

Psychological and behavioral factors of radicalization essay sample

[Society](#), [Terrorism](#)



Introduction

The defining characteristics of the contemporary world have been the notion of terrorism that affects global security and stability. The tragic events are typifying the twenty-first-century including attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center, and the successive attacks in London, Madrid, Bali among other places attracted significant media coverage. However, the terrorism issue is extensive as numerous radical groups exist around the globe and tend to practice their extremist activities on a regular basis. It has been a norm that no matter how many terrorists are captured or killed; many more are willing to join the likes of Al Qaeda and other radical groups. As a result, many scholars argue that the challenge is to reverse or prevent radicalization.

Radicalization

This is a process by which a group, mass of people, or individual go through a transformation to adopt extreme social, religious, or political aspirations and ideals that undermine or reject the modern expressions and views of freedom as well as freedom of choice. Scholars consider radicalization into terrorism as the adoption of extreme means to meet the goals of an individual or a group. The process of radicalization is a complex mechanism characterized by psychological and behavioral factors that affect individuals. However, there is a panoply of factors that elucidate individual motives such as honor, vengeance, social status, and loyalty to a certain leader, monetary benefits to family members as well as a desire for martyrdom. Even though the individual's reasons are dissimilar, an underlying motivational force

referred as the quest for significance drives them. The quest symbolizes an essential human need to be respected by others in the society in order to earn self-esteem and a sense of value. Individuals tend to pursue terroristic objectives due to the opportunity and need for the significance they provide. Overall, psychological theorists label this quest as a human or universal motivation that is variously viewed a necessity of meaning, achievement, competence, control, and esteem.

Group ideology is a means that attains the significance quest that tends to be bound by a culture that characterizes the individual. Even though, these individuals search for ways to earn significance and uniqueness, and they do so in ways that are not distinctive, yet socially shared based on cultural philosophy and are external to the individual. Being a member of a radicalized group entails one of the means that earn individuals significance and sense of importance. This means tends to come at the expense of other societal values and individual goals. These are probably the reasons as to why people experience hardships of the loss of significance, but choose culturally-based alternative means that do not require them to become radicalized such as becoming an athlete. The third psychological means of radicalization is the social process that constitutes a mutual or shared reality. In this case, ideologies are social illusions or hopeful mystifications that tend to be validated by social consensus.

Individuals rarely commit blindly to specific ideologies, but look to those ideologies that are affixed in common group beliefs. The commitment to group ideals is nurtured through social connections and the group pressure placed on the individual when other members promote individual views.

Friendship groups are often developed in this case where extremist cases are concerned, for example from the teachings of Imams. Scholars argue that the group-based behaviors and decision tend to be very strong a more extreme than those of an individual.

There are also the behavioral factors that influence radicalization of individuals. Numerous studies have shown a correlation between violence and cognitive capacity and have extensively indicated a relation between a person's character to join a radical group and cognitive style. The cognitive capacity, in this case, entails to mental functions such as attention, concentration, memory, and the ability to follow and learn rules, and develop sensible inferences. Consecutively, the cognitive style is an individual's way of thinking that entails prejudices in decision-making. When studying radicalization through an individual mechanism, behavioral factors factor significantly. Radical behavior is considered as the greatest concern in the process of radicalization. An individual with a level of adequate emotional vulnerability, empathy as well as the opportunity to enable them access informative materials are potential victims to radicalization. An individual transforming to extreme violence from sympathy can be a means of personal or political grievance. This mechanism is referred as a manifestation of frustration and victimization, and these individuals are known as elf-radicalized and tend to contemplate terrorist activities. The members that are in this category have an array of radicalization motivation, that entail hatred and grievance against institutions like governments, the estrangement of society, anger over societal status and unequal opportunities.

Counter measures

The various factors that are hugely contributory to the perpetuation of terrorism, as discussed above, psychological and behavioral ones, emanate from the radicalism cocoon. Thus, any measures that should be employed to cut the root of terrorism must ensure that they fight radicalism of any form. The society is the only institution that can structure its people to eradicate radical movements and resultantly ensure that terrorism is discontinued. For instance, countries that are democratic and prosperous have a doddle in fighting terrorism, unlike countries that are impoverished and politically shaken. Thus, the main cause of the radicalization of people into terrorism is thus more rampant in countries that do not have a robust economic development, and the political structure is in disarray. For this reason, prudent political institutions, religious homogeneity, steady economic development, and high military expenditure are some of the counter-measures that can eliminate the psychological and behavioral factors that contribute hugely to terrorism. These sum up as the predominant measures that can be used by the countries that have chronic cases of perpetual terrorism.

Since motivation is one of the cardinal factors that propel people to becoming serial terrorists by radicalization, countering it is an effective method to achieve the goals of counter-terrorism. Discouraging the motivation of terrorists by ensuring that there are strict measures in the form of beefing up security and terrorist detection gadgets as well as military training are among the effective ways to undermine motivation. If the motivation of these terrorists is undermined, the probability of perpetual

terrorist activities being continued is highly reduced.

Moreover, to ensure that deradicalization efforts become successful it is highly important to channel the energy into the Islam religion. The main step to undertake in the fight against the radicalization of people is through reliable communication efforts. The step is a composite element that is comprised of a cognitive/intelligent component that includes the exposure of people to counterarguments about the justification of terrorism. The other component of the step is the motivational component that bases its huge material support on job training and moral support to the families of the various detained militants.

Exposing people to counterarguments that are truly credible, prudent, and circumspect about the justification of terrorism is a milestone in the elimination of the radicalization fever. It is an important strategy since it enables the washing away of the reversed mindset that most Islamic terrorists have. Moreover, creating an educational strategy that discourages any form of terrorism is a huge stride in ensuring that the societal structure discourages any radicalization processes. In eradicating the norms, myths and false beliefs about terrorism, communicating with people to educate them on the adversity and detriments of terrorism plays a cardinal principle in reducing radicalization.

Lastly, the motivational component is also imperative since training people on various jobs enable them to have income-generating jobs that can help in guarding them against the wave of radicalization. Moreover, educating the families of the militants is important in ensuring that radicalization does not spread to these families. It is highly imperative to guarantee that the

channels within which the militants can use to spread the terrorism radicalization are blocked. In effect, the number of militants does not increase, and terrorism reduces over time. The society thus heals of the malady about the radicalization of people into the terrorism incidents.

Bibliography

Horgan, John. 'Deradicalization Or Disengagement?'. Perspectives on Terrorism 2, no. 4 (2010). Accessed June 28, 2015. <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/32/html>.

[terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/32/html](http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/32/html).

Kruglanski, Arie W., and Michele J. Gelfand. 'Motivation, Ideology, And The Social Process In Radicalization - Association For Psychological Science'.

Psychologicalscience. Org. Last modified 2015. Accessed June 28, 2015.

Kruglanski, Arie W., and Shira Fishman. 'Psychological Factors In Terrorism And Counterterrorism: Individual, Group, And Organizational Levels Of Analysis'. Social Issues and Policy Review 3, no. 1 (2009): 1-44. <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2013/april-13/motivation-ideology-and-the-social-process-in-radicalization.html>.

[psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2013/april-13/motivation-ideology-and-the-social-process-in-radicalization.html](http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2013/april-13/motivation-ideology-and-the-social-process-in-radicalization.html).

Kruglanski, Arie W., Michele J. Gelfand, Jocelyn J. Bélanger, Anna Sheveland, Malkanthi Hetiarachchi, and Rohan Gunaratna. 'The Psychology Of Radicalization And Deradicalization: How Significance Quest Impacts Violent Extremism'. Political Psychology 35 (2014): 69-93.

Silke, Andrew. 'Holy Warriors: Exploring The Psychological Processes Of Jihadi Radicalization'. European Journal of Criminology 5, no. 1 (2008): 99-123.