ANDREW MARR:
David Cameron says that tackling extremism will be one of the defining themes of his final term as prime minister. In a speech last week, he signalled that the struggle against Islamist terror is similar to defeating Hitler and he called on Muslim communities to work together towards promoting moderate values. The former foreign office minister and Conservative peer Sayeeda Warsi has in the past criticised the prime minister for demonising Muslims when he said some of them quietly condoned extremism and she joins me now from Wakefield. Good morning to you, Baroness Warsi.

BARONESS WARSI:
Good morning, Andrew.

ANDREW MARR:
We’re apparently getting … we’re getting a new policy on combating extremism, a new policy approach. How different does it need to be to the old one to work?

BARONESS WARSI:
Well I think there were some positive things in the prime minister’s speech last week.
First of all, I think it was important that he did the speech in Birmingham. I’ve been calling now for a while that these speeches should not be in Munich and Bratislava, but should be here talking to our own communities in our own country. I think he also signalled a recognition that British Muslim communities were in the frontline in the fight against ISIS. He talked about the huge contribution that the community has made, but he also talked about the fear of British Muslim parents. He also signalled an end to what I have described as the policy of disengagement with British Muslim communities. He talked about …

ANDREW MARR:
Okay.

BARONESS WARSI:
… a direct community engagement forum, which he would use to directly engage with the British Muslim community. So I certainly think in his speech there was some signalling that some things were going to change.

ANDREW MARR:
Alright, but it seems to me that the real difference is what is extremism inside the Muslim community? I mean we see polls saying a third of young Muslims want to live under sharia law. We see very large numbers of young Muslims regard Jews as legitimate targets and so forth. There are some very … views that a lot of people would regard as extreme and worrying inside the mainstream Muslim community and the question is does British Islam have to respond to the fact that Muslims are living inside a Western liberal state in a more dramatic way?

BARONESS WARSI:
Look there is no doubt that there are some views within some British Muslim communities that are of an extreme nature, but let’s also be clear that there have been enough studies and enough polls done which show that British Muslim communities have much more faith in British institutions like the police, democracy, parliament, the intelligence services than the community at large. It also shows - and the Gallup World Poll showed this – that British Muslim communities like to live in mixed communities. So it is a mixed picture and it is important that we keep that mixed
picture in mind when we try and deal with the issue of extremism. I think what we saw in the speech from David Cameron was an acknowledgement that extremism can take many forms - it can exist within the Islamist ideology, it can also exist within far right extremism. And he also tackled not just conspiracy theories which he said could be found within British Muslim communities, but he talked about conspiracy theories which could be found about British Muslim communities, and specifically he referred to this far right extremist ideology and view that somehow Muslims are there to take over Europe or British Muslims are there to take over government.

ANDREW MARR:
But there is a view inside the Muslim community, some quite prominent clerics and so forth who believe that eventually Islam should convert the rest of the UK and Britain should become an Islamic society living under sharia law. Would you regard that as an extremist and worrying view yourself?

BARONESS WARSI:
Look I wouldn’t call those influential. Nor would I call them respectable clerics. I would call them the nutcases within the British Muslim community. We will always find nutcases in all religious communities who feel that their religion will prevail over everybody else’s views and religion and will take over large parts of territory. It is not a mainstream view that is held and it is important, therefore, for us to isolate it …

ANDREW MARR:
Okay.

BARONESS WARSI:
… and for us to describe it as that isolated, extreme view.

ANDREW MARR:
Well let’s put the nutcases back in their box then and ask you about what the prime minister is now saying about Syria and indeed about Libya – about the need for a much more aggressive and probably military fight back against so-called Islamic State in those parts of the world. How do you think Conservatives should vote on that vote when it comes in the Autumn?
BARONESS WARSI:
I think my own view is that if you look at the way in which the allied forces have been working to date, although they’ve managed to contain Isil in certain parts of Iraq, Isil are still growing. For me, I’m not ideologically wedded to no airstrikes or airstrikes. I want to know what the practical outcome of it would be. I want to know how our added firepower will add to the fight against Isil. And I think as long as the prime minister and the government can show that it will make a material difference and without it the allied forces as they are at the moment would not be able to achieve the results if it was not for British airstrikes, then I would be supportive of that. But I think the case needs to be made …

ANDREW MARR:
Exactly.

BARONESS WARSI:
… the practical case needs to be made, the outcome case needs to be made.

ANDREW MARR:
And is there a danger that the more deeply we get involved militarily, the more inflamed views will be inside British Muslim communities?

BARONESS WARSI:
I don’t think there is much sympathy for Isil in British Muslim communities. One of the things of the speech in Birmingham was that the prime minister acknowledged the hatred that British Muslims have towards Isil. I think that was a shift from the speech he made in Bratislava when he talked about Muslim communities quietly condoning. Let’s not forget, Andrew, that it is British Muslim parents who sit and fear Isil because it is their children that are being preyed upon and it is their faith that is being maligned, so I certainly don’t think that you will have British Muslim communities being concerned about Isil being bombed by British forces.

ANDREW MARR:
Baroness Warsi, thank you very much indeed for joining us this morning. Thank you.
INTERVIEW ENDS