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Ronald Wintrobe

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## Rational Extremism

### *The Political Economy of Radicalism*

Extremists are people whose ideas or tactics are viewed as outside the mainstream. Looked at this way, extremists are not necessarily twisted or evil. But they can be, especially when they are intolerant and violent. What makes extremists turn violent? This book assumes that extremists are rational: given their ends, they choose the best means to achieve them. The analysis explains why extremist leaders use the tactics they do and why they are often insensitive to punishment and to loss of life. It also explains how rational people can be motivated to die for a cause. The book covers different aspects of extremism, including nationalism, revolution, suicide terrorism, and global *jihad*. The arguments are illustrated with important episodes of extremism, including the French Revolution, the rise of nationalism in Yugoslavia under Milosevic, and the emergence of suicide terror and Al Qaeda today.

Ronald Wintrobe is Professor of Economics at the University of Western Ontario, where he also codirects the Political Economy Research Group. Professor Wintrobe is the author of *The Political Economy of Dictatorship* (1998) and coauthor (with Albert Breton) of *The Logic of Bureaucratic Conduct* (1982). He is also coeditor (with Albert Breton, Gianluigi Galeotti, and Pierre Salmon) of *Rational Foundations of Democratic Politics* (2003), *Political Extremism and Rationality* (2002), *Understanding Democracy: Economic and Political Perspectives* (1997), and *Nationalism and Rationality* (1995). All of these titles were published by Cambridge University Press. He is also author or coauthor of many book chapters and articles in leading professional journals, and he has written and narrated two radio programs (on dictatorship and on extremism) for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's *Ideas* series.

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RONALD WINTROBE

*University of Western Ontario*



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*To the memory of my mother and father*

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