

## CONCEPT OF RADICALIZATION

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**Abstract:** The term radicalization is wide spread today, but the search for what exactly radicalization is, and how to de-radicalize those who are considered violent extremists or terrorists is still a challenge for the academic and professional community. In this paper, the key terms and literature focusing on radicalization will be explored in more detail. Political violence encompasses a wide range of political action - persuasive politics, pressure politics and violent politics - by those with state power, as well as by non-state militant actors. With this in mind, it should also be recognized that radicalization is not necessarily a one-sided phenomenon, as it is equally important to explore the role of state actors and their potential for radicalization. There are a number of factors that can lead to radicalization, as well as factors that may influence de-radicalization. It is a complex phenomenon, where particularly vulnerable category are young people with incomplete education, mostly from unstable social environments, who are easily susceptible to manipulation. Stimulated by political, economic or socio-cultural factors, these individuals find themselves and identify with the ideologies of extreme and radical structures. In the past, this problem of security has been of interest primarily to the intelligence services, which by their nature deal with the consequences, but not with the causes of radicalization. However, experience has indicated that repression is not the only solution. The growing trend of this phenomenon and the challenge of early prevention have emphasized the need for increasingly inclusive community engagement. Considering the complexity of radicalization and violent extremism leading to terrorism, these phenomena are among the top security priorities of contemporary democratic states. Nevertheless, without a clear definition of radicalization, intelligence security agencies will not be able to cope successfully and have a realistic perception of the driving force that lead the individual to extremism and terrorism.

**Keywords:** radicalization, security, terrorism, religious extremism

### 1. INTRODUCTION

There are numerous reasons for radicalization. The term itself is often inappropriately complex and controversially defined. The only aspect that holds a consensus, is that radicalization is a process. This concept was popularized after the terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004 and London 2005, by European policy makers, who created the term "violent radicalization". Since 2004, the term "radicalization" has become a key term in policy-making and a concept in the "war on terror". After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, suddenly it became difficult to discuss about suppressing the "roots of terrorism", but through the idea of radicalization, such discussion became possible again.<sup>9</sup>

The causes of radicalization that can lead to terrorism have been analyzed at the micro, meso and macro levels:

1. Micro-level, ie the level of an individual, includes identity problems, failed integration, feelings of alienation, marginalization, discrimination, deprivation of rights, humiliation (directly or indirectly), social stigmatization and rejection, often combined with moral outrage and feelings of revenge. This approach is most dominant and explores the extent to which second- and third-generation Western democracies of Middle Eastern descent socialize ideologically and psychologically from terrorist propaganda or are recruited by terrorist organizations.

2. Meso-level, ie the wider supportive social environment - which serves as a gathering point that forces people to come together to support a person, a cause, or a link to terrorist organizations.<sup>10</sup> This approach highlights the developments in the environment of a particular extremist organization, ie the services and conveniences it offers within the organization.

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<sup>9</sup> Sedgwick, M., The Concept of Radicalisation as a Source of Confusion, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 22, No. 4. (2010)

<sup>10</sup> Sageman, M., *Understanding Terror Networks*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, (2004)

3. Macro level, ie the role of the government and society, domestically and abroad, includes the radicalization of public opinion and party politics, tense majority-minority relations, especially when it comes to the diaspora abroad that is compressed between two cultures, the weak socio-economic opportunities of complete sectors in society leading to mobilization and radicalization of dissatisfaction, sometimes even in the form of terrorism.

Each of these levels of analysis are providing closer and more precise answers to the socio-psychological causes of radicalization, and extremism that leads to terrorism. More research suggests that there is no single reason, but rather a complex combination of internal and external factors that cause the radicalization of individuals, and even larger groups, to violent extremism. Thus, the answer regarding the circumstances that can increase or decrease the legitimacy of using certain types of violence for a particular political entity - a non-state actor or a state, will be obtained. These analyzes will examine the ways in which Western states and non-state actors have been "radicalized" after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and are increasingly prepared to use a wide range of violence.<sup>11</sup> It is also necessary to analyze the circumstances under which state and non-state actors present themselves as legitimate fighters in the global conflict between the West and militant Islamism, as well as the circumstances under which each party uses tactics of violence. A recent study commissioned by the City of New York defines the ideology behind radicalization as follows: "Jihadist or jihadi-Salafi ideology is the driver that motivates young men and women, born or living in the West, to carry out 'autonomous jihad' via acts of terrorism against their host countries. It guides movements, identifies the issues, drives recruitment and is the basis for action."<sup>12</sup> The analyzes of the interactions among different conflicting parties and the interpretation of their actions, will explain why after 2001 and the beginning of conflicts in the Middle East the domestic terrorism in the Western democracies has been increased. No heavy socioeconomic variable is able to explain radicalization alone, no more than it is central in the involvement process.<sup>13</sup>

## 2. CONCEPT OF RADICALIZATION

What the concept of "radicalization" represents? There is no universally accepted definition of radicalization, nor is there a mutually accepted process in relevant literature that identifies how an individual decides to advance on the path to radicalization leading to terrorism. In other words, the concept of radicalization is still not so clearly defined today.

The Expert Group on Violent Radicalization, created by the European Commission in 2006, was tasked with analyzing the condition of radicalization of violence, particularly terrorism. Thus, in 2008 the Group noted that global, sociological and political factors are as important as ideological and psychological ones.<sup>14</sup> This expert group used a concise working definition of violent radicalization, explaining it as "socialization of extremism manifested in terrorism". Obviously, the term radicalization is used as a social description in order to analyze or debate about violent extremism, terrorism or terrorist activities, while the definitions of radicalization are predominantly in the context of terrorism.

However, radicalization is a special process that does not have to be equivalent to violent extremism or terrorism. Relevant literature clearly points out that radicalization is the process of transformation of an individual, by changing of his behavior and ideology over time. Time in this context will be considered irrelevant because as a result of individual circumstances, each individual advances in this process at a different speed.<sup>15</sup>

## 3. DEFINITION

The term radicalism refers to political principles that focus on changing of social structures through revolution and changing of value systems in fundamental ways. The word is derived from the Latin word *radix* (root). Although the meaning has undergone changes since the 18th century when it became coined, it still retains the connotation of "change in the root" that is fundamental to revolutionary social changes. There are many definitions of radicalization. The 2011 International Journal of Conflict and Violence provides seven different definitions:

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<sup>11</sup> Kundnani, A. 'Radicalisation: the journey of a concept', *Race & Class*, Vol. 54, No. 2, Oct.-Dec. (2012)

<sup>12</sup> Mitchell, D. Silber and Arvin B., "Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat", New York: OccupyBawlStreet.com Press, (2015)

<sup>13</sup> Brie, G. et Rambourg, C., *Radicalization: Scientific analyses versus Political Use*, Analytical synthesis, ENAP, (2015)

<sup>14</sup> Expert Group, *Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism: A Concise Report prepared by the European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation* (Submitted to the European Commission on 15 May 2008)

<sup>15</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigations. *The Radicalization Process: From Jihad to Conversation*, (2006)

- In the 1970s, the term radicalization came to emphasize the interactive (social movement / condition) and the processual (gradual escalation) dynamics of the formation of violent clandestine groups. In this approach, radicalization concerned the actual use of violence, with escalation in form and intensity;
- radicalization can be understood as a process leading to increased use of political violence ...;
- ... radicalization is understood as a process of escalation leading to violence;
- ... a process characterized by an increased likelihood of using violent means and strategies in political conflicts. Radicalization from this perspective implies a shift in perception towards certain definitions of a given situation and articulation of radical goals and objectives, which may evolve hostile to a particular social group or social institution and structure. It can also cause increased use of violent means.
- radicalization can be analyzed as a process of interaction between violent groups and their environment, or the effect of interaction between mutually hostile entities;
- political radicalization is increased activity and preparation for inter-group conflicts. In a descriptive way, radicalization means a change in beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in ways that increasingly justify group violence and seek victimhood in defense of the ingroup;
- Radicalization can be understood as the strategic use of physical force to influence a wider target audience.<sup>16</sup>

What are the roots of the word *radicalism*? Historically, the term "radical" has been in use since the 18th century and was often associated with the French and American revolution of that period, later to become widespread in the 19th century, and often referred to a political agenda advocating a thorough social and political reform. The conditions in which this term is defined often depend on whom the definition refers to, to whom and for what period of time. It should also be accented that not all entities to which the definition refers have the same reference point. For example, some entities move from a particular left-wing or right-wing political position, while others to ecological or religious ones.

Throughout history, the concept of radicalism has changed its meaning. The political parties that were called radical in the nineteenth century were radical, mainly on issues relating to republicanism<sup>17</sup>, not to royalism.<sup>18</sup> Some of them have argued for the introduction of a system of democracy in which the right to vote should not be a privilege for those who own property or are discriminated against on gender basis. Their activities were not revolutionary, but reformed. In the second half of the 19th century in England, the term *radical* was used to describe the wing of the Liberal Party. Their public live appearances in support of women having the right to vote were often illegal, but not illegitimate. In fact, some of the radical demands of the 19th century today represent major human rights. But for more than a century, the essence of the concept of "radical" has drastically changed: if in the 19th century it was primarily concerned with liberal, opposition, pro-democratic, progressive political positions, the contemporary use of "radical" such as in "radical Islamism" has the opposite direction and encompasses an anti-liberal, fundamentalist, anti-democratic and regressive agenda.

Based on the abovementioned, we can conclude that the term "radical" is a conditional concept. Therefore, it is difficult to precisely define the concept of radicalization, as well as of deradicalization and the fight against radicalization. Distinguishing between radicalism and radicalization and similar terms such as extremism, is important if we want the concept of radicalism to be analytic.

To achieve a clearer differentiation, it is necessary to distinguish between activism and radicalism. In other words, activism can be defined as "readiness to engage in legal and non-violent political activities", while radicalism as "readiness to engage in illegal and violent political activities".<sup>19</sup> However, at this point arises the question about according to which standards the legal and illegal activities will be measured. If these standards are not grounded in international law (human rights, humanitarian law, international criminal law), it leaves a possibility that both authoritarian and democratic governments can adopt and change national laws, so that the same activity can at one point be categorized as legal "activism", while at another it could be considered as illegal "radicalism".

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<sup>16</sup> Della Porta, D., La Free, G., Guest Editorial: 'Processes of Radicalisation and De-Radicalisation', *IJCV*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (2012)

<sup>17</sup> Republicanism - a doctrine that social power should always serve the common good of all who are subject to its rules. It is a concept of freedom without domination, through the rule of law, sovereignty, controlled and well-balanced policy. Republicans strive for freedom and justice through a law and government that will work for the common good.

<sup>18</sup> Royalism - a political ideology that supports a certain monarch as head of state of a particular kingdom or certain dynasty.

<sup>19</sup> Moskalenko, S., McCauley, C., Measuring Political Mobilisation: The Distinction Between Activism and Radicalism, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 21, (2010)

Considering the before mentioned, the concept of radicalism can be described in terms of two main elements that appropriately reflect thought - attitude and action - behavior:

1. Advocating a convincing political change based on the conviction that maintaining the status quo is unacceptable, in other words means that what is acceptable for radicals is the condition which is fundamentally different from the existing one;

2. The means of seeking a radical solution to the transformation of the system and society can be non-violent and democratic (through negotiations and reforms) or violent and undemocratic (through coercion and revolution).<sup>20</sup>

Western democracies have developed detailed definitions of the term radicalization. Its use is in the context of combating violent extremism and developing domestic and foreign policy to combat terrorism. As we have previously stated, there is no universally accepted definition of radicalization, since radicalization may have different meanings for different entities.

Following is an overview of the definitions that are in use in several modern democratic states:

Australia - Radicalization occurs when one person's thinking and behavior are significantly different from the majority of members of the community and he/she begin to act politically. Only a small number of people are radicalized and can come from different ethnic, national, political and religious groups.

Canada - A process by which certain individuals, usually young people, become acquainted with an obvious ideological system of messages and beliefs that encourages it to move from moderate to extreme ... while supporting, engaging in violence, or acting directly to promote political, ideological or religious extremism.

United Kingdom - A process by which people support terrorism and violent extremism, and in certain cases, join terrorist groups afterwards.

Denmark - A process by which a particular person to a greater extent accepts the use of undemocratic or violent means, including terrorism, in an attempt to achieve a particular political - ideological goal.

These definitions can be compared to the 2006 FBI definition that states that radicalization of the individual is a fluid process that has no specific schedule and does not always lead to action. However, according to analysts Frank Cilluffo and Gregory Saathoff, radicalization is the process of adopting an extremist belief system, including a willingness to use, support or facilitate the process of violence as a method of influencing social change.<sup>21</sup>

Namely, according to some theorists, the term radical "applies to the one who applies his theories or beliefs to their most extreme application", including extreme action. However, the word radical is a relative term used in the context of an individual only expressing a significant deviation from the social norms of society. It can be concluded that radicalization can occur in a number of different forms and that a person who is radical does not have to go through a radicalization process that leads to violence.

With this in mind, we can conclude that each of the above definitions explains that radicalization is a process that moves an individual's thinking from moderate to extreme, but they differ in that some assume that violent action is an essential part of this process, and others deny it.

#### **4. RADICALIZATION AS A PART OF THE REASONS FOR TERRORISM**

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, many theorists focused on the root causes of terrorism in radicalization. The events of 9/11 were also commented at the UN General Assembly by the leaders of the states, and the blame for the terrorist attacks was differently interpreted:

- Communities affected by poverty, illness, illiteracy, hopelessness;
- social inequality, marginalization and exclusion from society;
- political oppression, extreme poverty and violation of fundamental human rights;
- injustice, misery, hunger, drugs, prejudice, despair due to the lack of perspective;
- oppression of people in several parts of the world, especially in Palestine;
- alienation of young people in situations of economic deprivation and political tension and uncertainty, injustice and lack of hope;
- rejecting the West with all its cultural dimensions;
- hunger, poverty, deprivation, fear, despair, lack of sense of belonging to the family of humans;
- situations leading to misery, injustices that lead to greater frustration, despair and harassment.

Nevertheless, some of these claims about the reasons for the 9/11 attacks speak more about the attitudes of certain countries in different parts of the world than about the motives for terrorism. However, consensus on the root causes of terrorism is difficult to reach, even in academic circles. According to the 2011 Handbook on Terrorism Research, some 50 causes of terrorism are presented, and a few of them are listed below:

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<sup>20</sup> Scruton, R., A Dictionary of Political Thought, London: Macmillan, (1996)

<sup>21</sup> Cilluffo, F., Saathoff, G., NET worked Radicalization: A Counter-Strategy, (2006)

- terrorism is rooted in political dissatisfaction;
- the culture of alienation and humiliation of the individual can influence the initiation of the radicalization process and the development of virulent extremism;
- the collective or individual desire for revenge against acts of repression may be a sufficient motive for terrorist activity;
- failure to mobilize support for a radical political program may trigger terrorist activities in order to carry out a violent confrontation with the authorities;
- modern terrorism arises because modern circumstances make terrorist methods extremely easy;
- the choice to engage in terrorist activities is the result of the process of learning from one's own and others' experiences.

More generally, studies have shown that educated people are more prone to conflict than their less-educated counterparts because education creates expectations about professional and life standards, and, when these are not met, heightens dissatisfaction and frustration, which are often drivers of violence. This partly explains why, according to a recent study on the educational backgrounds of both violent and nonviolent Islamist activists in Muslim majority countries, engineers were more prone than others to become radicalized.<sup>22</sup>

These theories above have not been tested so far because they are based on very general formulations. What is missing here, is an explanation for the appearance of the leaders of terrorist organizations or their followers. This does not lead to the conclusion that the causes and roots of terrorism must be explored at different levels of analysis.

### 5. PSYCHOLOGY OF TERRORISM AND RADICALIZATION

Modern psychological research on terrorism explains this concept from a holistic point of view, emphasizing many factors at the macro and micro levels that influence political violence and terrorism. In this sense, the authors point out that political, historical, family, group, organic, and even purely coincidental factors should be taken into account in understanding the psychology of terrorism. As Morgan and Taylor<sup>23</sup> have argued, most of the involvements in terrorism are the result of the gradual and continuous exposure to and socialization of extremist behavior. Among the key psychological factors in understanding whether and how individuals become terrorists are motives and vulnerabilities. Thus, the ideology of the group is often assumed to be a motive for the individual to join a terrorist group. On the other side, some authors (for example, Post)<sup>24</sup> argue that terrorism is the final point in itself, regardless of the stated political or ideological goals.

One of the strongest motivation behind terrorism is revenge, especially the desire not to take revenge on yourself but on others. Revenge may be specific or diffuse, but it is an obsessive urge that is a powerful motive for violence against others, especially people who are held responsible for injustice. The identity is another strong factor that has the potential to motivate an individual to join a terrorist group. Particularly in seeking their identity, the individual may be attracted to extremist or terrorist organizations in various ways. A variant of this process is one in which the individual defines his or her identity simply through group membership, without a sense of (or need for) individuality. This escape from the real world combined with the search of a utopian world could consequently constitute an implicit motive for a specific engagement.<sup>25</sup> Finally, terrorism is usually perceived by many authors as a form of antisocial behavior. Existing research, however, reveals a significant absence of serious psychopathology in potential suicide bombers. Moreover, the existence of a so-called "terrorist personality" does not have strong empirical support and, according to some authors, the attempts to confirm the presence of a terrorist personality or profile have been relatively unsuccessful so far<sup>26</sup>. Personality traits "per se" are not very good indicators of behavior either. Therefore, a complex set of factors needs to be considered holistically in order to understand terrorist behavior as well as the motives and characteristics underlying it.

### 6. CONCLUSION

We can conclude that radicalism is a term that has undergone major changes in its meaning over the past 200 years. The concept spread from the famous Glorious Revolution in England, also known as the 1688 revolution that overthrew King James II of England, followed by the Enlightenment - a spiritual movement that began sometime in

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<sup>22</sup> Diego, G., Steffen H., *Engineers of Jihad: The Curious Connection Between Violent Extremism and Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), (2016)

<sup>23</sup> Borum, R., *Psychology of terrorism*. Tampa: University of South Florida, (2004)

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem

<sup>25</sup> Bouzar, D., Martin, M., *What motives bring youth to engage in the Jihad?* *Neuropsychiatr Enf Adolesc*, (2016)

<sup>26</sup> Ташковски, И., Танески, Н. *Разрешување конфликти и меѓународен тероризам*. КА ЕЛ ЕС Принт, Скопје, (2018)

the late 17th century and was associated with the French Revolution held in 1789, reaching Germany through radical parties in the 19th century.

In terms of the concept, it then represented enlightened, liberal leftist political principles, opposing right wing political institutions. Radicalism has become a political doctrine that inspires national movements dedicated to individual and collective freedom and emancipation, targeted against monarchist and aristocratic reign. At the time, radicalism was predominantly bilingual - directed against religious authorities, hostile to monarchies and monarchs, and definitely pro-democratic - political activism aimed at establishing a democratic government in one country. Some of their demands, such as women's rights, have become mainstream ideas and have been realized in most parts of the world during the 20th century. Political opponents have often sought to portray radicalism as a revolutionary and more recently a religious, subversive force. However, historically, in terms of political parties that adopt their principles, radicalism is much more associated with progressive reformism than with utopian extremism, whose celebration of radicals and of massive violence is generally rejected.

We can conclude that radicalism refers to a political doctrine accepted by socio-political movements that proclaim individual and collective freedom and emancipation in an attempt to achieve economic, social and political rights and equality. In this sense, radicalism is a concept that is opposed to the rule of authoritarian regimes and hierarchically structured societies, a concept that advocates political change. Historically, radical political parties have been key drivers of progress towards greater democracy in many states. Radicalism as an ideological way of thinking, tends to be very critical of the existing status quo, pursuing the goal of restructuring and / or overthrowing outdated political structures. According to their opponents, radicals are often portrayed as violent, but this is only partially true, since radicalism tends to be associated historically more with progressive reformism than with utopian extremism, an agglomeration of violence being rejected. Radicalism is emancipatory and does not try to subjugate them, as extremism does. Radical narratives contain utopian ideological elements, but they do not celebrate the distant past. Although unwilling to compromise their ideals, radicals are open to rational arguments about the means to achieve their goals. Unlike extremists, radicals are not necessarily extreme in choosing the means to achieve their goals. Unlike the extremists who reject the extremist label, radicals publicly proclaim themselves as radicals. Therefore, radicalism can be said to be on the verge of democratic consensus, while extremism is quite the opposite of democracy. Although the meanings of these two contested concepts can sometimes overlap to some extent, they should not be equated. Faced with radicalism, democratic political systems have shown the ability to absorb radical demands by reaching for reasonable compromises. Faced with extremism, however, democratic societies cannot make concessions to democratic values based on ideological constructions related to religion that have no firm basis in social reality.

The links between radicalism and terrorism are much weaker than those between extremism and terrorism. In this sense, the use of the term radicalization to denote a specific form of political violence, and in particular terrorism, is unsatisfactory. What is critical in determining the direction in which the term develops, is that all forms of radical rebellion - even legitimate resistance against corrupt and violent authoritarian regimes - are disqualified as illegitimate extremism.

Hence this phenomenon has the dangerous potential to become a tool in the hands of many endangered authoritarian regimes that tend to equate radicalism with extremism, as it allows them to claim that the only instantaneous choice of the people is the one between the relative stability they offer as government or extremism in the form of terrorism.

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