



Social Sciences Spectrum

A Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, HEC recognized [Y-category](#) Research Journal

E-ISSN: [3006-0427](#) P-ISSN: [3006-0419](#)

Volume 04, Issue 01, 2025

Web link: <https://sss.org.pk/index.php/sss>



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Radicalization as a Growing Tree: An Examination from Seeds to Production

Faiza Idrees

Lecturer, Department of International Relations,
Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi Pakistan

Correspondence: faiza.xtravision@fjwu.edu.pk

Dr. Noor-ul-Huda

Lecturer, Department of International Relations,
Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi Pakistan

Email: noorulhuda776@gmail.com

Article Information [YY-MM-DD]

Received 2024-12-10

Accepted 2025-02-10

Citation (APA):

Idrees, F & Huda, N. (2025). Radicalization as a Growing Tree: An Examination from Seeds to Production. *Social Sciences Spectrum*, 4(1), 186-195. <https://doi.org/10.71085/sss.04.01.212>

Abstract

Radicalization and terrorism usually, are overlapped but in fact, both are different concepts. In this paper, by looking with deep eye at academic and institutional definitions of radicalization, it is clarified that radicalization often, leads to terrorism but itself is not terrorism. It is speculated that radicalization always exists in violent form but contemporary forms of radicalization explicate that it can be either violent or nonviolent. However, radicalization is a dynamic process that gradually forces the individuals or groups to adopt violent behavior. This article expounds, radicalization grows bit by bit as tree of which the seeds are fundamentalism, radicalism, and extremism and its ultimate fruit is terrorism. This research also examines that radicalization does not exist in single form and does not work with one strategy. It has multiple mechanisms which remain activated at individual, group, and mass level to stimulate the people towards violent actions. The meticulous study raises the basic question that how radicalization leads people towards the path of violence? To find the answer of this inquiry inductive methodology is availed by the researcher.

Keywords: Radicalization, Fundamentalism, Extremism, Violence, Terrorism.



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Introduction

In current literature, one of the fact, which has been explored by the scholars and researchers is that radicalization is the major cause of contemporary terrorist phenomenon. To understand radicalization, multiple models and theories have been presented. In view of Crossett and Spitaletta (2010), sixteen theories have been proposed to elucidate the underlying cause of radicalization (Crossett & Spitaletta, 2010). While this research rather to focus on the already existed models and theoretical debates, particularly, looks on the terminology ‘radicalization’ in deep, institutional and scholarly definitions are presented to explain the term.

The researcher argues that radicalization is a tree, of which radicalism, fundamentalism, and extremism are the seeds and its ultimate production (fruit) is terrorism. The project highlights that how radicalization works as a dynamic process that leads the people, to adopt violent behavior. Mechanisms (through which extreme violent ideologies emerge) that work on individual, group, and mass level, of this developmental process, are also excavated.

Institutional Definitions of ‘Radicalization’

Although on a single definition of the term, the current institutions are not agreed. But some of the descriptions that are followed in today’s world, are discussed here. According to UK Home Office (HO) the term can be defined as a process where individuals support or legitimize terrorism and then may join different terrorist groups or organizations in some cases (UK Home Office, MI5’s parent agency, 2008). In the view of this particular definition, radicalization is also a similar process like terrorism, where individuals become ready to support terrorism and sometimes, they physically attach with terrorist groups.

Some scholars see radicalization as a progression of socialization which regards itself as terrorism (Della Porta et al, 2008). This description explains the whole phenomenon in a brief language. It clarifies that through a proper socialization (consistent training by society), extreme violent ideologies are developed among people and later, these ideologies are manifested in the acts of terrorism.

A US department sees it as the process of embracing extreme ideologies, which may include endorsing or using violence as a means of bringing about societal change. (Homeland Security Institute, 2006). According to this definition, radicalization as a process works, through which people adopt extremist belief system. This system on the one hand, generates motivation to support violence and on the other, it stimulates people to use or apply violence as a method to bring social change.

A Dutch organization describes the phenomena of radicalization as an increasing willingness to seek and/or support radical social changes that are in opposition to or threaten the democratic order through non-democratic means (The Dutch Security Service, 2005). In the light of this definition, radicalization prepares people to pursue or to support undemocratic means to change society at a large scale. These inequitable (illegitimate) means have the conflict with society and as well as directly, pose intimidation to democratic order.

Another organization defines radicalization as, “the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2012). This definition illustrates the whole process in a single sentence. A person who has extremist ideology, he at first, supports terrorism and later, he himself, engages in terrorism. The process from beginning to end, that guides him, is called as radicalization.

Scholarly Definitions of ‘Radicalization’

On the term ‘radicalization’, academic literature is also available at a large scale. The scholars and researchers looked at the term from multiple angles. Wilner & Dubouloz (2010) define radicalization as a process when a person or group can become radicalized by adopting more extreme political, social, or religious beliefs and goals that oppose or challenge the status quo or undermine modern concepts and manifestations of freedom of choice (Wilner & Dubouloz, 2010). According to this particular definition, this term is a process that presses individuals or a group to adopt extreme aspirations. These aspirations deny or destroy the contemporary political system, social ideas, and expression of freedom of choice. Ultimately, through this process that individual or group stands against current political and social institutions.

McCauley and Moskalenko (2008) describe and explain it that it as is the rise in extreme attitudes, sentiments, and actions that promote violence and conflict between groups, among individuals, groups, and the general public (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008). Both the researchers argue that radicalization works across individual, group, and mass levels. Currently, Crossett and Spitaletta (2010) delineate radicalization as a process through which an individual or group transitions from using legal means to participate in politics to using or endorsing violence for political ends (Crossett & Spitaletta, 2010). This definition looks different from the descriptions mentioned above. Although, the authors consider it as a process through which individuals, groups, or mass public bring huge change in society (transformation) by using violence, but differ on the point of legitimization. According to them, in the process of radicalization, people participate in prevalent political process by legal means just to support or use violence for political objectives.

By taking the support from above mentioned all definitions it can be summarized that radicalization is the process by which an individual embraces ideology that defend the use of violence to bring about social change and actively supports and uses violent tactics for political ends. It would be accurate to state that it is a process, frequently a slow and gradual one, that culminates with an individual launching a violent campaign to bring about social change.

Radicalization as Violent or Nonviolent Process

In contemporary world, it is thought that radicalization exists in violent forms. While, Borum (2011) describes the term that it can exist as both the violent and nonviolent forms (Borum, 2011). However, majority of the literature concentrates on violent radicalization. Radicalization is violent or non-violent, it is a separate debate, but it has been clarified by the researchers that it leads to violence and in many cases, ultimately, to terrorism. In fact, most people who have radical ideas do not directly or indirectly, engage in terrorism, while, many terrorists who label them as terrorists, are not deeply ideological and are not ‘radicalize’ in any conventional sense. At different times and possibly under different situations, distinct pathways and systems function differently for different individuals (Borum, 2011).

According to the best available worldwide polling from institutions like Pew and Gallup, there are millions of Muslims worldwide who support Jihadi aspirations but the majority of them abstain from violence. Although, the literature on radicalization, suggests that there is a sense of urgency and emergency in radicalized population, they do not agree for any type of compromise, they wish to bring undemocratic change, and they consider violent means legitimate to use on soldiers as well as on civilians, for this change. These violent actions are called terrorist activities in lay language, in media, and in literature.

Radicalism, Fundamentalism and Extremism

Radicalism, fundamentalism, and extremism are the seeds of that tree of radicalization, of which production (fruit) is terrorism. Through these three ways the process of radicalization works and in the end leads the people to terrorism. To understand the process of radicalization, it is compulsory to explore three terms radicalism fundamentalism and extremism.

In defining the term 'radicalism,' Daniela Pisiou (2012) argues that two of its historical traits, going to the roots and sweeping change are what spark radicalism. She provides the following description of the term 'political ideology, with the aim of bringing about universal transformation founded on essential or 'root' principles' (Pisiou, 2012). Although, radicalism from very deep, starts its works and develops willingness for a sweeping change among the people and this willingness provides water to the tree of radicalization.

Fundamentalism is the second seed in the tree of radicalization. Advocating for fundamentalist views is linked to radicalization; however, this phrase is less frequently used in relation to the radicalization's aftermath. The idea of "fundamentalism" originates in the field of religion, specifically in the Protestant movement of the early 20th century in the United States. At first, this fundamentalism was defined by "premillennialism and the verbal inerrancy of the Bible," and it was also based on the broad "antimodern" and "antiliberal" perspectives (Carpenter, 1997). In contemporary era, the term is not used only in the religious, but also in the political settings. It elucidates a strict, uncompromising attitude and an unwavering attachment to a set of beliefs. Like radicalism, fundamentalism is also not inevitably violent and does not, in most cases, impose such beliefs on others by way of force. While, it develops rigidity and inflexibility in behavior and as an aftermath, lack of tolerance emerges for the opponents and ultimately, this lack of tolerance fertilizes the tree of radicalization.

As radicalism and fundamentalism, extremism is another term usually used to have strong association with radicalization. Alex Schmid (2011) defines extremists that by stifling all dissent and oppressing minorities, extremists aim to establish a homogenous society founded on strict, dogmatic ideological principles (Schmid, 2011). According to this definition, extremists hold dogmatic ideological tenets, on the bases of particular ideology, they wish to construct homogeneous social order, and they do not allow minorities to be flourished. Neuman (2010) describes extremism as political ideologies that conflict with a society's fundamental ideals and values might be referred to as extremist. This could be used to describe any ideology that supports racial or religious supremacy and/or goes against the fundamental tenets of democracy and universal human rights in the context of liberal democracies. The phrase can also refer to the ways in which political actors try to achieve their goals, i.e., by employing strategies that "display disregard for the life, liberty, and human rights of others (Neuman, 2010). In the light of this particular description, extremism can be understood as: it is a specific political ideology that rejects core values of a society it denies key principles of liberal democracy, and universal human rights, it promotes religious; racial; cultural superiority among the people. The author argues that extremism is not just an ideology but it is also a method, used by political actors to achieve their political objectives. They by multiple means, humiliate the life, liberty, and human rights of others to pursue their agenda. The dogmatic ideological tenets and suppression of opposition, as well as, denial of core social values, key democratic principles, universal human rights, heterogeneous society, equality of minorities, disregard of life and liberty of others gives a huge support to the tree of radicalization to be grown fully. In general, it can be understood that radicalism persuades people for a sweeping change, fundamentalism provides a strict, uncompromising, intolerant position, for those who talk about radicalization, while, extremism can be understood as an

ideology that is against democratic norms, human rights, equality and tolerance. All the three terms 'radicalism' 'fundamentalism' and 'extremism' on the one hand, work as the seeds for the plant of radicalization while, on the other, they supply water and fertilizers to that plant, so it can flourish as a burly tree, its roots go very deep in society and its branches spread all around the people living in that social order.

Radicalization as a Pathway to Terrorism

Numerous studies on the investigation of terrorist action at various levels, including individual, group, network, organization, mass movement, sociocultural setting, and international/interstate contexts, have been conducted since the late 1960s. The idea that only "crazy" people commit acts of terrorism has been decisively refuted by previous years of research on the subject.

However, the majority of modern social scientists who study terrorism have disproved these early, naïve theories by the end of the 2000s. It has come to their attention that the best way to understand terrorism is not as a "condition," but rather as a dynamic "process." However, nothing is known about the nature of that process. While, Laqueur (2002) has said of terrorism that the quest for a "general theory" is misguided (Laqueur, 2002).

While, the researchers and scholars are agreed on the point that behind violent behavior (terrorism) some process works and this process may be called as radicalization. When we concentrate on the process of radicalization, we find that there are multiple pathways that lead to radicalization and each pathway is itself, affected by a variety of factors (McCormick, 2003). In a discussion on home ground terrorism, Wilner and Dubouloz (2010) suggest that individuals who embrace extreme political, social, and/or religious beliefs and aspirations and believe that using indiscriminate violence to achieve specific aims is acceptable are said to be radicalized. It is a psychological and emotional process that primes and inspires someone to engage in violent behavior (Wilner & Dubouloz, 2010). This violent behavior of radicalized people, in general term, is called as terrorism.

Although, the term 'terrorism' has been excavated by many of the researchers but to understand the terminology 'terrorism' which is the end result of the dynamic process of radicalization, some definitions are presented here. Walter Laqueur (2002) clarifies terrorism that it targets only innocent (Laqueur, 2002). Schmid (2011) explores the term that it involves using or threatening violence to supposedly bring about a shift in ideology, politics, or religion. It can only be carried out by undercover agents or non-state actors acting on behalf of their respective governments. It targets a wider range of people in society and reaches more people than just the immediate target victims (Schmid, 2011).

There is no universally accepted description of terrorism but it is clear in above mentioned definitions that the violent acts, upon innocents, to make the government or population terrified, to achieve political, ideological, religious or personal aims, are considered terrorism. However, this exceedingly violent behavior (terrorism) evolves through a long, gradual, developmental and dynamic process and in fact; this continuous progression is called as radicalization. To understand that how radicalization leads an individual to terrorism the description of Peter Neumann (2008) is adequate "what goes on before the bomb goes off" (Neumann, 2008).

Levels and Mechanisms of Radicalization

Many of the authors previously tried to explore the clandestine reasons and mechanisms behind radicalized mentality that forces a person to adopt violent behavior. The development of these beliefs, in actual, is the process of radicalization. When this process arrives at its culmination, it

easily guides a person to move towards terrorist organizations because these terrorist organizations further fortify his or her beliefs and ultimately, he or she wishes to take undemocratic change in society through violent actions.

While Baylouni (2004) explores that not terrorist organizations make a person rigid, violent, extremist, and terrorist, but his or her own emotions (radicalized views; beliefs; feelings;), his financial circumstances (poverty), or political agendas of different parties force a person to go towards violent actions (Baylouni, 2004). Although, Clark McCauley & Sophia Moskalenko (2008) in more detail, excavate that there are 12 mechanisms through which the people turn into radicalized and these mechanisms work at three levels, “individual, group and mas/public level” (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008).

Individual level

- 1) Individual Radicalization: Personal victimization. The best example of personal victimization is, Chechen Black Widows who sought revenge against Russians because of the reason that they were raped or their menfolk were killed by Russian soldiers (Tessendorf, 1986). Another example of this mechanism is, Tamil Tigers of the suicide brigades called “Black Tigers” who survived after Sinhalese atrocities. Palestinian suicide terrorists also cite revenge from Israeli attacks on neighbors or loved ones as a motive for self-sacrifice.
- 2) Individual Radicalization: Political grievance. This mechanism can be observed in cases of racism; religious; or lingual minorities (Varshney, 2003). In Europe, many of the Muslims when do not find employment or equal educational opportunities just because their belonging to Islam. Ultimately, they move towards radicalization.
- 3) Individual Radicalization: Joining a radical group the slippery slope. This mechanism works to turn an individual from sympathizer to activist. Characteristically an individual’s progress into a terrorist group is slow and gradual. He or she is tested with many small missions just like fund-raising or facilitating violent actions before being trusted in more important missions as use of gun or bomb (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008). To be precise, this is a step by step mechanism from radicalization to terrorism.
- 4) Individual Radicalization: Joining a radical group—the power of love. Sageman argues that there is no recruitment to armed jihad or to al-Qaida (Sageman, 2008). Similarly, in the case of Red Army Fraction (RAF) most of the people have been involved in terrorist activities through devotion of friends.

Group level

- 5) Group Radicalization: Extremity shift in like-minded groups. This mechanism works when people compete with one another within same group to prove that they are more radicalized than their partners. Through this contest, they wish to achieve a distinguished political status in group. The compatible example of this kind of mechanism is the Weather Underground: a U.S. anti-war group of the 1970s (Collier & Horowitz, 1989). In plain words, every member, to become more radical, keeps eye on the acts of all other members of his group.
- 6) Group Radicalization: Extreme cohesion under isolation and threat. This mechanism of radicalization starts to be active when diminutive combat groups lacerate from larger groups.
- 7) Group Radicalization: Competition for the same base of support. This mechanism becomes vibrant when two groups fight for the same cause and compete with each other to achieve the objective. the one group always endeavors to surmount over its competitor to defeat the enemy through more violent strategies. The best illustration of the situation is the 1979 assassination

of Lord Mountbatten by the Irish Republican Army. In fact, this assassination was the aftermath of the terrible competition between the Irish Republican Army and the Irish National Liberation Army. In this case the former tried to overcome the attacks of the later but the cause prevailed same for both groups. Another extreme example of this mechanism is the Tamil Tigers, who, in their rise to power, exterminated more Tamils than Sinhalese (Rajan, 1990). The LTTE prematurely removed other Tamil militant groups, and in 2006 it killed individual Tamil critics and Tamil political opponents.

- 8) Group Radicalization: Competition with state power condensation. This mechanism of radicalization is being remained the focal point of social movement theorists (Christian, 2005). They explore that when some group, with weak and diffuse popular support, searches out a sufficient organization to highlight a public demonstration (a rally, a protest march, a sit-in, or some other form of civil disobedience). This group after confronting abrogation of human rights and use of violence by the state's institutions (police; army) attaches itself with an organized terrorist group. For instance, Della Porta describes in her research on the origins of the Brigade Rossa in Italy and the Red Army Faction in Germany. according to her, "the Red Brigades condensed out of 1960s leftist student protest movements in Italy; the RAF condensed out of similar leftist student protest groups in Germany" (Della Porta, 1993). Another analogous case has been presented by Sprinzak. She argues that a small fraction of the Students for a Democratic Society, who initially protested against the war in Vietnam, but condense into the Weather Underground later (Sprinzak, 1991)).
- 9) Group Radicalization: Within-group competition fissioning. This mechanism works opposite to the previous trajectory of radicalization. in the earlier mechanism a small group condenses with a larger organization while in the mechanism of fissioning, an immense group is divided in small fractions. Usually, intra-group conflict brings about splitting or fissioning of a terrorist group into multiple fractions. The best example of this observable fact is The IRA who competed with many its splinter groups like, Official IRA, Provisional IRA, Real IRA, Continuity IRA, INLA—who (Zawodny, 1983).

Mass level

- 10) Mass Radicalization: Conflict with an Outgroup—Jujitsu Politics. This form of radicalization can be understood as a generalization of the group dynamics theory already described. outgroup threat leads the small groups to increase group cohesion, to increase respect for ingroup leaders, and to increase sanctions for in group deviates (John & Fisher, 2003). While in larger groups, outgroup threat leads towards ingroup identification, patriotism, or nationalism. However, the responsive strategy to the outgroup threat remains same in smaller or larger groups. Mass radicalization by outgroup threat or external attack is so reliable that it can be used as a tactic to engage more and more people in the process. For example, some terrorists draw out the state to respond with force. Rather than actual terrorists, sympathizers of terrorists, in this response, are killed who have not yet been mobilized to action (Marighella, 1970). The predictable result is mobilization of terrorist sympathizers towards terrorism. This strategy is called jujitsu politics.

Conclusion

Radicalization and terrorism usually, are overlapped but in fact, both are different concepts. In this paper, by looking with deep eye at academic and institutional definitions of radicalization, it has been clarified that radicalization often, leads to terrorism but itself is not terrorism. It has been speculated that radicalization always exists in violent form but contemporary forms of radicalization explicate that it can be either violent or non-violent. However, radicalization is a dynamic process that gradually forces the individuals or groups to adopt violent behavior. This article as well has expounded that radicalization grows bit by bit as tree of which seeds are fundamentalism; radicalism; and extremism; its ultimate fruit is terrorism. In this research, it has also been examined that radicalization does not exist in single form and does not work with one strategy. It has multiple mechanisms which remain activated at individual, group, and mass level to stimulate the people towards violent actions.

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