

Major Causes of Radicalization to Violent Extremism and Terrorism

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What is Radicalization? It is a common question in CVE with varying academic answers. Radicalization is the gradual social process into extremism and is often applied to explain changes in ideas or behavior. In other terms it can as well be defined as a process of growing willingness to pursue or support radical changes in society in an undemocratic manner, if necessary, that conflict with, or could pose a threat to, democratic legal order. Typically, youths are the ones targeted and introduced to adopt the blatant ideological beliefs that in turn their socialization approaches into an extremist belief structure that sets the eventual stage for violence.

Whereas radicalization as such does not necessarily have to result or equate to violence, most radical individuals are posed to be motivated by certain factors in order to participate in perpetuating violent undertakings to advance their ideologies.

These factors bring into question as to what are the major contributors, or causes of radicalization and violent extremism which finally births terrorism. There is myriad of factors that triggers individuals mostly youth to adopt radical and jihadist approaches such that they will leave their countries and for example travel to other countries far to fight the Holy war or commonly known as the jihad.

Every day the media and open sources reports of young men and women arrested or intercepted enroute to jihad destinations; to join the extremist Islamic terror outfits. A simple analysis of the recruits joining the Al-Qaeda, ISIS and other terror outfits across the world shows that the bigger number is motivated by factors ranging from social, economic causes to religious and political causes.

Social and Psychological Causes

There is a myriad of societal and psychological causes that pushes people especially the youths of below 35 years of age to plunge into radical and violent activities that habitually linked with terrorism.

1. Disaffection by the Community

This one single cause that has propelled many into the terrorist camps. Disaffection by the community is dangerous and does not only make the youths feel marginalized but also makes them feel unwanted and not valued. As such these individuals seek to fit in any community and have a feel that they belong somewhere. This leaves the youth looking to have that sense of belonging, driving them into seeking solace on the social media where they fall prey to the terrorist recruiters who offer a false sense of belonging and purpose.

2. Rejection by Parents and Family

This can be loosely translated to parents and the entire family by extension have little time for their children. In today's world, you will find that society is engaged with matters such as work, employment and matters relating to economics leaving very little time for their growing children. Modern day parents tend to be busy and engrossed in their careers, some parents unknowingly neglect their children with the notion of giving the teenagers/youth privacy which leads to a lot of unmonitored online activity and eventual falling prey to online recruiters and radicalizers.

3. Racial/Ethnic and Cultural Profiling

It is commonplace that people tend to profile people according to their race, ethnic and cultural setting and by extension, by how they look or by where they perceived to originate. Violent extremism and terrorism hugely are associated with Islam as a religion. For example, people who that look like they have origin from the Middle East or largely Muslim dominated countries often tend to be judged and at times treated with prejudice for the public's fear they are terrorists. This can simply be termed as 'Islamophobia'. Youths who experience this kind of treatment tend to keep to themselves and withdraw from society. Another example, In East Africa countries,

citizens of Somali descent despite their social stature since the outrageous menace of the Al-Qaeda affiliated Al-Shabaab attacks in the region find themselves largely discriminated against due to their look as they are seen as the enemy within and this where the terrorist groups greatly exploit this void to their advantage.

4. Indoctrination

The indoctrination aspect is largely psychological. Radical Sheikhs teach on Islam selectively by quoting Quranic verses that usually favors them and thereby achieve their desired outcomes. Vulnerable youths clearly are seen as falling prey of such Sheikhs. Slain Sheikhs such as Aboud Rogo and Makuburi offered such rogue teachings to youth who in turn joined the Islamist terrorist group, Al-Shabaab in Somalia. World-over there such radical Sheikhs interpreting the Holy Quranic, often they teach on jihad thus pushing youths into violent extremism and terrorism.

Indoctrination works perfectly and leads into the other step of an individual becoming a radical. However, radicalization that will lead people into violent extremism and terrorism will even be perfected by the presence of a charismatic leader and or recruiter who with little effort will be able to interpret Islam teachings and thereby sell the ideologies that appeals to the radical groups.

While the radicalization is mostly targeted at gullible and vulnerable individuals, an alluring, strong leader that is charismatic is key towards appealing towards potential jihadi wannabe, and does target audience and followers with ease. That's why, most terrorist organizations have such Sheikhs and leaders that connect with the people who are able to lure people to travel to jihadi destinations and join the perceived 'Holy War'.

Nonetheless, youths are seen leave their homes regardless of the care they are rendered there and embrace doctrines they have scanty information about emulating selective phrases of the Islam religion guidelines. Some of these problems faced by youth both abroad and at home drive them to seek safe haven in the false hope and misguided extremists' doctrines.

Political Causes

Political perceptions, views and ideologies are also drivers and notable popping factors catapulting youths and other individuals into the path of being radicals and eventual into violent extremism.

1. Political Dissatisfaction and Prolonged Unresolved Conflicts

Research shows that majority of terrorist organizations were started by people that disgruntled by the political system in their individual countries and thus seek alternative methods to change or force changes in the political system. In most instances, these Islamists terror organizations are driven by the need by select individuals to change a political system from what they term as western-emulated into society governed by their own so-called strict sharia law.

Its with no doubt, resolution of conflicts is essential for, example., ensuring better socio-economic opportunities for all. Besides, the building of peace has a critical role to play in terms of vindicating other drivers of violent extremism, and terrorism since it is a base from which a just and inclusive society can be built.

2. Poor Governance, Violations of Human Rights

Poor governance and violations of human rights have largely propelled the birth of radicalization among youths especially those in Africa countries. Issues of poor governance goes hand in hand with lack of creating opportunities especially jobs for millions of youths, and subsequently rendering them vulnerable into the hands of recruiters with promises of a good life in the world of jihad.

The radicals Sheikhs exploit, incidents of human rights violations especially on youthful Muslims by radicalizing them through their teachings further aggravating the situation with their influence. When poor governance is combined with repressive policies and practices which violate human rights and the rule of law, the potency of the lure of violent extremism tends to be heightened. Violent extremists also actively seek to exploit state repression and other grievances in their fight against the state.

3. The West Foreign Policies

It is paramount to note that radicalization has become a menace in modern-day political and societal settings thus making it a major cause of terrorism and violent extremism. Its imminent, foreign policies brought forth by the West's superpowers have also fueled the ill of radicalization among youths and like-minded individuals who feel that the western countries have influenced besides eroded the core doctrines/beliefs and values of Muslim countries. Moreover, military incursions and kinetic operations are a key cause that have aggravated radicalization broadly. In a broader spectrum, citizens from these countries have been pushed into violent extremism and terrorism as they struggle to revolt against what they term as political and sovereignty intrusion.

Recommendation & Conclusion

Fight against or curbing violent extremism (CVE) should be one of the key issues discussed among young Muslims from across the continents without victimizing citizens. Creating awareness on the global effects of radicalization could also help in this fight against violent extremism and terrorism.

Introduction of anti-radicalization programs in the war against terrorism should be made in learning institutions across the world. The rise in the number of young men and women who now prefer to join radicalized groups is quite alarming.

This comes at a time when most of the Islamic radical groups are either comprised of teenagers or young men and women who are devoted to kill and spread propaganda.

The young generation somehow lacks proper leadership and guidance, and as such, introduction of anti-radicalization programs in learning institutions would therefore be a good start in curbing violent extremism that eventually morphs into terrorism.

Change of institutions in to incorporate new members of the society without alienation or profiling them could be the first step. After-school activities sports, tutoring and mentorship programs should be introduced to keep the youth occupied and minimize time spent online.

If such programs could be developed and implemented world over, could greatly equip young Muslims even to those who converts, with a clear understanding of what true Islam is and not the misinterpreted ideologies being spread by the militia groups.

While these are not the exact solutions, they are steps worthy adopting in eradicating radicalization of naive, vulnerable youths in the society today.

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