

Radicalization to Terrorism? What does it mean?

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Radicalization is the process of causing someone to adopt radical positions on political or social issues. Radicalization to terrorism creates the motivational or cognitive preconditions ripe for terrorism (*wherein terrorism is usually an instrument through which its perpetrators, lacking mass support, attempt to realize a political or religious objective*). Terrorist groups consist of different types of disaffected individuals who undergo different paths of radicalization.

Radicalization leading to acts of terrorism thrives in an environment characterized by a shared sense of injustice, exclusion and real or perceived humiliation. In general, all forms of radicalization exhibit the following characteristics:

- People who feel left behind in the progress of mankind and resent injustice are more prone to radicalization. Kinship, friendship, group dynamics and socialization all trigger an individual's association with radicalization.
- People involved in terrorism come from a variety of social backgrounds. The use of violence involves a limited number of individuals who undergo diverse paths of radicalization.
- Profiling to identify possible terrorists is not productive, as no profiling measures fit all variables at work. It is possible to identify several positions which individuals may move towards or away from radicalization or de-radicalization.
- Preventive strategies require tailoring to specific terrorist activity drivers and specifics of the groups involved.
- The constant use of ideology helps consolidate violent ideas and attitudes, and reduces potential moral inhibitors in order to generate a sub-culture of violence.
- Propaganda is key, as it offers doctrinal arguments that legitimize extremist positions. Radical/terrorist propaganda is generally framed around ideological, utilitarian, emotional and identitarian considerations.

Ref: European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation, Fernando Reinares (Group Chairman) 2008 (<https://gsdrc.org/document-library/radicalisation-processes-leading-to-acts-of-terrorism/>)