Religious Freedom of the World Evangelical Alliance  
[www.iirf.eu](http://www.iirf.eu)

Martin Bucer Seminary  
[www.bucer.org](http://www.bucer.org)

Pro Mundis e. V.  
[www.thomasschirmmacher.net](http://www.thomasschirmmacher.net)

Theological Commission of "Hope for Europe" (European Evangelical Alliance)  
[www.hfe.org](http://www.hfe.org)

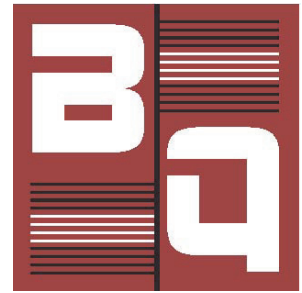
Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance  
[www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/tc/](http://www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/tc/)

Bonner Querschnitte Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

**Text & Technology:**  
Titus Vogt (ViSdP)  
Vorderer Kamp 52a, D-25479 Ellerau  
Phone: +49 / 4106 / 80 48 06  
Fax: +49 / 4106 / 80 48 07  
E-Mail: [Titus.Vogt@bucer.de](mailto:Titus.Vogt@bucer.de)

# Bonner Querschnitte

## Bonn Profiles – Press Reports



The current danger for Europe, he said, is precisely that the two varieties of radicalism (political and religious) tend to feed off each other and react to each other.

The participants in the panel discussion were unified in the conviction that the protection of freedom of religion and other human rights, along with cooperation and peaceful exchanges among faith communities, could make an important contribution to overcoming violent fundamentalism. Even if the European institutions do not have specific jurisdiction for this area, they can act as catalysts and provide a platform for such efforts. Von Schnurbein explained the holistic approach of the European Commission, which includes the “Radicalization Awareness Network” (RAN) as well as a working paper on the protection of victims of extremism and hate crimes which should be presented in November, 2015. According to Prof. Mas’ud, only about 500



“Foreign Fighters” from Indonesia have joined Islamist terror militias. This number is small in comparison to fighters emanating from European countries, and especially so in light of the fact that 87% of Indonesia’s 200 million inhabitants are Muslims. Mas’ud

connects this fact with the way in which the principles of tolerance, compassion, and love of neighbors are firmly anchored in Indonesian social values, which are both communicated and embodied by a strong organizational culture of civil society.

### The identity of European Muslims and the role of the Imam

Dr. Hajji described the lack of a model of identity formation as a trigger for the growing sympathy of young European Muslims for radical Islam. Islamism offers the possibility of finding one’s personal identity, oriented toward Islamic roots, in a manner that our postmodern society cannot offer to Muslims. Of course, this Islamism arises from a fantasy world, not from reality. However, in a time in which public life is focused on communication and effects, but not focused on meaning or purpose, such Islamism offers a supposed orientation. For this purpose, on the one hand, Islamists proclaim the necessity of an Islamic state in which Muslims can realize the puritanical dream of a “virgin territory,” while, on the other hand, they attempt to destroy any hope that Muslims can have an acceptable future in a non-Islamic state. This process of growing sympathy for radical Islam is occurring in new and partly unknown virtual online rooms. Dr. Hajji noted that youth at risk often turn away from people in their immediate situation, which makes intervention even more difficult. The role of the Imam was traditionally oriented to accompanying people in prayer, and participation in public discourse was not common for Imams. But in the context of recent developments, a suitable preparation in public discourse for Imams would certainly be

**A joint platform for the following Bonn organizations on the basis of the Evangelical Alliance:**

Commission for Religious Freedom of the German and the Austrian Evangelical Alliance  
[www.ead.de/akref](http://www.ead.de/akref)

Culture and Science Publ.  
[www.vkwonline.com](http://www.vkwonline.com)

Giving Hands – International Charity  
[www.gebende-haende.de](http://www.gebende-haende.de)

Help Worldwide – International Charity  
[www.hilfe-weltweit.de](http://www.hilfe-weltweit.de)

Institute for Pro-life and Family Studies  
[www.bucer.de/ilfw](http://www.bucer.de/ilfw)

International Institute for Islamic Studies of the World Evangelical Alliance  
[www.islaminstitute.net](http://www.islaminstitute.net)

International Institute for Religious Freedom of the World Evangelical Alliance  
[www.iirf.eu](http://www.iirf.eu)

Martin Bucer Seminary  
[www.bucer.org](http://www.bucer.org)

Pro Mundis e. V.  
[www.thomasschirmmacher.net](http://www.thomasschirmmacher.net)

Theological Commission of “Hope for Europe” (European Evangelical Alliance)  
[www.hfe.org](http://www.hfe.org)

Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance  
[www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/tc/](http://www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/tc/)

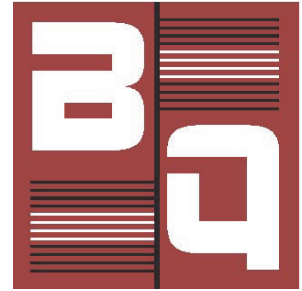
**Bonner Querschnitte Bonn Profiles – Press Reports**

#### Text & Technology:

Titus Vogt (ViSdP)  
Vorderer Kamp 52a, D-25479 Ellerau  
Phone: +49 / 4106 / 80 48 06  
Fax: +49 / 4106 / 80 48 07  
E-Mail: [Titus.Vogt@bucer.de](mailto:Titus.Vogt@bucer.de)

# Bonner Querschnitte

*Bonn Profiles – Press Reports*



desirable, even though experience shows that a European educational background does not provide a guarantee that Imams will safeguard European values.

## Religious Nationalism



Prof. Schirmacher reported on the increasing and dangerous world-wide tendency toward religious nationalism, which equates membership in a majority religion with nationalism. Religion is misused for the sake of creating political identity while simultaneously excluding other groups from political influence. The main problem is the related decline in tolerance toward religious minorities. As examples, Schirmacher mentioned developments in India, where the

equal treatment of all religions guaranteed by the Indian constitution is being called into question by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, and Turkey, which is increasingly distancing itself from its own principles of distinguishing religion and government.

Source: <http://www.hss.de/internationale-arbeit/themen/themen-2015/religion-und-politik-in-einer-freien-gesellschaft.html>

### Downloads:

- Flyer for this event ([pdf](#))
- [Photo 1](#)
- [Photo 2](#)
- [Photo 3](#)

*Released for free complete or partial reproduction*

### DOWNLOADS OF GRAPHICS AND OF COMMUNICATION

<http://www.bucer.org/bq.html>

### SUBSCRIBING OR UNSUBSCRIBING BONN PROFILES

If you want to begin receiving or no longer wish to receive the Bonn Profiles, please send us an e-mail.

**Bonner Querschnitte** *Bonn Profiles – Press Reports*

#### Text & Technology:

Titus Vogt (ViSdP)  
Vorderer Kamp 52a, D-25479 Ellerau  
Phone: +49 / 4106 / 80 48 06  
Fax: +49 / 4106 / 80 48 07  
E-Mail: [Titus.Vogt@bucer.de](mailto:Titus.Vogt@bucer.de)

**A joint platform for the following Bonn organizations on the basis of the Evangelical Alliance:**

Commission for Religious Freedom of the German and the Austrian Evangelical Alliance  
[www.ead.de/akref](http://www.ead.de/akref)

Culture and Science Publ.  
[www.vkwonline.com](http://www.vkwonline.com)

Giving Hands – International Charity  
[www.gebende-haende.de](http://www.gebende-haende.de)

Help Worldwide – International Charity  
[www.hilfe-weltweit.de](http://www.hilfe-weltweit.de)

Institute for Pro-life and Family Studies  
[www.bucer.de/ifw](http://www.bucer.de/ifw)

International Institute for Islamic Studies of the World Evangelical Alliance  
[www.islaminstitute.net](http://www.islaminstitute.net)

International Institute for Religious Freedom of the World Evangelical Alliance  
[www.iirf.eu](http://www.iirf.eu)

Martin Bucer Seminary  
[www.bucer.org](http://www.bucer.org)

Pro Mundis e. V.  
[www.thomasschirmacher.net](http://www.thomasschirmacher.net)

Theological Commission of "Hope for Europe" (European Evangelical Alliance)  
[www.hfe.org](http://www.hfe.org)

Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance  
[www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/tc/](http://www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/tc/)